



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

18 AUGUST 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>Absent</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), Sarah White (Planning, Preservation & Zoning)

The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm and adjourned at 8:20pm.

Member Howitt Easton stated for the record that she listened to the recordings and filled out an affidavit for the 4 August 2022 and 16 June 2022 meetings.

Member Jabib stated for the record that he listened to the recording but did not fill out an affidavit for the 5 May 2022 meeting. Chair Capuano confirmed that since the meeting minutes were the only outstanding matter from the 5 May 2022 meeting, Member Habib will be able to vote if he feels that the minutes accurately reflect what he heard in the recording, even though he did not fill out an affidavit.

GENERAL BUSINESS: Meeting Minutes

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Member Howitt Easton, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to approve the 5 May 2022 meeting minutes.

RESULT:

APPROVED

PUBLIC HEARING: 59 Bow Street (P&Z 21-017)

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Member Habib, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to approve the applicant's request to continue the case to 8 September 2022.

RESULT:

CONTINUED

PUBLIC HEARING: 50 Webster Avenue - Building (P&Z 21-060)

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Clerk Geno, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to approve the applicant's request to continue the case to 8 September 2022.

RESULT:

CONTINUED

PUBLIC HEARING: 50 Webster Avenue - Thoroughfare (P&Z 22-073)

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Member Howitt Easton, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to approve the applicant's request to continue the case to 8 September 2022.

RESULT:	CONTINUED
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PUBLIC HEARING: 50 Webster Avenue/62 Prospect Street - Civic Space (P&Z 21-166)

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Member Habib, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to approve the applicant's request to continue the case to 8 September 2022.

RESULT:	CONTINUED
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PUBLIC HEARING: 16 & 20 Medford Street (P&Z 21-057)

The applicant team gave a brief presentation to address the Board's concerns, including an updated rear façade design and the infeasibility of burying the public utility lines.

The Board was pleased with how the applicant team addressed their concerns and addressed the community's comments regarding the traffic on Warren Street.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Clerk Geno, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to approve the Site Plan Approval to develop a four (4)-story LEED Platinum general building in the Mid-Rise 4 zoning district.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Member Habib, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to approve the Special Permit for a Household Living principal use for 41 dwelling units.

RESULT:	APPROVED WITH CONDITIONS
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PUBLIC HEARING: 231-249 Elm Street and 6-8 & 12 Grove Street (P&Z 21-068)

(continued from 4 August 2022)

The applicant team presented a review of the proposal including a development summary. Chair Capuano agreed that an in-depth presentation was not necessary, as the team gave a detailed presentation at the last meeting. It was noted that a development covenant has not been signed between the applicant team and the city yet, therefore per the practice of the Planning Board there will not be a vote this evening.

The Board, applicant team, and Staff discussed the type of lab being proposed at this location, the city's bio-safety ordinance and committee that will have the final say in the type of lab that will be permitted, how the building will be outfitted with an HVAC system that can handle up to a BSL-3 lab, and how the type of lab use is regulated at the city, state, and federal levels. They continued the discussion with identifying that it would be the responsibility of the tenant to seek approval from the bio-safety committee when the time comes and the Board requesting that Staff gather information regarding precedent of approval of a similar lab building in any major square in the city. Staff confirmed that they will provide that information at the next meeting.

The Board and applicant team discussed how the retail space design (shared bathrooms, shared loading zone, etc.) offers an affordable and approachable option for a range of small businesses to become part of Davis Square, the pedestrian and bicycle activation on Grove Street, the safety warning system planned for the parking garage entrance, and the team's strategies for the existing long-term small businesses that have been in this block for several years. The applicant team noted that there were three types of private discussions that they had with the business owners; the ones that would not like to return after construction is complete for one reason or another, the ones that they are working with on a construction timeline so that their businesses can return, and the ones that they may not have space for and are trying to help find an alternative location for. The Board requested that Staff assist them on reviewing how the Board has handled the displacement of other commercial tenants that would like to stay in their current location in the past.

The Board and applicant team also discussed the roof top terrace access, the public accessibility of the parking garage, and the potential cost of parking.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Member Howitt Easton, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to continue the case to 8 September 2022.

RESULT:

CONTINUED

The Board went into recess at 7:18pm and reconvened at 7:23pm.

PUBLIC HEARING: 325-375 Assembly Row (P&Z 20-014)

The applicant team presented their proposal to improve the linear park area in between *Café Nero* and *The Smoke Shop* including a fire feature, additional trees, and increased seating options.

The Board commended the applicant team for recognizing that their original idea for the space isn't working as intended and for trying to make this public space better for everyone.

The Board and applicant team discussed the safety of the fire feature and the ADA accessibility of the space.

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

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Member Habib, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to approve the revision to a previously issued Special Permit with Site Plan Approval (PB2016-14) in the Assembly Square Mixed-Use District, to change the permitted design of ASQ Linear Park.

RESULT:

APPROVED

PUBLIC HEARING: 394 McGrath Highway (P&Z 21-122)

The applicant team presented an overview of the proposal, vehicle and bicycle parking, landscape plan, floor plans, amenity spaces, materiality of the building, and renderings. They spoke about how they situated the building on the lot and positioned the windows so that they do not interfere with the abutters.

Chair Capuano opened public testimony.

Matthew Murgida (36 Church St) – has a passion for the historic value and beauty of the architecture in Somerville. Mr. Murgida stated that while this building does have esthetic merit, he is concerned that it doesn't fit within the historic context of Prospect Hill and Union Square.

Jeffrey Rhodin (32 Lincoln St, Lexington) - is the Passive House Consultant and part of the applicant team. These units will be built to minimize air exchanges between the units themselves and therefore provide a state-of-the-art health standard that new developments will be held to.

Chair Capuano closed public testimony; written testimony will be left open until noon on 2 September 2022.

The Board and applicant team discussed the warning system for the parking garage, the proposed changes to McGrath Highway and how those changes may impact the site or proposal in the future, NetZero versus NetZero-ready, the proposed number and size of the units including the affordable units, the parking plan, and the materiality of the building. The Board requested that the applicant team show alternative renderings with more traditional materials that may fit within the context of the neighborhood a little better at the next meeting, as well as actual photos of those materials.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Clerk Geno, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to continue the case to 8 September 2022.

RESULT:	CONTINUED
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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.