



City of Somerville

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

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

TO: Zoning Board of Appeals
FROM: OSPCD Staff
SUBJECT: 56 Webster Ave, ZP25-000025 – Supplemental Memo
POSTED: July 9, 2025

RECOMMENDATION: Approve w/ Conditions (Modification & Extension of Special Permit)

This memo is supplemental to the PPZ Staff Memo dated May 9, 2025, and the Interoffice Memorandum memo dated May 8, 2025.

This supplemental memo identifies new and modified staff recommended conditions based on the discussions between the Zoning Board of Appeals and Applicant for 56 Webster Ave.

BACKGROUND

The application (ZP25-000025) to modify the conditions of approval for a previously granted special permit (ZBA #2008-65) and to grant an extension of time on that permit was first opened for a public hearing on May 14, 2025.

During the first hearing, the staff's recommendation was for the First Extension not to be granted until the Applicant comes back in 2029, contingent upon the applicant showing some progress towards securing a new location for the laundry facility. The Applicant team explained that the property owner and workers' union need certainty that they will be able to operate in this location until 2030.

The staff and Applicant have met in the intervening weeks and reached a proposed compromise that is agreeable to both the City and Applicant.

ANALYSIS

Staff's position is now that the First Extension of one year should be granted now, with the condition that the Applicant commits to reporting to the ZBA every six months on their progress in finding a new location for the laundry, with the first report due no later than March 31, 2026 (the end of Q1 of 2026). The reports can be sent to the ZBA as a communication regarding the status of ZBA #2008-65.

This gives the property owner and union certainty that they will be able to operate in the current location until Jul 22, 2030. It also may allow time for market conditions to evolve, as they currently are not favorable for optimizing "the mixed use, transit-oriented development potential of the site" as envisioned in the original decision of the ZBA.

The criteria for grant of a Second Extension and a Final Extension, in keeping with the spirit of the original special permit, should be based on the same considerations, modified to align with the Applicant's submitted anticipated timeline for developing the new laundry location. The anticipated timeline has been attached to this memo.

RECOMMENDED FINDINGS

The SPGA finds that the original term of the permit has been extended by tolling through July 22, 2029, as follows:

- a. The delay in opening the Somerville Green Line extension applies to extend the permit through July 22, 2027,
- b. Chapter 238, Section 80 of the Acts of 2024 (the "COVID Economic Relief Act") also applies and extends the permit another two (2) years through July 22, 2029.
- c. Applicant's timeline demonstrates that five (5) years are needed to complete the laundry move and Applicant has requested that the permit be modified to allow the First Extension to be exercised now.

It is Staff's opinion that the changes proposed by this amendment to the application would not impact any of the criteria which were previously found to be satisfied.

RECOMMENDED PERMIT CONDITION CHANGES

Should the Board approve the modification to and extension of a previously approved Special Permit, PPZ Staff recommends the following modifications to the conditions of approval:

Condition #2

This SPSR ~~shall expire ten (10) years after the date of issuance of a permanent certificate of occupancy for the expanded laundry processing center use ("Effective Date").~~ is modified to allow for a one (1) year extension (the "First Extension") to the original term to be exercised now to allow the continued operation of the laundry facility through July 22, 2030. Accordingly, this SPSR shall expire on July 22, 2030, subject to the Applicant providing the SPGA, no less than every six (6) months with the first report due no later than March 31, 2026, with a written report of progress towards moving the laundry facility to a new location (the "Progress Report"). Each Progress Report shall detail the Applicant's best efforts to accomplish the tasks contained in the timeline for moving the laundry facility (the "Laundry Move Time") included in the Application, as updated by the Applicant. The Laundry Move Timeline is attached to this decision and incorporated into this Special Permit. Receipt of each Progress Report shall be placed on the SPGA agenda to be part of the written record.

Condition #3

The Applicant may apply to the SPGA for up to two (2) additional one-year extensions of this SPSR: an first extension for one (1) year which shall expire ~~eleven (11) years from the Effective Date on July 22, 2031~~ (the "First-Second Extension"); and an additional second extension for one (1) year which shall expire on July 22, 2032 ~~twelve (12) years from Effective Date~~ ("Second-Final Extension") ~~unless the application of the force majeure in clause in Paragraph 7 of the Development Covenant extends these dates~~. The Applicant shall notify the City in writing, no later than six (6) months in advance of the expiration date ~~(or extended expiration date)~~ of the SPSR, that the Applicant intends to apply for an extension. Each request for extension shall be filed no later than ninety (90) days prior to the expiration date ~~(or extended expiration date)~~ of the original SPSR and must include an updated Laundry Move Timeline.

In determining whether or not to support the ~~First Extension and~~ Second Extension, the SPGA will consider the following criteria: (1) whether the Applicant has made best efforts to move the laundry facility in accordance with the Laundry Move Timeline; (2) whether the updated Laundry Move Timeline is reasonable based on all the evidence submitted. In addition, the SPGA will take into account the following considerations set forth in the Applicant's Covenant with the City, including without limitation: (1) the Applicant's compliance with the conditions attached to this SPSR; (2) the then current real estate market conditions, including absorption rates and commercial financing availability and terms; ~~(3) progress on the extension of the Green Line into Union Square;~~ (34) proximity of the Property to the nearest Green Line Station and other redevelopment projects; (45) the Applicant's willingness to take reasonable actions to plan for and further the redevelopment of the Property as described below: During the ninth (9th) year following the Effective Date and pPrior to applying for the First-Second Extension, the Applicant shall have developed a conceptual site plan for the Property that (i) is acceptable to the City as being consistent with publicly-adopted plans and guidelines for development in the Union Square/Boynton Yards area; (ii) conforms to the then-current zoning, or can be permitted with zoning relief acceptable to the City; and (iii) optimizes the mixed use, transit-oriented development potential of the site (a conceptual site plan meeting the foregoing criteria is referred to in the following paragraphs as the "Conceptual Site Plan"); and (56) filed an application for zoning relief for a project that conforms to the Conceptual Site Plan.

In determining whether or not to support the Final Extension, the SPGA will consider the following criteria: (1) the laundry facility move being on track to be completed no later than July 22, 2032; and (2) the Applicant having obtained zoning approval for a project on the Property.

ZP25-000025 - 56 Webster Street - Special Permit Modification & Extension Application
Applicant-Submitted Anticipated Relocation Timeline (July 16, 2025 ZBA Hearing)

Royal Relo	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032
Q1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and secure new plant location 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New plant construction, order new equipment . 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mechanical, Electrical, and Pneumatic hook ups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Install 5 new ironing lines in new plant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dual operations in both plants 		
Q2		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and secure new plant location 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New plant construction, order new equipment . 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mechanical, Electrical, and Pneumatic hook ups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Install 12 new triple sort towel folders in new plant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exit Somerville plant 		
Q3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and secure new plant location 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design and permitting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New plant construction, order new equipment . 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Install new tunnels and dryers in new plant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Install soil belts, conveyor belts. 			
Q4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and secure new plant location 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design and permitting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mechanical, Electrical, and Pneumatic hook ups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Install E Tech Rail System in new plant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dual operations in both plants 			