



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

19 MAY 2022 MEETING MINUTES

This meeting was conducted via remote participation on GoToWebinar.

NAME	TITLE	STATUS	ARRIVED
Michael Capuano	Chair	<i>Present</i>	
Amelia Aboff	Vice Chair	<i>Present</i>	
Jahan Habib	Member	<i>Present</i>	
Erin Geno	Clerk	<i>Present</i>	
Debbie Howitt Easton	Alternate	<i>Present</i>	
Russell Pildes	Alternate	<i>Absent</i>	

City staff present: Raisa Saniat (Planning, Preservation & Zoning), Charlotte Leis (Planning, Preservation & Zoning), Emily Hutchings (Planning, Preservation & Zoning); Sarah Lewis (Director of Planning, Preservation & Zoning)

The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm and adjourned at 7:30pm.

PUBLIC HEARING: 304 Somerville Ave (P&Z 21-087)

The applicant team has requested a continuance to the 2 June 2022 meeting.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Vice Chair Aboff, the Board voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the applicant's request to continue the case to 2 June 2022.

RESULT:

CONTINUED

GENERAL BUSINESS: Meeting Minutes

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Vice Chair Aboff, the Board voted (4-0-1) with Vice Chair Aboff abstaining to approve the 3 March 2022 meeting minutes.

Chair Capuano noted for the record that members who were not present at a meeting can still vote to approve minutes for that meeting.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Vice Chair Aboff, the Board voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the 17 March 2022 meeting minutes.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Vice Chair Aboff, the Board voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the 7 April 2022 meeting minutes.

PUBLIC HEARING: 350 Assembly Row (P&Z 22-064)

Director Lewis noted that although the application is a major amendment, it involves one specific change to the design guidelines for the master plan, which must be approved before the Planning Board can take action on 350 Assembly Row (P&Z 21-137). Director Lewis provided an overview of the changes.

The Board and Staff discussed how this is a ministerial approval due to the changed zoning ordinance and how not approving this application would impact Block 7 at 350 Assembly Row.

Chair Capuano opened public testimony.

Patrick McMahon (applicant team) - stated that Director Lewis accurately described the application and thanked her for her review.

Chair Capuano closed public testimony.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Vice Chair Aboff, the Board voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the Major Amendment to the Assembly Square Planned Unit Development-Preliminary Master Plan (as amended) to incorporate the Block 7A Guidelines and strike Block 7 from Condition 39.2.

RESULT:

APPROVED

PUBLIC HEARING: 350 Assembly Row (P&Z 21-137)

(continued from 5 May 2022)

The applicant team gave a brief overview of the project, as well as reviewed the general site context, parking, uses, building, and site design. They described the PUD amendment and design guidelines that the Board just voted on and how they apply to the building. The team provided information on the accessibility questions asked at the previous meeting such as appropriately placed planters, fully flush streets, and material changes to provide signals and support accessibility throughout the site. They noted how they worked with the PSUF and Mobility divisions to design where different colored pavers will be used in different areas to indicate pedestrian zones, crossing zones, and transition zones. They shared renderings of the proposed public realm to demonstrate how the materials chosen will support accessibility.

Chair Capuano re-opened public testimony due to receiving new information. No one indicated they wished to speak. Chair Capuano closed public testimony.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Vice Chair Aboff, the Board voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the Site Plan Approval formerly known as SPSRA, with conditions, subject to the Assembly Square Planned Unit Development-Preliminary Master Plan (as amended).

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Vice Chair Aboff, the Board voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the waiver for the minimum parking stall width, with conditions.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Vice Chair Aboff, the Board voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the waiver for minimum parking requirements, with conditions.

RESULT:

APPROVED WITH CONDITIONS

PUBLIC HEARING: 518-524 Somerville Ave (P&Z 21-063)

The applicant team presented the site plan and explained that the marijuana retail market has changed, with significantly more retailers in Massachusetts recently (over 200 open, with another 100 likely to be open in the next year). He stated that because of this, clientele is typically local. The team reviewed the anticipated timing for visits and purchases, the customer flow plan, and how customer IDs will be reviewed. They went over the security

plans, including cameras and alarms throughout the facility, how product will be secured within a vault, the loading area plan, and waste disposal procedures for both regular waste and marijuana waste. The applicant team then presented the façade elevation and pointed out where a second door and window display will be added. They noted that they are aware that the updates to the façade will require minor site plan approval, which they are ready to pursue.

The Board, Staff, and applicant team discussed the plans for the loading zone and the close proximity of a school that may or may not be permanently closed. Staff stated that they will investigate the school situation further and report back to the Board.

Chair Capuano opened public testimony. No one indicated that they wished to speak. Chair Capuano closed public testimony.

The Board and applicant team discussed neighborhood meetings and the confusing nature of their community outreach plan, the applicant's hiring and training plan, and how there is a need for the applicant to update their Transportation Access Plan to include information regarding the loading zone to ensure that the delivery vehicles do not double park and block the bike lane in front of the building. The Board requested that the applicant update the TAP prior to the 2 June 2022 meeting.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Vice Chair Aboff, the Board voted unanimously (5-0) to continue the case to the 2 June 2022 meeting.

RESULT:

CONTINUED

OTHER BUSINESS: Updated Submission Requirements

Staff noted that the updated draft Submittal Requirements have been provided to the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals for their review. They are not asking the Board to adopt the document at this meeting, but are just providing an overview.

Staff presented the updated Submittal Requirements, reviewed the state and local regulations on the requirements, how the current requirements are organized and used, and the fact that the submittal requirements were written over two years ago and needed significant updates based on feedback from applicants about difficulty navigating the application process.

Staff continued by stating that the Planning Staff has specific goals in updating the Submittal Requirements and provided an overview of the updated Submittal Requirements manual, including a summary of each chapter and how they apply to development applications and the review process. Staff reviewed the intended benefits to applicants, including clearly navigable processes for different applications and definitions of required documents.

Staff requested review and feedback from the Planning Board at the next meeting or via email and stated that when the Board is comfortable with the draft, they can vote to approve the manual. Once both the Planning Board and the Zoning Board of Appeals vote to adopt the new Submittal Requirements, they will go into effect for any project that does not already have a completed application submitted to the city.

The Board and Staff discussed how it may be useful to include a list of situations for which applicants don't need to go through the board review process and the intended audience for the document. Staff noted that it encompasses everyone, developers and homeowners, and that for this reason they tried to break down the information and the manual into an easily navigable document, organized with the intent of being able to be reviewed in its respective sections.

They also discussed how Staff has met with certain individuals in the community early in the process to determine what was working and what was not. Staff noted that although they have not submitted the draft for public review, they expect to continue to receive feedback as the manual is implemented, and it can continue to be revised as determined necessary. They spoke about the timing of further edits depending on the type of issue; smaller clarifications could be done fairly quickly with the Board's approval.

Staff encouraged the Board to email any specific edits they have, and to bring any big picture questions and discussion items to the next meeting.

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.