



City of Somerville

# URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

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

## DECEMBER 13, 2022 MEETING MINUTES

This meeting was conducted via remote participation on GoToWebinar.

NAME	TITLE	STATUS
Sarah Lewis	Co-Chair	<i>Present – Late at 6:09pm</i>
Cortney Kirk	Co-Chair	<i>Present</i>
Frank Valdes	Member	<i>Present</i>
Deborah Fennick	Member	<i>Present</i>
Andrew Arbaugh	Member	<i>Present</i>
Tim Talun	Member	<i>Present</i>
Tim Houde	Member	<i>Absent</i>
Cheri Ruane	Member	<i>Present – Left at 6:35pm</i>

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

The meeting was called to order at 6:02pm and adjourned at 7:37pm.

### GENERAL BUSINESS: Meeting Minutes

Following a motion by Member Ruane, seconded by Member Arbaugh, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the 13 September 2022 meeting minutes.

### OTHER BUSINESS: REVIEW OF UDC DRAFT RULES OF POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The Commission started by commending the organization of the document, stating that it is an overall improvement of what is currently in place. The Commission went through the document section by section.

#### Section 1:

The Commission and Staff discussed why changes were made to the responsibilities section, the difference between neighborhood plan guidelines and guidelines in zoning, and if the UDC would like to provide feedback on zoning amendments then Staff could work with the Commission to draft a letter on their behalf and provide it to the Planning Board or City Council. Staff confirmed that they would review the other Board and Commission's Rules of Policy and Procedure (RPP) draft documents for consistency regarding incorporating that process.

#### Section 2:

The Commission and Staff discussed term limits, the lack of compensation for UDC members, why Staff serve as Co-Chairs, new member orientation, the process to appoint subcommittees, the establishment of meeting agendas, and how the liaison supports the commission. The Commission requested that they review the written recommendations that Staff draft prior to being provided to the applicants because they are providing design guidance rather than voting yes or no on a project which could be misconstrued. Staff stated that considering Robert's Rules of Order, the wording of the motions and design guidance during the meetings needs to be very clear so that they can be translated into the written recommendations.

#### Section 3:

The Commission and Staff discussed if the language of the standards of conduct could be softened to include “make best efforts” rather than “shall”, the requirement of a three-week notice if a member cannot attend a meeting, and how members should inform Co-Chairs and Staff if they are unable to attend a meeting.

#### Section 4:

The Commission and Staff discussed how the document should read that Staff publishes the annual schedule “on behalf” of the Commission, the special meeting section and how that works procedurally, that the Commission liaison will assist with finding a meeting space for subcommittee meetings, the 20-minute time limit on applicant presentations, and the two-meeting limit on design review. The Commission shared concerns that if they are held to a maximum of two meetings to push projects forward, they may need to make modifications to the motions and how design guidelines are handled; they would also like the applicable design guidelines specifically stated at the beginning of design reviews. Staff stated that the UDC should not need to see their design guidance applied to projects, as Staff can ensure that their feedback has been incorporated before the applicant teams present to the Planning Board.

The Commission and Staff also discussed that there have been many zoning changes and educational sessions to understand the zoning better would be beneficial, how the Commission would like to see Master Plans included in their purview, that they are unsure of the Mobility Division’s goals and if they should be reviewing thoroughfares at all, the possibility of referencing complete-streets guidelines instead of NACTO, voting procedures during a meeting, how the submission requirements will be a separate document, and how neighborhood plans should be a separate section.

*NOTICE: These minutes constitute a summary of the votes and key discussions at this meeting. A recording of these proceedings can be accessed at any time by using the registration link at the top of the meeting agenda.*