EVERSOURCE

247 Station Drive
Westwood, MA 02090

May 17, 2023
Somerville Planning Board
City Hall 3rd Floor, 93 Highland Avenue
Somerville, MA 02143
Sent via email
Re: Case Number P&Z 21-181

Dear Chair Capuano, Vice-chair Aboff, and honorable members of the Planning Board,

In response to comments raised during the May 4, 2023, Planning Board hearing, Eversource wishes to provide you with the following update.

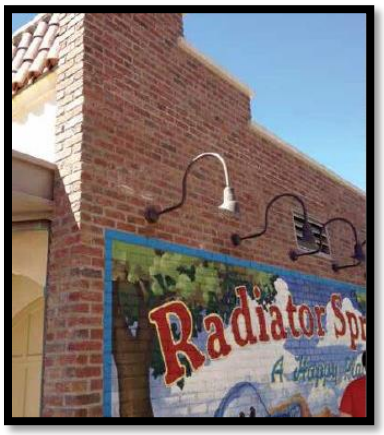
1. **Request that landscaping plan includes only native species**
   As suggested by the Board and staff, Eversource has revised its landscaping plan to include all native species. Please refer to the revised Landscape and Tree Plan last dated 5/15/2023. As noted in the staff recommendation, Eversource will work with the Urban Forestry Staff as necessary to determine final species selection that are both appropriate for the substation's operational and security needs and agreeable to the City.

2. **Request that dimensional bricks, rather than veneer bricks, be used on the proposed screening wall's projecting pilasters**
   Planning staff, per their 04/26/2023 memo, recommended that the "screening around the new proposed transformer incorporate architectural brick materiality on the projecting pilasters", while the Planning Board, at its 05/04/2023 public hearing, suggested the use of dimensional brick for the entire enclosure around the new transformer.

   To ensure the design provides for the required accessibility to our equipment for operations and maintenance, the Prospect Street side of the walled enclosure must have removable columns/pilasters and wall sections. By having removable pilasters and wall sections the third transformer and other larger pieces of equipment can be easily repaired or even removed and replaced, which in turn allows for faster service restoration and limits the potential duration of any outages.

The removable wall sections and pilasters will be precast concrete and will be manufactured by the same company responsible for creating the other two (non-removable) sides of the walled enclosure. Eversource's intention would be to apply a brick paneling system to both the wall sections and pilasters on the Prospect side of the walled enclosure. Door openings, space for art installations, and other details can be incorporated into the design.

Thin brick column installation (ref: McNear[1])



Thin brick with mural (ref: McNear)

This type of paneling system has been successfully used at Eversource's Colburn Street substation in Boston, where it matches the facades of the surrounding buildings. The Colburn Street wall paneling is approximately 15 years old.

Brick-faced panels at Eversource Station 350, Colburn St., Boston, MA

[1] www.mcnear.com

On the remaining two sides of the enclosure a stonemason could construct a wall in front of the precast concrete panels and around the pilasters using real brick and incorporating design details, such as faux windows. The brick selected would be the closest possible match to the brick paneling on the Prospect Street side of the enclosure. Since most viewpoints along Prospect Street make it impossible to view the other two sides of the walled enclosure, a discernable difference in brick color is highly unlikely. If it's the preference of the Board and staff that for consistency reasons the brick paneling system be used on all three sides of the walled enclosure, then Eversource would be agreeable to that request.

One further option Eversource explored was the possibility of the manufacturer of the walled enclosure using a mold to create the texture and impression of brick and mortar lines in the concrete panels. However, this was ultimately dismissed as the manufacturer cannot color/stain the concrete to replicate brick and mortar, and this in turn would require regular hand painting of the panels to replicate brick and mortar. The authenticity and durability of the brick appearance using this untested approach was also questionable.

An additional item that we wanted to bring to your attention is the height of the walls surrounding the new transformer and the height of the fence proposed around the existing equipment. The April 26th OSPCD staff report to the Board references the walls as being thirty-four (34) feet in height, and the height of the fence around the existing equipment as being thirty-eight (38) feet. While these overall heights are technically correct, we wanted to clarify that they do not reflect the height from finished grade, which would be twenty-four (24) feet and twenty-eight (28) feet, respectively.

We look forward to continuing collaboration with the neighborhood and City at large.

Respectfully submitted,

Eamon McGilligan

Eamon McGilligan
Team Lead, Eversource Siting