



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

21 DECEMBER 2023 MEETING MINUTES

This meeting was conducted via remote participation via Zoom.

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

City staff present: Emily Hutchings (Planning, Preservation, & Zoning); Raisa Saniat (Planning, Preservation, & Zoning); Andrew Graminski (Planning, Preservation, & Zoning)

The meeting was called to order at 6:04pm and adjourned at 7:47pm.

The Clerk read 30 Bow Street and 288 Highland Avenue into the record.

PUBLIC HEARING: 45 Mystic Avenue (P&Z 22-029)
(continued from 7 December 2023)

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Vice Chair Aboff, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to continue this application to 4 January 2024.

RESULT:

CONTINUED

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

The applicant team addressed outstanding issues related to the Transportation Access Plan (TAP) and loading plan.

Staff explained that the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) made a determination that the variance for this property has been exercised and remains in full effect. All information in the TAP is up to date, matches the conceptual plan, and the updated TAP was approved by the Mobility Division. There is one updated condition proposed that the applicant fulfill and implement the pavement markings plan. This is only a conceptual design at this point, as the city is still working on its redesign of Broadway.

The applicant team noted that it would be open to a condition committing it to using the roof for solar energy. Staff explained that there is a condition proposed in the Staff Memo requiring the confirmation of installation and operation of roof-mounted solar prior to a Certificate of Occupancy, as volunteered by the applicant team. There is also a revised condition that will require all vehicles used for loading and delivery to be no larger than 30' in length.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Vice Chair Aboff, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to approve, with the most updated conditions laid out in the most updated Staff Memo, the Site Plan Approval to develop a one-story commercial building in the Commercial Core 5 District.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Vice Chair Aboff, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to approve, with the most updated conditions laid out in the most updated Staff Memo, the Special Permit to establish a cannabis retail sales use in the Commercial Core 5 District.

RESULT:	APPROVED WITH CONDITIONS
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PUBLIC HEARING: 28-44 Broadway (P&Z 23-061)

(continued from 7 December 2023)

The applicant team explained that the proposal is for an 85-unit residential property at 44 Broadway with approximately 8,500 s.f. of retail at the ground level and providing a total of 21 parking spaces on the site. The Mobility Management Plan (MMP) requires four of these spaces be provided to the commercial tenant and two of the spaces to be provided as car share spaces. The amended plan includes providing 15 parking spaces for the residential tenants and six-month MBTA and bike share passes for up to two residents per parking space in the first three years. The plan then phases out the passes over the remaining six years of the nine-year plan. The proposal is designed to mitigate traffic impacts and ensure the project's financial feasibility.

The Board agreed that this seems to be the correct mitigation for the proposed impact on this neighborhood. There were some concerns expressed regarding the proposal to offer an MBTA pass and Blue Bikes membership to discourage renters from using their cars, questioning the equity of the plan. The applicant team explained that there is a difference between mitigation of impact and community benefits. This is not an oversized project that conflicts with the zoning ordinance, thus allowing the focus to be on mitigation of the actual impact of the project.

The Board suggested an additional cost neutral strategy, such as making the bike room more friendly to cargo bikes; the applicant team accepted the suggestion. Staff noted that they and the Mobility Department have not yet had a chance to review the proposed conditions made by the applicant team this evening.

The applicant team read the language for proposed condition #7: *"The property owner shall provide up to two MBTA monthly LinkPass, or an equivalent stored value MBTA CharlieCard, to each adult lessee in a residential tenant household renting a vehicular parking space within the building during the first month of the initial parking space rental, as follows:*

- 1. From the final Certificate of Occupancy for the building through the 3rd anniversary of the final Certificate of Occupancy of the building, each month for a minimum of 6 months.*
- 2. From the 3rd anniversary of the final Certificate of Occupancy for the building through the 6th anniversary of the final Certificate of Occupancy of the building, each month for a minimum of 4 months.*
- 3. From the 6th anniversary of the final Certificate of Occupancy for the building through the 9th anniversary of the final Certificate of Occupancy of the building, each month for a minimum of 2 months.*

This requirement renews each time a new residential tenant rents a parking space within the building up to and through the 9th anniversary of the final Certificate of Occupancy of the building."

The applicant team noted that proposed condition #8 reads the same, except instead of MBTA passes, the language is for bike share memberships.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Vice Chair Aboff, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to approve, with conditions laid out in the Staff Memo and as delineated tonight such that will be incorporated with the language read into the record by the applicant's attorney, to the Major Amendment to a previously approved

general building in the MR6 Zoning District, P&Z 23-061, which required Site Plan Approval and a Special Permit for household living.

RESULT:

APPROVED WITH CONDITIONS

PUBLIC HEARING: 2-4 Alpine Street (P&Z 21-119)

(continued from 7 December 2023)

The applicant team explained that the plan has been amended to switch out a one-bedroom unit with a two-bedroom unit. The landscape plan was also updated, making minor changes related to calculations of the permeable area and coordination between the architectural ground floor and landscape plans. The Board asked about use of native plant species for the trellis of the property. The applicant team agreed to a condition that a native plant species be used for the trellis.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Vice Chair Aboff, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to approve, with the conditions outlined in the Staff Memo, the Site Plan Approval to develop a four-story general building in the Mid-Rise 4 Zoning District.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Vice Chair Aboff, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to approve, with the conditions outlined in the Staff Memo and as discussed further tonight, a Special Permit to establish household living use in the Mid-Rise 4 Zoning District.

RESULT:

APPROVED WITH CONDITIONS

PUBLIC HEARING: 288 Highland Avenue (ZP23-000052)

The applicant team explained that the proposal is to open another location of Lotus Yoga Studio in the commercial first floor space of this building. The applicant team emphasized its commitment to creating an inclusive space where yoga is accessible to all. The Yoga Studio is interested in community involvement and plans to continue offering a variety of yoga classes and workshops at the new location. There will be no physical adjustments needed to the existing space, as this building was previously used as a yoga studio. At the studio's location in Arlington, an outdoor permit is applied for each year in order to hold outdoor classes and workshops. The same is planned for this location in Somerville.

Chair Capuano opened public testimony.

Federica Torri (6 Clifton Street) – expressed support for this proposal.

Chair Capuano closed public testimony.

There were no Board comments or questions at this time.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Vice Chair Aboff, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to approve, with the conditions outlined in the Staff Memo, the Special Permit to establish a Fitness Service Principle Use on a pedestrian street in the Mid-Rise 4 District.

RESULT:

APPROVED WITH CONDITIONS

PUBLIC HEARING: 30 Bow Street (P&Z 23-068)

The applicant team explained that the proposal is for a Special Permit, allowing the retail sale of alcohol on the ground floor space at 30 Bow Street, located in the Mid-Rise 3 zoning district, pursuant to Table 4.1.13 and Section 4.1.13.B of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance. The proposed store, Wild Child, is a welcoming space, offering natural wines, food-related literature, and culinary ephemera. This location will serve as the base of operations for Wild Child's already very popular wine club. After five years in Bow Market, the company is looking to move into this larger, more permanent location. The applicant team explained that no operations will generally occur outside of the building, but the existing wooden deck in the back of the building is proposed to be renovated and made accessible. A neighborhood meeting was held on 16 August 2023, and an additional site meeting was held on 15 September 2023. There were some concerns expressed regarding traffic and congestion. The intention is to mitigate neighbor concerns relative to traffic and pedestrian congestion by posting signage to discourage patrons from blocking driveways, and also from using the premises' driveway to access Bow Market. The applicant will also work with neighbors on either side to mitigate impacts using fencing and introductions to store staff. This new location would increase existing capacity by approximately twofold. However, the space in the new building which will be used to hold classes in is actually a bit smaller than in the existing building.

The applicant team explained that the benefits of this proposal will outweigh the adverse effects. The proposal is for a boutique bottle shop, along with a place for the community to learn about and experience the culture of wine. The existing business is derived predominantly from pedestrian and bike traffic, and this is expected to continue. The e-commerce arm of the business should encourage shorter parking times. The proposed use is in harmony with Somerville's Comprehensive Plan. This proposal is also in harmony with the intention of the zoning district.

The Board asked about loading and stocking of the shop. The applicant team explained that most deliveries will be made using the primary front entrance, as expressed as a preference by neighbors. The front entrance will also be the primary entrance for all shop users.

Chair Capuano opened public testimony.

Gerard Amaral (347-349 Somerville Ave) – expressed support for this proposal.

Chair Capuano closed public testimony.

Staff explained that no specific mitigation items are laid out in the conditions. Staff felt that the applicant would provide adequate mitigation to address those concerns after having formal conversations with the neighbors on site. Staff did propose a condition that the Special Permit would be attached to the applicant and not the property, to help alleviate some of the concerns regarding potential future alcohol-oriented retail sales uses.

The Board recessed for a few minutes and reconvened at 7:45pm.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Vice Chair Aboff, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to approve, with conditions outlined in the Staff Memo, the Special Permit to establish an Alcohol Sales Principle Use along a pedestrian street in the Mid-Rise 3 District.

RESULT:	APPROVED WITH CONDITIONS
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NOTICE: These minutes constitute a summary of the votes and key discussions at this meeting. To review a full recording, please contact the Planning, Preservation & Zoning Division at planning@somervillema.gov.