



City of Somerville  
**PLANNING BOARD**  
City Hall 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville MA 02143

**2 JUNE 2022 MEETING MINUTES**

This meeting was conducted via remote participation on GoToWebinar.

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

City staff present: Raisa Saniat (Planning, Preservation & Zoning), Emily Hutchings (Planning, Preservation & Zoning), Charlotte Leis (Planning, Preservation, & Zoning)

The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm and adjourned at 8:38pm.

**GENERAL BUSINESS: Meeting Minutes**

Following a motion by Acting-Chair Aboff, seconded by Clerk Geno, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to approve the 21 April 2022 meeting minutes.

**PUBLIC HEARING: 518-524 Somerville Avenue (P&Z 22-084)**

*(continued from 19 May 2022)*

The applicant team briefly spoke to the outstanding items they still must work with city departments on such as parking and minor façade changes. The team also touched on the school nearby that was raising some concerns.

The Board and applicant team discussed the loading zone and how working with the Mobility Division is the best path forward to determine if they can incorporate a ride-share/taxi zone in the same area so that they are not blocking any bicycle lanes.

The Board requested that Staff confirm that the building that housed the school within 300' is no longer in operation. Staff testified that the Inspectional Services Division (ISD) has designated the use as "abandoned".

Following a motion by Acting-Chair Aboff, seconded by Clerk Geno, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to approve the Special Permit to establish a Cannabis Retail Sales use in the Mid-Rise 4 District.

**RESULT:**

**APPROVED**

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

*(continued from 19 May 2022)*

The applicant team presented an overview of the company and its values, national and local community engagement efforts, their commitment to hiring local personnel, the plan to prioritize medical-use over adult-use, site plan with a queuing option if necessary, and the safety and security plan including technology and training aspects.

The Board and applicant team discussed their adult-use licensing status with the state, and the requirement of obtaining this Special Permit before submitting their application to the Licensing Commission.

Acting-Chair Aboff opened public testimony.

David Gibbs (9 Lindon Place) – is the Executive Director of the Community Action Agency of Somerville and he spoke in support of the application. Mr. Gibbs stated that the applicant team are great partners, have provided a space for collaboration, and have already made donations to help the Somerville community. He noted that the team means what they say and are true to their values.

Tomas Gonzalez (286 Broadway) – is one of the owners and operators of SEED and he spoke in support of the application. Mr. Gonzalez stated that the Liberty team has already been great partners, especially in regard to their Social Equity & Economic Empowerment work, and are a community-oriented organization.

Jessica Eshleman (366 Somerville Ave) – is the Executive Director of Union Square Main Streets and she spoke in support of the application. Ms. Eshleman noted that her relationship with Liberty has been great since 2018. She stated that the applicant team is committed to their values, especially their community engagement and sponsorships/donations.

Stephen Mackey (22 Hudson St) – is the President and CEO of the Somerville Chamber of Commerce and he spoke in support of the application. Mr. Mackey stated that they are a world class partner, they engage with people on the street, and their social-responsibility, employer-responsibility, and neighborhood-responsibility has been demonstrated time and again.

Gabriel Camacho (243 Boylston St, Watertown) – is the Political Director for United Food & Commercial Workers Local 1445 and he spoke in support of the application. Mr. Camacho stated that Liberty is a good partner to the Union due to their racial, economic, and social justice efforts.

Acting-Chair Aboff closed public testimony, but left written testimony open until noon on 10 June 2022.

The Board and applicant team discussed medical-use vs adult-use deliveries and storage.

The Board inquired about the educational facility within 500' proximity to this location mentioned in the Staff Memo. Staff explained that since the applicant team is expanding from medical-use only to medical and adult-use, they included specific language regarding the school in the Staff Memo. However, it is not certain that this finding is necessary to be made. Staff does not have concerns about the proximity of the school, as this applicant has been operating at this location for a couple of years now without any issues that Staff is aware of. They will still be strictly governed by the Cannabis Control Commission.

The Board commented on the applicant team's commitment to the community, both financially and through engagement efforts; it is clear through the public testimony support.

The Board and applicant team also touched upon how deliveries are currently being handled for the existing operation and the plan for the increase in volume.

Following a motion by Acting-Chair Aboff, seconded by Clerk Geno, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to continue the case to 16 June 2022.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>CONTINUED</b>
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**PUBLIC HEARING: 28-44 Broadway (P&Z 21-029)**

The applicant team presented a summary of the process they have been through so far, site context, the updates made to the proposal as a result of the comments made by the Board at a previous meeting and the additional required neighborhood meeting, updated materiality pallet, landscape plan, and the city approved traffic studies.

Acting-Chair Aboff opened public testimony.

Lindsey Allen (149 Broadway) – is the Executive Director of East Somerville Main Streets and she spoke in support of the application. Ms. Allen stated that she has worked closely with the applicant team and this project incorporates two underutilized pieces of street frontage on Broadway and will advance the economic development of the area, along with the additional housing that it will bring to the city.

Ello LoRusso (7 & 11 George St) – is a direct abutter and spoke against this proposal. Mr. LoRusso stated that this proposal is still in litigation and asked the Board to not vote this evening. He feels that this development is too large for the neighborhood, there is too much traffic as it is and this will cause even more, and this building should be half the size. Mr. LoRusso stated that parking is a concern in the neighborhood, and this is going to cause an even bigger problem.

Martin Scott (17 Mt Vernon St) – spoke against the application. Mr. Scott is concerned with the traffic in the neighborhood; and especially how much more traffic will be added by another 30-60 units. He stated that the existing traffic situation was designed up to 100 years ago and this new development will likely result in dangerous conditions especially in the snowy season.

Tina Giordano (15 George St) – spoke against the application. Ms. Giordano noted that this area already has an excessive traffic problem, especially on the residential one-way streets. She stated that this will negatively impact the residents in the neighborhood, due to the increased residential units and retail parking spaces. She also noted that the size of the building has basically tripled and will negatively affect the abutting neighbor's views.

Acting-Chair Aboff closed public testimony, but left written testimony open until noon on 10 June 2022.

The Board and applicant team discussed the proposed parking especially due to the proximity to public transportation, as well as the anticipated traffic impact on the neighborhood. Staff stated that no other traffic mitigation has been recommended by the Mobility Division. However, if the Board would like to include this as a condition of the proposal, the applicant team should first coordinate with Mobility and then return to the Board. The applicant team stated that they are working with the Mobility Division to improve this section of Broadway to make it more pedestrian-oriented, by adding two more crosswalks and improving the bike lanes; the plans can be found on their Broadway Brakes proposal which is across the street from this development. They also stated that a zero-parking building will be much less marketable and that no city street parking passes will be issued to residents of this building. The Board would like the amount of parking spaces reduced as much as possible and the amount of single car trips discouraged, as well as restrict George Street to residents only to mitigate traffic concerns. Staff stated that restricting a street to residents only is the purview of the Traffic Commission and there is no guarantee that the Traffic Commission will agree with this.

The Board suggested that the applicant team work with the Mobility Division, as well as the case planner, to brainstorm and work through any other traffic mitigation strategies that the neighborhood has been very concerned with and vocal about.

The Board also suggested that there should be 3 or less materials in the façade; reducing the number of materials will make it more contextual and appropriate for the neighborhood.

Following a motion by Acting-Chair Aboff, seconded by Clerk Geno, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to continue the case to 16 June 2022.

### **Other Business: Updated Submission Requirements**

Staff asked the Board for any further feedback on the document that they have not yet provided and stated that the goal is to be ready for adoption in July. The Board and Staff discussed the possibility of providing a demonstration video to assist with understanding the manual, ways to make it more user-friendly, and that this will be a living document that will be updated as needed.

### **Other Business: 299 Broadway Staff Update**

The Board asked Staff for an update on the 299 Broadway project, considering that the applicant team should have been before the Board twice by now based on the recommendation that the Board provided to the City Council in November to up-zone this property. The Board noted that there were intermediate steps laid out that the applicant team should be taking due to this being a complicated project and they have not been before the Board at all and therefore no votes have been taken yet.

Staff stated that the city has been working with the applicant team to determine the best path forward and that they will be able to provide a better update at the next meeting. Staff also noted that the team is considering some changes to their application and alternative processes to best reach their goals.

The Board stated that the zoning recommendation to the City Council was given with the understanding that the Board would have the opportunity to go through the process of several discretionary permits so that they could ensure that the project aligns with the Winter Hill Urban Renewal Plan.

### **Other Business: Ward Councilor Representation**

The Board raised concerns regarding the lack of Ward Councilors' involvement in the development review process and inquired about what the process would be to amend the zoning ordinance to reflect that when a Ward Councilor is not representative of their neighborhood, an At-Large Councilor may step in.

Staff responded that they would investigate the process and follow-up at the next meeting.