



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

6 MARCH 2025 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>	
Luc Schuster	Alternate	<i>Present</i>	
Lynn Richards	Member	<i>Present</i>	

City staff present: Stephen Cary (Planning, Preservation, & Zoning)

The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm and adjourned at 8:08pm.

GENERAL BUSINESS: Meeting Minutes

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Vice Chair Aboff, the Board voted unanimously (6-0) to approve the 6 February 2025 meeting minutes, as presented.

OTHER BUSINESS: Zoning Amendments

Vice Chair Aboff was recused from this item.

- Horace-Ward LLC, Bealm Realty, LLC, Delhi Properties, LLC, and Delhi Properties II, LLC requesting a Zoning Map Amendment to change the zoning district of 11 Horace Street, 5-7, 9, 13, and 15 Ward Street, and 15 and 21 South Street from Mid-Rise 4 (MR4) to Mid-Rise 6 (MR6) (File # [24-1584](#)).

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Vice Chair Aboff, the Board voted unanimously (5-0) to recommend adoption of this proposed amendment to the City Council.

RESULT:

RECOMMENDED

Vice Chair Aboff retook her seat.

PUBLIC HEARING: 20-23 Cummings Street (ZP24-000046)

(continued from 20 February 2025)

The applicant team explained that revisions have been submitted to both proposed buildings. A reduction of three floors which represents approximately 105,000 s.f. is now proposed for 23 Cummings Street. The zoning height of this building has been reduced by 45'. One floor was also reduced from 20 Cummings Street. The zoning height of this building has been reduced by 15'. The shadow impacts from these reductions were reviewed. A reduction in parking, via a reduction of 100 valet spaces, is also now offered while keeping the 0.65 ratio the same. There is a

condition that all of the garages are open to the public. As there is joint ownership of the parcels, there must be equal opportunity for both. Staff stated that, as the project moves forward, which parcel is built first can be determined by way of Staff approval. The applicant has agreed to an Economic Development Covenant.

Mobility Staff explained that there are approximately 50 parking spaces between what is recommended and what the applicant is proposing. The same parking ratio is proposed but the revised plan shows an overall lower intensity of use based on the reduction. Staff's recommendation attempts to be equitable across all of the buildings in this area. For Phases 1 and 2, Staff recommend a 0.7 ratio. Phase 3 may consider an amended Special Permit to increase the valet capacity if needed. An additional condition requested that the valet operations cease on 31 December 2039. The applicant team stated that a sunset clause would be difficult to support.

The Board discussed that it would like to see a broader parking and mobility plan within this area of the Assembly Square neighborhood. Mobility Staff explained that the ultimate goal is to build as little parking as possible, as this is the number one contributor to traffic. The Board discussed that it would like the City to provide leadership on a parking district for Assembly Square. The Board discussed concerns with the sunset provision, as this may be something which the applicant cannot comply with and noted that it would like the condition removed.

The applicant team stated that they have agreed with all of the proposed conditions and offered to have 835 parking spaces with 100 valet, when the original proposal was 738 spaces with 197 valet. The applicant team have also agreed that no one building can use more than the 0.7 ratio.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Vice Chair Aboff, the Board voted (5-0-1), with Member McNeley abstaining, to approve the Special Permit for a Master Plan in the Assembly Square mixed-use district with the recommended conditions as listed in the Staff Memo, dated 28 February 2025, and amended this evening.

RESULT:

APPROVED

PUBLIC HEARING: 20-23 Cummings Street (ZP24-000085)

(continued from 20 February 2025)

This item was discussed concurrently with the previous agenda item.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Vice Chair Aboff, the Board voted (5-0-1), with Member McNeley abstaining, to approve the Special Permit for:

1. Waivers for dimensional standards for building height, floor area ratio, and front setback
2. Proposed occupancy of a commercial space greater than 10,000 square feet in the leasable floor area in the Assembly Square mixed-use district
3. Proposed modifications to the provisions of Section 11.2: Motor Vehicle Parking

As well as the conditions in the Staff Memo and as amended this evening

RESULT:

APPROVED

The Board recessed for five minutes, and Member Habib exited the meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS: Community Outreach & Engagement

The Board discussed possible efforts towards community outreach and engagement. There was discussion regarding working collaboratively with elected officials regarding neighborhood research and outreach during specific projects. The Board discussed asking members of the public what kind of outreach would be best and most accommodating for them. This could be done during a public meeting. The Board also discussed reaching out to neighborhood associations to further discuss how to best engage with them. There was a suggestion to keep planning documents and decisions in a central repository to address public transparency. Other potential methods to make information easier for the public to find include navigation changes to the City website, and/or plain language on the Board's agendas. The Board agreed to continue to discuss this topic at future meetings.

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