



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

APRIL 20, 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>Absent</i>	
Erin Geno	Member	<i>Present</i>	
Jahan Habib	Member	<i>Present</i>	
Michael McNeley	Member	<i>Present</i>	
Debbie Howitt Easton	Alternate	<i>Present</i>	
Luc Schuster	Alternate	<i>Present</i>	

City staff present: Sarah Lewis (Director of Planning, Preservation, & Zoning), Wendy Szechowicz (Planning, Preservation, & Zoning)

The meeting was called to order at 6:01pm and adjourned at 8:12pm.

GENERAL BUSINESS: Meeting Minutes

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Clerk Geno, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to approve the 2 February 2023 meeting minutes.

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

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Member Habib, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to continue the case to 4 May 2023.

Members Howitt Easton and Schuster acknowledged that they missed the previous meeting but have both reviewed the recording and signed affidavits.

RESULT:

CONTINUED

PUBLIC HEARING: 1 McGrath (P&Z 21-028)

The applicant team provided an overview of the project and noted that the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) granted a Hardship Variance for the façade build out requirement. The team reviewed the site history, how the Cambridge/Somerville municipal line runs through the middle of the parcel, the contamination onsite that the team is currently remediating, the two complimentary hotel brands that will operate out of this space, the Arts & Creative Enterprise (ACE) spaces, architectural design and floor plan of the hotel, proposed materiality and how the team is anticipated to return to the Urban Design Commission (UDC) for a final material review, and the shadow studies. The team explained the parking plan which includes several bicycle parking spaces and an agreement with the adjacent property to allow parking at night at 15 McGrath Highway.

The applicant team then presented the site plan, an overview of the utilities and the requirements for each municipality, the landscape plan including a mostly native planting list and a green roof, and noted that there is a historic retaining wall at the rear of the property that will remain. The team explained the vehicular circulation for hotel guest drop-off, the proposed ramp and connection to the Community Path, the shared driveway with the adjacent 15 McGrath Highway property, and the intersection improvements for pedestrians and bicycle crossing underway by MassDOT.

The applicant team ended their presentation by reviewing the community benefits this project will provide and by stating that they have a development covenant signed by both the applicant team and the City of Somerville.

Chair Capuano opened public testimony.

Alan Moore (23 Cherry St) – is the Co-President of the Friends of the Community Path and has been working with this team for about 5 years regarding the ramp and connection to the Community Path, which he noted would be a great public benefit. He stated that he is appreciative that the team is including the ramp and is in support of the project.

Rob Dickey (15 Davis Ave, West Newton) – works for Leggat McCall of the 15 McGrath Highway project and has worked closely with this team on several details of this project and will continue to do so. He stated that he is in support of the project and the many public benefits it will bring.

Lynn Weismann (112 Belmont St) – is the Co-Founder and Co-President of the Friends of the Community Path and shared her support of the project. She commended the team for their thoughtful design and thinking holistically about bike and vehicular connections; she appreciated the city too for the coordination. She would like the applicant team to better describe the height of the wall where the ramp descends, the width of the sidewalk in front of the hotel, the width of the cycle track, and the street trees.

Karl Alexander (49 Myrtle St) – is a member of the Friends of Grand Junction Path and commended the team and expressed his support of the project.

Chair Capuano closed public testimony.

The applicant team addressed the public comments; the wall will be 12' high and the ramp will be 14' wide (the actual detailing and construction will be coordinated with District 4 and District 6 MassDOT and the MBTA), the sidewalk width is proposed to be 18' from the face of the curb to the face of the building on the Somerville portion of the property, and the street trees are proposed to be Pin Oaks but the plan will be finalized when the cycle track is completed.

The Board, applicant team, and Staff discussed the intent of the High-Rise district, the ACE space requirement and possible programming, the remediation plan, construction timeline, the process if Cambridge requires a change to the proposal, the location of the ride-share area, how the off-site cycle track will be raised and separated from the sidewalk to increase pedestrian safety, and how the Board would like more information on the sustainability aspects of the project at the next meeting especially regarding EV charging and renewable energy.

The Board and applicant team discussed the environmental remediation onsite, including the EPA required testing and evacuation of soil. They also discussed the ADA requirements and accessibility throughout the property, how the Board would like to see a side-view elevation of the front of the building and the cycle track at the next meeting, and the parking plan and overflow parking at night.

Chair Capuano left written testimony open until noon on 28 April 2023.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Clerk Geno, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to continue the case to 4 May 2023.

RESULT:	CONTINUED
----------------	------------------

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.