



City of Somerville
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS
City Hall 3rd Floor, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville MA 02143

APRIL 19, 2023 MEETING MINUTES

This meeting was conducted via remote participation on GoToWebinar.

NAME	TITLE	STATUS	ARRIVED
Susan Fontano	Chair	<i>Present</i>	
Anne Brockelman	Vice-Chair	<i>Present</i>	
Katherine Garavaglia	Clerk	<i>Present</i>	
Ann Fullerton	Member	<i>Present</i>	
Zachary Zaremba	Member	<i>Present</i>	
Brian Cook	Alt. Member	<i>Present</i>	
Sisia Daglian	Alt. Member	<i>Absent</i>	

City staff present: Sarah Lewis (Director of Planning, Preservation, & Zoning), Andrew Graminski (Planning, Preservation, & Zoning)

The meeting was called to order at 6:07pm and adjourned at 6:45 pm.

GENERAL BUSINESS: Meeting Minutes

Following a motion by Clerk Garavaglia, seconded by Vice Chair Brockelman, the Board voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the 18 January 2023 and 1 February 2023 meeting minutes.

PUBLIC HEARING: 1 McGrath Highway (P&Z 23-032)

The applicant team introduced the project, explained that the Cambridge/Somerville municipal line runs through the middle of the property, and provided their argument for needing a Hardship Variance from the minimum façade build out requirement. They also reviewed the shared driveway with the neighboring parcel at 15 McGrath Highway, the proposed connection to the Community Path, and the valet parking plan.

Chair Fontano opened public testimony.

Karl Alexander (49 Myrtle St) – stated that he has been part of the community groups that have had conversations with the developer regarding the Community Path connection. He thanked and applauded the developer and shared his support for the project.

Mike Gerhardt (15 McGrath Hwy) – is the Leggatt McCall Development Manager at the property next door. He voiced his full support for the requested variance and noted that the two teams have had a very collaborative relationship throughout the process. He noted that this variance would allow many good things to happen, such as the shared driveway and the Community Path connection, and it would not be detrimental at all to the neighboring properties.

Lynn Weissman (112 Belmont St) – is the Co-Founder and Co-President of the Friends of the Community Path and she spoke in support for the requested variance. She noted that she has worked closely with the team for the last couple of years on the proposed ramp and connection to the Community Path.

Chair Fontano closed public testimony.

The Board asked about the parking requirements for this parcel. The applicant team explained that they are within the half mile transit area, they will be requesting a Special Permit for parking relief from the Planning Board, and they have a shared parking agreement in place with the adjacent developer so that they can use the lot at 15 McGrath Highway at night.

The Board reviewed the Hardship Variance criteria; special circumstances relating to the odd shape of the lot, the importance of the historic retaining wall at the back of the lot, and how the desirable relief could be granted without causing substantial detriment to the public good.

Following a motion by Clerk Garavaglia, seconded by Vice Chair Brockelman, the Board voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the applicant's request for a Hardship Variance from the minimum façade build out requirement, with the conditions outlined in the Staff Memo.

RESULT:

APPROVED WITH CONDITIONS

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.