



City of Somerville
URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

City Hall 3rd Floor, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville MA 02143

APRIL 26, 2022 MEETING MINUTES

This meeting was conducted via remote participation on GoToWebinar.

NAME	TITLE	STATUS
Sarah Lewis	Co-Chair	<i>Present</i>
Cortney Kirk	Acting Co-Chair	<i>Present</i>
Frank Valdes	Member	<i>Absent</i>
Deborah Fennick	Member	<i>Present</i>
Andrew Arbaugh	Member	<i>Present</i>
Tim Talun	Member	<i>Arrived Late – 7:35</i>
Cheri Ruane	Member	<i>Present</i>
Tim Houde	Alternate	<i>Present</i>

City staff present: Andrew Graminski (Planning, Preservation, & Zoning)
The meeting was called to order at 7:04pm and adjourned at 10:14pm.

The Commission discussed which cases should be heard in which order to make sure there is a quorum for each case.

Member Arbaugh rescued himself.

PUBLIC MEETING: 153 South Street – Boynton Yards Thoroughfare 1 (P&Z 22-008)

Co-Chair Kirk stated this design review is subject to the NACTO (National Association of City Transportation Officials) design guidelines, specifically the Commercial Shared Streets standards. Co-Chair Kirk read the 15 guidelines aloud, as this is the first thoroughfare the Commission has seen.

The applicant team presented the urban context and project goals for the proposed thoroughfare. The team noted that the thoroughfare is intended to be pedestrian-oriented rather than auto-oriented, as well as presented the landscaping plan, materiality choices, and shared several street sections and perspectives to provide the overall feel for the proposed space. The team also discussed the vehicle and bicycle parking plan.

The Commission and applicant team discussed the shadow impacts, water retention, street lighting, and the traffic impact analysis and how it would be helpful to see a site plan depicting the vehicle patterns such as entrances, exits, and ride share spaces. The applicant team noted that there is no grade change between sidewalk and road, as there will be a curb-less condition.

The Commission and applicant team continued the discussion with the materiality of the thoroughfare surface, how bicycles will move through the space, the speed limit and how to discourage vehicles from going too fast, how to enhance the materiality to prioritize pedestrians along the entire thoroughfare, if there is a way to use the landscaping to create a more cohesive space, the condition of the arcade, and the possibility of adding additional bike parking along the civic space areas.

The Commission and applicant team addressed if a circulation diagram would be helpful to understand how vehicular and bicycle traffic will flow through the space. The Commission would like to better understand the flow

of traffic, as well as ride shares considering this could affect the overall design of the thoroughfare. The applicant team explained that they have provided that information as part of their Master Plan for the area and are willing to share what they have worked out with various city departments to reduce traffic and encourage bicyclists and pedestrians. The Commission stated that there are several variables involved and would like to see the visuals to better understand the conditions.

Following a motion by Member Talun, seconded by Member Fennick, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to continue the design review to a future meeting.

RESULT:

CONTINUED

PUBLIC MEETING: 99 South Street – Boynton Yards Building 3 (P&Z 22-007)

The applicant team presented the general design strategies, urban context, massing options, floor plans, landscaping plan containing a covered arcade, and three façade design concepts. The team shared several street sections to provide the overall look and feel of the building in the setting.

The Commission and applicant team discussed the preferred zipper massing option 3, the preferred terracotta façade concept C, the location of the two entrances/lobbies, how the logic of the stepping and the datums of the façade need to be developed further even though the proportions are good overall, the materiality and how the warm natural terracotta is a good choice for this neighborhood, how the zoning ordinance does not allow for an upper story to project over a lower story so there is no option to step the zipper glass portion back any further, options to enhance the zipper portion of the building, and possible opportunities to open up the the base of the building to create a more inviting space along the thoroughfare.

The Commission requested renderings of the building showing the long view at the next design review, such as from Prospect Hill. The Commission also suggested fine tuning the landscaping plan to coincide with the retail spaces in a more cohesive manner along the thoroughfare.

Following a motion by Member Fennick, seconded by Member Ruane, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to recommend the preferred massing option 3.

Following a motion by Member Talun, seconded by Member Fennick, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to recommend the preferred façade concept C.

Following a motion by Member Talun, seconded by Member Ruane, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to continue the design review to a future meeting.

RESULT:

CONTINUED

Member Arbaugh rejoined the meeting.
Member Ruane recused herself.

PUBLIC MEETING: 256-260 Elm Street (P&Z 21-039)

(continued from 12 April 2022)

The applicant team presented the updated façade designs and showed how the previous comments by the Commission were incorporated into the various design concepts.

The Commission and applicant team discussed the public realm component along Herbert Street, the possibility of bringing the terracotta element all the way down to the ground, the opportunity to landscape the upper terrace on the Herbert Street façade, the accessibility to the retail storefronts along Herbert Street considering the narrow sidewalks, and the materiality options for several of the building components.

Following a motion by Member Arbaugh, seconded by Member Talun, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to recommend that the design guidelines have been met for the CC district.

Following a motion by Member Arbaugh, seconded by Member Houde, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to incorporate additional design guidance into the design.

Additional design guidance:

- Investigate the terracotta element going to the ground on Herbert Street
- Study the possibility of the piers on Elm Street being brick or stone, instead of metal, with a granite base
- Show the accessibility strategy for the retail storefronts on Herbert Street

RESULT:

RECOMMENDED

OTHER BUSINESS: 5 Lake Street – Pocket Park

Co-Chair Kirk explained that the Public Space and Urban Forestry (PSUF) Division has advised the applicant team to follow the pocket park civic space standards. The team received approval prior to the new zoning ordinance adoption, however PSUF requested that they go through the pre-submittal process of have neighborhood meetings and design review before the park can be constructed. The buildings at 346 Somerville Ave and 3-5 Hawkins Street are currently being constructed, although they cannot obtain their Certificate of Occupancies until the pocket park is completed. Technically, no vote is required, and the Commission will only provide design guidance to the team.

The applicant team gave an overview of the project, timeline, and the site context. They presented two pocket park designs, explained that the neighborhood expressed an interest in a green oasis with a lawn and trees, and they reviewed their proposed native planting list.

The Commission and applicant team discussed the neighboring transformer locations & fenced-in amenity spaces, the maintenance plan, irrigation & water access, the decorative stone balls which could be a great opportunity for local artists, the success of the path that connects Lake Street and Somerville Ave, how the planters don't necessarily need to go all the way to the property line, and the possibility of extending the sidewalk width.

The Commission agreed that design scheme A is preferred due to the usability of the space, as well as the zoned seating. They expressed a desire to explore opportunities to add art into the space as a way to frame the area in the back across from the seating zone, extending the paving materials beyond the pathway, and squaring off the corner of the planters.

NOTICE: These minutes constitute a summary of the votes and key discussions at this meeting. To review a full recording, please contact the Planning & Zoning Division at planning@somervillema.gov.