



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

14 JUNE 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>Absent</i>	
Katherine Garavaglia	Clerk	<i>Absent</i>	
Ann Fullerton	Member	<i>Present</i>	
Zachary Zarembo	Member	<i>Present</i>	
Brian Cook	Alt. Member	<i>Present</i>	
Sisia Daglian	Alt. Member	<i>Absent</i>	

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

The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm and adjourned at 6:50pm.

It was noted that Ann Fullerton was the Acting Clerk for this meeting.

GENERAL BUSINESS: Meeting Minutes

Following a motion by Acting Clerk Fullerton, seconded by Member Cook, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to approve the 15 March 2023, 5 April 2023, and 19 April 2023 meeting minutes.

PUBLIC HEARING: 14 Clyde Street (P&Z 23-046)

Acting Clerk Fullerton read and opened the case.

The applicant team explained that this unit is a freestanding condo built in 1870, with less than 1,100 s.f. In 2000, a developer bought the house and placed two units and three garages behind it. This left a 5.5' gap between this house and the other structures. The house is a 3-bedroom but is more similar to a 2.5-bedroom. The proposal is to turn a separate deeded garage into a den/office, freeing up an additional room in the house as a bedroom. A 5.5' new construction connector between the buildings is proposed; this is the minimum relief being requested. The conversion will not change the appearance of this house from the street. In the new connector area, unconditioned storage space is proposed for bicycles, etc.

Chair Fontano opened public testimony.

Meredith Porter (104 Josephine Avenue) – stated that this seems to be a well thought out project that will preserve the existing structure while also enhancing its use. He noted that the Zoning Ordinance requires that notice be posted at project sites, and he would like the Planning Department to point this out to applicants.

The Board and the applicant team discussed the reason for the storage space being unconditioned. The applicant team stated that this choice was based on use only. It also allows for not having to insulate the slab in that area. The applicant team stated that the plans include a door to access the storage room from the proposed family room.

The Board and the applicant team discussed why two hardship variances are required for this project. Staff explained that modification of an existing non-conforming building, the garage in this case, requires a variance.

Connecting the two buildings essentially creates a new non-conforming structure, also requiring a variance. Two motions and two sets of findings are required.

The Board reviewed the Hardship Variance criteria; special circumstances relating to there being two primary structure on the property, that the two structures were never connected, and that access through the garage for useful space must be sought through the house, and how the desirable relief could be granted without causing substantial detriment to the public good.

The applicant team noted that they received three letters of support from nearby and adjacent neighbors. These were submitted too late to the Board to be included in the packet.

Chair Fontano closed public testimony.

Following a motion by Acting Clerk Fullerton, seconded by Member Cook, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to approve the request for a Hardship Variance for 14 Clyde Street (P&Z 23-046) to modify a non-conforming building type in the NR Zoning District, with the conditions included in the staff memo for the subject property dated May 31, 2023.

Following a motion by Acting Clerk Fullerton, seconded by Member Cook, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to approve the request for a Hardship Variance for 14 Clyde Street (P&Z 23-046) to create a new non-conforming building type in the NR Zoning District with the conditions included in the staff memo for the subject property dated May 31, 2023, and with findings as noted during the Board's discussion.

RESULT:	APPROVED WITH CONDITIONS
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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.