



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

23 MAY 2024 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	Clerk	<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: Emily Hutchings (Planning, Preservation, & Zoning); Stephen Cary (Planning, Preservation, & Zoning); Josh Eckart-Lee (Office of Sustainability & Environment)

The meeting was called to order at 6:02pm and adjourned at 6:44pm.

OTHER BUSINESS: Recommendations to the City Council

- Mayor Ballantyne requesting ordainment of an amendment to Article 2, Article 3, Article 4, Article 5, Article 8, and Article 10 of the Zoning Ordinance to remove conflicts with the State Building Code.

The Planning Board noted that it had received and reviewed a number of public comments regarding these proposed amendments.

Staff presented a slight change in what is believed to be appropriate in terms of the density bonus. This was based on concerns expressed by developers, architects, attorneys, and others who are in the process of development projects. Staff recognized that there are a number of development projects in the pipeline that would be at risk if the density bonus is simply removed at this stage. The proposal is that, if the density bonus is retained, the net zero density bonus be kept, while also adding the LEED Platinum Certifiability requirement. This would add a small, but legitimate, bonus in terms of sustainability requirements that Staff believes is appropriate. This would be a temporary proposal.

The Board asked if projects that had already received zoning approvals prior to 17 April 2024 would be allowed to proceed with Building Permits under the previous regime regarding the density bonus, as it applied at the time of their zoning approvals. Staff explained that approval does not vest the rights of zoning; if there was a Special Permit involved that would vest the rights of the zoning. To that end, the vast majority of the projects that the Board has seen would have their rights vested because they have a Special Permit attached to them.

The Board expressed concern regarding changing the rules on a developer midway through the process and considered a recommendation for an effective date into the future in order to protect those already in the pipeline. Staff stated that it is believed the proposed amendments may only impact 1-2 projects currently in the pipeline.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Vice Chair Aboff, the Board voted unanimously (6-0) to recommend, with associated discussions and recommendations, to the Land Use Committee for adoption of the recommendations for the Zoning Ordinance, regarding the City Council and Mayor Ballantyne requesting

ordination of an amendment to Article 2, Article 3, Article 4, Article 5, Article 8, and Article 10 of the Zoning Ordinances to remove conflicts with the State Building Code.

RESULT:	RECOMMENDED
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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 planningboard@somervillema.gov.