



City of Somerville

URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

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

MAY 10, 2022 MEETING MINUTES

This meeting was conducted via remote participation on GoToWebinar.

NAME	TITLE	STATUS
Sarah Lewis	Co-Chair	<i>Absent</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 – 6:10 PM</i>
Tim Houde	Member	<i>Present</i>
Cheri Ruane	Member	<i>Absent</i>

City staff present: Andrew Graminski (Planning, Preservation, & Zoning)

The meeting was called to order at 6:03pm and adjourned at 8:10pm.

GENERAL BUSINESS: Meeting Minutes

Following a motion by Member Arbaugh, seconded by Member Houde, the Commission voted unanimously (3-0) to approve the 22 March 2022 meeting minutes.

PUBLIC MEETING: 483 Broadway (P&Z 22-006)

Member Talun arrived at 6:10pm

The applicant team presented their proposal to redevelop an existing commercial building that is located in the City of Medford and will be expanded into the City of Somerville, including a site plan, three façade options, floor plans, and the mechanical penthouse design and sound threshold.

The Commission and applicant team discussed the front setbacks, the trash/recycling plan, the intent for the signage, how a streetscape plan would be helpful including a plan on installing street trees and consideration of different plant species on the side of the building, and how it is currently reading as a single tenant building. They continued the discussion with which elements of the current building are going to remain, the concern of matching new brick with the existing brick, how there should be a solid separation to distinguish between the two commercial spaces, how the top of the building feels heavy and articulation at the cornice could help, and how the awning should extend to the edges of the building.

The Commission agreed that façade option 2 is the preferred option in terms of color and style, however they encouraged the applicant team to look at ways to make the façade more symmetrical with the doors, windows, and overall fenestration. They also urged the applicant team to reconsider the signage and overall separation of the two commercial spaces.

Following a motion by Member Fennick, seconded by Member Arbaugh, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to recommend façade option 2 with further development.

Design guidance for further development of façade option 2:

- Confirm sidewalk dimensions
- Streetscape proposal
- More clarification between the two tenant spaces
- Review the possibility of a better signage plan
- Study the cornice and the parapet further
- Revisit the symmetry of the façade, including the architectural and window elements
- Use similar buildings in the area as architectural references to create more of a commercial building
- Confirm the loading/unloading plan

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

RESULT:

CONTINUED

Member Arbaugh recused himself.

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

(continued from 26 April 2022)

The applicant team presented updates to the thoroughfare design, including how considerations from shadow studies were incorporated into the design, the circulation of traffic throughout the area including parking and loading access, potential designated ride-share zones, updated materiality options to create a continuous pedestrian experience, lighting plan, and the location of bicycle parking.

The Commission and applicant team discussed the traffic circulation and if the shared street condition should continue along to Ward Street, the possibility of exploring a strategy to enlarge the spaces in front of the buildings and the location of the fixed bench seating, how the straightening of South Street will affect the area, signage to designate loading and ride-share zones, the possibility of not designating specific ride-share zones, and the current shuttle bus access. They also discussed the paving materiality options, how to make the area between the two civic spaces even more pedestrian focused, and the opportunity to incorporate more warmth and earth tones into the thoroughfare to help make the space more unique.

Following a motion by Member Talun, seconded by Member Fennick, the Commission voted unanimously (3-0) to recommend that the street design meets the NACTO design guidelines for a commercial shared street.

Following a motion by Member Fennick, seconded by Member Houde, the Commission voted unanimously (3-0) to recommend that additional design guidance be incorporated into the design.

Additional design guidance:

- Additional study on the end conditions of the shared street, especially continuing the shared condition to Ward Street, to discourage cars from coming onto the shared street
- Placement of furniture could be further developed in relation to the location of the building entrances
- Explore how ride-shares will work on the street
- Paving patterns should have a hierarchy to emphasize spaces where pedestrians would naturally gather
- Paving pattern should incorporate additional color and warmth that relate to building materials in the neighborhood

RESULT:

RECOMMENDED

PUBLIC MEETING: 99 South Street/BY Building 3 (P&Z 22-007)

(continued from 26 April 2022)

The applicant team presented long views of the building such as from Prospect Hill and Union Square, further studies of the “zipper” design on the building, north elevation storefront entrance options, and the updated landscape plan along the thoroughfare.

The Commission and applicant team discussed the preferred 3-step zipper design with the framing, the possibility of adding a design element to the North side of the building such as a step back above the zipper design to provide an outdoor space but because of the zoning ordinance the team decided against it, and how the preferred storefront design option b and its canopy is a good scale for the public realm. They also further discussed the 3-step versus 5-step zipper design and how the applicant team should work with the city on the possibility of creating a balcony above the zipper design on the North side of the building.

Following a motion by Member Fennick, seconded by Member Talun, the Commission voted unanimously (3-0) to recommend the 3-step zipper design.

Following a motion by Member Fennick, seconded by Member Houde, the Commission voted unanimously (3-0) to recommend option b for the North elevation base entrance.

Following a motion by Member Fennick, seconded by Member Houde, the Commission voted unanimously (3-0) to recommend that the design guidelines for the HR district have been met.

Following a motion by Member Fennick, seconded by Member Houde, the Commission voted unanimously (3-0) to recommend that additional design guidance be incorporated into the design.

Additional design guidance:

- Additional exploration to accommodate a mirrored condition at the zipper between the South and North façade with the windows and frame

RESULT:

RECOMMENDED

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.