



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

**MARCH 16, 2023 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>Present</i>	
Erin Geno	Clerk	<i>Present</i>	
Jahan Habib	Member	<i>Present</i>	
Michael McNeley	Member	<i>Absent</i>	
Debbie Howitt Easton	Alternate	<i>Present</i>	
Luc Schuster	Alternate	<i>Present</i>	

City staff present: Emily Hutchings (Planning, Preservation, & Zoning Division), Cortney Kirk (Public Space & Urban Forestry Division), Andrew Graminski (Planning, Preservation, & Zoning Division)

The meeting was called to order at 6:02pm and adjourned at 7:46pm.

**GENERAL BUSINESS: Meeting Minutes**

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Vice Chair Aboff, the Board voted unanimously (6-0) to approve the 15 December 2022 meeting minutes.

**PUBLIC HEARING: 620 Broadway (P&Z 21-145)**

The applicant team submitted a written request to continue the hearing to the 6 April 2023 Planning Board meeting.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Vice Chair Aboff, the Board voted unanimously (6-0) to approve the applicant's request to continue the case to 6 April 2023.

**RESULT:**

**CONTINUED**

Vice Chair Aboff recused herself.

**PUBLIC HEARING: 200 McGrath Hwy (P&Z 22-097)**

*(continued from March 2, 2023)*

The applicant team appeared at the meeting and requested a continuance to the 6 April 2023 Planning Board meeting to allow for more time for community engagement.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Clerk Geno, the Board voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the applicant's request to continue the case to 6 April 2023.

**RESULT:**

**CONTINUED**

Vice Chair Aboff rejoined the meeting.

**PUBLIC HEARING: 256-260 Elm St (P&Z 21-039)**

*(continued from March 2, 2023)*

The applicant team presented new information including project phasing, program allocation, operator and property management experience, the transportation access plan, landscaping details, additional architectural cornice studies, and retail signage.

After the civic space presentation, Chair Capuano opened public testimony. No one indicated that they wished to speak. Chair Capuano closed public testimony.

The Board and Staff reviewed the Bio-Safety Committee's process in reviewing an application such as this one. The Board also noted that the new materials presented are not online and asked that they are made available for members of the public; Staff confirmed that the documents have been uploaded prior to this meeting.

The Board and applicant team discussed the safety, storage, pH neutralization system, and loading of the lab building; the team has committed to only allow BSL1 or BSL2 labs. They also touched upon the path for elevated BSL levels in the future, and how that was not included in the development covenant, but the applicant team was willing to modify the covenant to incorporate that language. The Board and applicant team discussed if tenants will be able to work with the property manager on the fit-out of the space and hood placement, the address for deliveries, and how the Planning Board typically conditions these types of projects. They also discussed how the affordable retail spaces are outlined in the covenant, if the trees will impede the loading activities and the turning radius for delivery trucks, and the plan for the power lines on Herbert Street.

Chair Capuano left written testimony open until noon on 31 March 2023.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Vice Chair Aboff, the Board voted unanimously (6-0) to continue the case to 6 April 2023.

**RESULT:**

**CONTINUED**

**PUBLIC HEARING: 270 Elm St (P&Z 21-042)**

*(continued from March 2, 2023)*

This proposal was discussed concurrently with the item above.

The applicant team presented further details regarding the proposed through block plaza, including the planting plan, how using different materiality throughout will drive the open space design, vertical plantings, artwork, the removal of the proposed canopy over the civic space, the accessibility of various plaza programs, and the proposed maintenance plan. They also spoke about the sections of the civic space that will be dedicated to tenants.

Chair Capuano opened public testimony.

James Williamson (30 Churchill Ave, Cambridge) – stated that the applicant has spoken about having private control of the space but noted that something that is privately owned does not sound like a civic space. Mr.

Williamson would like to better understand who will be controlling the space, who will be setting the guidelines, and what those anticipated guidelines are. Once those guidelines are presented, he noted that folks may have an opinion on if those are the best guidelines for the space.

Chair Capuano closed public testimony.

Chair Capuano asked either the applicant team or Staff to respond to the public comment. Staff explained how privately-owned civic spaces work in the city, noting that this will remain a civic space in perpetuity, but will be owned by the developer. The space will need to meet the standards of a civic space and the goals laid out by the city. Public Space & Urban Forestry Staff provided information on maintenance plans and enforcement for privately developed civic spaces.

The Board, applicant team, and Staff discussed how the ongoing maintenance of the permeable pavers be included in the maintenance plan to ensure that the accessibility of the space will not be compromised, how the ADA easement will affect the retailers and vendor's access to the space, the programming and how the permitting and management of the space will work, and the construction management and logistics. The Board requested that the applicant team keep the direct neighbors in mind when construction is going on.

Member Schuster noted that he watched the video of the previous meeting and signed the affidavit stating that he did so.

The Board and applicant team then discussed the accessible route through the civic space and noted that the path should be clear at all times; the applicant team noted that this will go into the maintenance agreement. They also spoke about outdoor seating, the proposed vertical and native plantings, public art, and how the existing street trees on Elm Street will remain and be protected during construction. Chair Capuano urged the Board to consider adding a condition to protect the existing street trees.

Chair Capuano left written testimony open until noon on 31 March 2023.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Vice Chair Aboff, the Board voted unanimously (6-0) to continue the case to 6 April 2023.

<b>RESULT:</b>
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<b>CONTINUED</b>
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*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.*