



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

Condominium Review Board

Katjana Ballantyne, Mayor

Monday, November 25, 2024

6:00 pm.

Staff Liaison & Housing Policy Coordinator
Morena Zelaya

Board Members
Zachary Zasloff, Chair
Kate Byrne, Vice-chair
Elizabeth Champion
Alix Simeon
Jennifer Tsolas

Meeting Minutes

November 25, 2024 – 6:00 PM

Virtual Hearing

Board Members present: Zachary Zasloff; Kate Byrne; Alix Simeon; Jennifer Tsolas
Staff present: Morena Zelaya, Staff Liaison; Joseph Theall, Housing Counsel;

Chair Zasloff convened the meeting at 6:01 PM. He read the following information aloud: Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023, this meeting of the Condominium Review Board will be conducted via remote participation. We will post an audio recording, audio-video recording, transcript, or other comprehensive record of these proceedings as soon as possible after the meeting on the City of Somerville website and local cable access government channels.

CONDO REVIEW BOARD MEETING AGENDA

1. MEETING CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order with a call for attendance made by Chair Zasloff.
Responses were as follows:

Chair Zasloff	Present
Vice-chair Byrne	Present
Member Champion	Absent
Member Simeon	Present
Member Tsolas	Present

With four in attendance there was a quorum, and the meeting was called to order.

2. NEW BUSINESS

- **APPLICATIONS FOR FINAL/COURTESY PERMITS**

WARD 6 PRECINCT 1

37 Banks Street

Application of Colleen Gillard & William Wells. Seeking Final Conversion Permits for Unit #1 & Unit #2 and a Courtesy Permit for Unit #3 at 37 Banks Street. Attorney Mark Sheehan attended as representative for the applicant. He stated that the outstanding items, the master deed and property condition report, had now been submitted and as such his clients were requesting final permits be granted.

Chair Zasloff opened the floor to the Board; seeing none, the floor was closed.

Chair Zasloff opened the floor to public comment; seeing none, the floor was closed.

On a motion duly made a roll call vote was called and it was voted 4-0:

Chair Zasloff- yes

Vice-chair Byrne – yes

Member Simeon- yes

Member Tsolas- yes

To grant a Final Conversion Permit for Unit #1 & Unit #2 and a Courtesy Permit for Unit #3 at 37 Banks Street.

WARD 5 PRECINCT 2

156 Albion Street

Application of 156 Albion LLC, Niranjan Gawli. Seeking a Final Conversion Permit for Unit #1 & Unit #2 at 156 Albion Street. Attorney Mark Sheehan attended as representative for the applicant. He stated that the outstanding items, the master deed and property condition report, had now been submitted and as such his clients were requesting final permits be granted.

Chair Zasloff opened the floor to the Board; seeing none, the floor was closed.

Chair Zasloff opened the floor to public comment; seeing none, the floor was closed.

On a motion duly made a roll call vote was called and it was voted 4-0:

Chair Zasloff- yes

Vice-chair Byrne – yes

Member Simeon- yes

Member Tsolas- yes

To grant Final Conversion Permits for Unit #1 & Unit #2 at 156 Albion Street.

WARD 3 PRECINCT 2

56 Putnam Street Unit #1

Application of 56 Putnam LLC, Lucas Mendes Garcia & James Douglas.
Seeking a Final Conversion Permit for Unit #1 at 56 Putnam Street.

Attorney Matthew Spang attended as representative for the applicant. He stated that the outstanding items, the master deed and property condition report, had now been submitted and as such his clients were requesting that the final permit be granted.

Chair Zasloff opened the floor to the Board; seeing none, the floor was closed.

Chair Zasloff opened the floor to public comment; seeing none, the floor was closed.

On a motion duly made a roll call vote was called and it was voted 4-0:

Chair Zasloff- yes

Vice-chair Byrne – yes

Member Simeon- yes

Member Tsolas- yes

To grant Final Conversion Permit for Unit #1 at 56 Putnam Street.

**b. APPLICATIONS FOR PRELIMINARY CONDOMINIUM
CONVERSION PERMITS**

WARD 2 PRECINCT 1

182-186 Tremont Street

Application of SEMS Holdings, LLC, Sanjay Kansagra. Seeking a Preliminary Rental Conversion Permit for Unit #1 through Unit #6 at 182-186 Tremont Street. Attorney Mark Sheehan attended as representative for the applicant. He listed off the documents included with the application. He stated the building was purchased vacant and has been for over a year.

Chair Zasloff opened the floor to the Board; Board Member Simeon asked why the building was vacant. Attorney Sheehan responded that it was in disrepair and had numerous issues, including a rodent infestation. Member Simeon asked if any attempts were made to discover the tenants who may have been living in the building before and Attorney Sheehan responded that because the ordinance does not require tenant information from before the previous 12 months they did not obtain the information from the prior owner. Member Tsolas asked if any verification was done to confirm that no tenants had lived on the property for over a year. Board Staff responded that she would have no way of verifying as records she'd have access to, such as voter registration records, are not updated annually.

Member Tsolas mentioned having the applicants submit an affidavit that the property was vacant and also asked Staff what would happen if a tenant came forward and indicated that they lived on the property and may be entitled to protections. Staff responded that should that happen then the Board could call the application up for a compliance hearing and could make determinations then on the status of the tenant and any potential protections. Attorney Sheehan also noted that the application acts as an affidavit where the applicant is confirming that there were no tenants on the property in the previous 12 months. With that the floor was closed.

Chair Zasloff opened the floor to public comment; seeing none, the floor was closed.

On a motion duly made a roll call vote was called and it was voted 4-0:

Chair Zasloff- yes

Vice-chair Byrne – yes

Member Simeon- yes

Member Tsolas- yes

To grant a Preliminary Rental Conversion Permit for Unit #1 through Unit #6 at 182-186 Tremont Street.

WARD 7 PRECINCT 3

99 West Adams Street

Application of JCW Corporation, Helen Cao. Seeking a Preliminary Rental Conversion Permit for Unit #1 & Unit #2 at 99 West Adams Street.

Helen Cao attended to speak on the application and she listed all the required documents that had been submitted with the application and requested that preliminary permits be granted.

Chair Zasloff opened the floor to the Board; Member Byrne asked why the former tenants vacated, Ms. Cao responded that she was unsure but that they had both been notified of the conversion. Staff confirmed tenants had been notified by text and mail. With no further questions, the floor was closed.

Chair Zasloff opened the floor to public comment; seeing none, the floor was closed.

On a motion duly made a roll call vote was called and it was voted 4-0:

Chair Zasloff- yes

Vice-chair Byrne – yes

Member Simeon- yes

Member Tsolas- yes

To grant a Preliminary Rental Conversion Permit for Unit #1 & Unit #2 at 99 West Adams Street.

WARD 7 PRECINCT 3

17-19 High Street

Application of Sangye Dongshi. Seeking a Preliminary Rental Conversion Permit for Unit #17 and a Preliminary Non-Rental Conversion Permit for Unit #19 at 17-19 High Street. Attorney Breanna Rolland attended as representative for the applicant. She listed all the required documents that had been submitted with the application, include proof of notice to the former tenants, and requested that preliminary permits be granted.

Chair Zasloff opened the floor to the Board; seeing none, the floor was closed.

Chair Zasloff opened the floor to public comment; seeing none, the floor was closed.

On a motion duly made a roll call vote was called and it was voted 4-0:

Chair Zasloff- yes

Vice-chair Byrne – yes

Member Simeon- yes

Member Tsolas- yes

To grant a Preliminary Rental Conversion Permit for Unit #17 and a Preliminary Non-Rental Conversion Permit for Unit #19 at 17-19 High Street.

WARD 5 PRECINCT 3

26 Pearson Avenue

Application of Mary Martinsen & James Scaringe. Seeking a Preliminary Rental Conversion Permit for Unit #1 and a Preliminary Non-rental Conversion Permit for Unit #2 & Unit #3 at 26 Pearson Avenue. Attorney Breanna Rolland attended as representative for the applicants. She listed all the required documents that had been submitted with the application, include proof of notice to the former tenants, and requested that preliminary permits be granted.

Chair Zasloff opened the floor to the Board; seeing none, the floor was closed.

Chair Zasloff opened the floor to public comment; seeing none, the floor was closed.

On a motion duly made a roll call vote was called and it was voted 4-0:

Chair Zasloff- yes

Vice-chair Byrne – yes

Member Simeon- yes

Member Tsolas- yes

To grant a Preliminary Rental Conversion Permit for Unit #1 and a Preliminary Non-rental Conversion Permit for Unit #2 & Unit #3 at 26 Pearson Avenue.

WARD 7 PRECINCT 3

23 College Hill Road

Application of Property Acquisition Group, LLC, Michael Diplatzi. Seeking a Preliminary Rental Conversion Permit for Unit #1 & Unit #2 at 23 College Hill Road. Attorney Breanna Rolland attended as representative for the applicant. She listed all the required documents that had been submitted with the application, and stated that multiple attempts had been made to contact the former tenants by phone but she had been unsuccessful except with one tenant who had indicated he was not interested in participating.

Chair Zasloff opened the floor for Board comments. Vice-chair Byrne asked if there was anything in writing to the former tenants, Attorney Rolland responded that the former owner only provided phone numbers and as such she was unable to provide anything in writing. Vice-chair Byrne expressed concern with proceeding with the application without proof that the tenants had been contacted. Board Staff noted that applicants had to make reasonable attempts to

obtain contact information and indicated that those efforts had been met. The floor was then closed.

Chair Zasloff opened the floor to public comment; seeing none, the floor was closed.

On a motion duly made a roll call vote was called and it was voted 4-0:

Chair Zasloff- yes

Vice-chair Byrne – yes

Member Simeon- yes

Member Tsolas- yes

To grant a Preliminary Rental Conversion Permit for Unit #1 & Unit #2 at 23 College Hill Road.

3. DISCUSSION

- Board discussion on concerns regarding scope of the ordinance and potential revisions.

Chair Zasloff opened the floor for board discussion. He opened with suggesting that the board form a working group to consider ways that the ordinance may be strengthened. Housing Counsel Joseph Theall noted to the Board that the ordinance underwent a substantial update in 2019 and that careful consideration was given to putting in place strong tenant protections. Board Staff presented data points showing that the number of applications had decreased since the 2019 ordinance update, which could be a combination of market conditions, the pandemic and the ordinance update. Staff also informed members that the Housing & Community Development Committee of the City Council had discussed Board concerns at their meeting the previous week and that councilors are hearing the Board's concerns and had questioned Office of Housing Stability Director, Ellen Shachter, about what could be done to strengthen the ordinance.

Board members expressed their concerns at length at the frequency with which applications before the board were for completely vacant properties. The members agreed with the formation of a working group and discussed who was available to participate. Vice-chair Byrne and Member Tsolas both expressed interest. Members discussed logistics of the meetings and Staff informed that they would primarily handle any research. Staff recommended accepting public comment for the working group in case any member of the public was interested in submitting comments.

Chair Zasloff opened the floor for public comments from any attendees of the board's meeting, seeing none the floor was closed.

On a motion duly made a roll call vote was called and it was voted 4-0:

Chair Zasloff- yes

Vice-chair Byrne – yes

Member Simeon- yes

Member Tsolas- yes

To form a working group made up of two members and city staff to explore ways to strengthen the protections in the condominium conversion ordinance.

ADJOURN

Chair Zasloff wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving and motioned to adjourn at 7:31pm pm which Vice-chair Byrne seconded. The meeting was adjourned.