



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

**5 OCTOBER 2023 MEETING MINUTES**

This meeting was conducted via remote participation on Zoom.

NAME	TITLE	STATUS	ARRIVED
Michael Capuano	Chair	<i>Present</i>	
Amelia Aboff	Vice Chair	<i>Present</i>	
Jahan Habib	Member	<i>Absent</i>	
Michael McNeley	Member	<i>Present</i>	
Debbie Howitt Easton	Alternate	<i>Present</i>	
Luc Schuster	Alternate	<i>Present</i>	

City staff present: Raisa Saniat (Planning, Preservation, & Zoning); Sarah Lewis (Director of Planning, Preservation, & Zoning)

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

**PUBLIC HEARING: 620 Broadway (P&Z 21-145)**  
*(continued from 7 September 2023)*

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Vice Chair Aboff, the Board voted unanimously (5-0) to continue this application to 2 November 2023.

**RESULT:**

**CONTINUED**

**PUBLIC HEARING: 45 Mystic Avenue (P&Z 22-059)**  
*(continued from 7 September 2023)*

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Vice Chair Aboff, the Board voted unanimously (5-0) to continue this application to 19 October 2023.

**RESULT:**

**CONTINUED**

**OTHER BUSINESS: Zoning Map Amendment**

Recommendation to the City Council on the following:

- NRL WSC 200 Inner Belt Prop, LLC requesting a Zoning Map Amendment to change the zoning district of 200 Inner Belt Road from Commercial Industry (CI) to High-Rise (HR).

The Board explained that a neighborhood meeting has occurred, and written comments have been received. This item is now open for Board discussion regarding a recommendation to the City Council.

Staff explained that the draft neighborhood plan for this area shows a pedestrian bridge to get people to the community path and to connect to the T Station. A fiscal analysis is being run on this proposed infrastructure item. The property owner has been meeting with the MBTA, and Staff has been involved with those discussions. As part

of an application for MassWorks funding, housing was included. The existing building was included in the request as it is a land-locked parcel and access would be needed along the front of the building. During the neighborhood meeting, concerns were raised regarding the potential sale of the property to a new owner.

The Board asked if there has been discussion regarding the developer funding the bridge without the grant. Staff noted that this question has likely been broached. The city is interested in connecting neighborhoods and is trying to facilitate this, if possible.

Staff explained that they are supportive of the draft neighborhood plan at this time.

The Board noted that comments received voiced concerns regarding the massing/scope of the proposed project and the project's potential detracting from the existing arts neighborhood. There was discussion regarding the comprehensive zoning overhaul completed three years prior, which designated Brickbottom as an area for transformation. There were questions regarding the loss of creative spaces and the requirement for high-rise buildings to include arts and creative enterprise (ACE) spaces; Staff confirmed these requirements and further explained the restrictions on what could be considered as such space. Staff explained that they envision the district as an arts hub and are working on architectural design guidelines to reflect the industrial style of the existing buildings. The area is designated as a transit-oriented development, with the aim of increasing density around train stations while maintaining the character of existing neighborhoods.

The Board noted that the public comment period expired at noon on Friday, 29 September. The Board requested an update on proposed zoning changes from the Arts Council and how they might impact this area. Staff explained that the changes will clarify definitions of arts and creative enterprises but will not directly affect Brickbottom. One Board member expressed concern regarding allowing a high-rise building, in that this could create a real liability for the artist community that currently exists, and which has been very vocal in the community participation process. There could be a better option for this area that includes additional guardrails for the community to ensure that the development will be in lockstep with the plan as proposed.

There was discussion regarding why a high-rise is the current proposal for this space and what other options could be possible. The Board asked if an MR-6 district could be part of a Master Plan Overlay District; Staff confirmed that this could be possible. This would reinstate the arts space requirement. There was some agreement on the Board regarding the proposal for an MR-6 District, as part of a Master Plan Overlay District. The Board discussed putting forth a *No Recommendation* motion, along with the comments expressed. The Board asked that Staff draft a recommendation.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Vice Chair Aboff, the Board voted unanimously (5-0) to make a No Recommendation to the Land Use Committee that reflects the concerns and suggestions raised during the meeting.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>NO RECOMMENDATION</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.*