



City of Somerville
URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION
City Hall 3rd Floor, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville MA 02143

27 FEBRUARY 2024 MEETING MINUTES

This meeting was conducted via remote participation on Zoom.

| NAME | TITLE | STATUS | ARRIVED |
|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|---------|
| Sarah Lewis | Co-Chair | <i>Present</i> | |
| Cortney Kirk | Acting Co-Chair | <i>Absent</i> | |
| Luisa Olivera | Co-Chair | <i>Absent</i> | |
| Frank Valdes | Member | <i>Present</i> | |
| Deborah Fennick | Member | <i>Present</i> | |
| Andrew Arbaugh | Member | <i>Absent</i> | |
| Cheri Ruane | Member | <i>Present</i> | |
| Tim Talun | Member | <i>Present</i> | 6:10pm |
| Tim Houde | Alternate | <i>Absent</i> | |

City staff present: Madison Anthony (Planning, Preservation, & Zoning)

The meeting was called to order at 6:08pm and adjourned at 7:52pm.

GENERAL BUSINESS: Meeting Minutes

Following a motion by Member Valdes, seconded by Member Ruane, the Commission voted unanimously (3-0) to approve the 9 January 2024 meeting minutes, as amended.

Member Talun entered the meeting at 6:10pm.

DESIGN REVIEW: 181 Pearl Street

The applicant team explained that the intention is for this building to act as an anchor for Pearl Street. The applicant team also expressed interest in this being a transit-oriented development. The proposal is to create three townhouses, each three stories tall. The development aims to enhance the street experience and incorporate ecology to the site. A bay window is proposed on each townhouse. The preferred façade option is a mix of masonry and metal. The bay window is generously sized to bring light into the units. The base of the building contains planter beds which creates a public realm. Trellises are proposed to include vertical greenery. Vent caps for the buildings will be collected on the north façade. The applicant team also reviewed the other two options, as well as the project's Green Score.

The Commission expressed concern regarding maintenance of the trellis plants. There was interest expressed regarding seeing the civil engineer drawings. The Commission noted an interest in also seeing an internal layout for the building, including trash handling, bike parking for residents, and other parking requirements. There was also concern about the overall scale of the building relative to its immediate context and the extent of the blank wall area at the third floor on the north side of the building.

There was discussion regarding if this submission would meet the requirements of this zoning district. It was agreed that this should be more thoroughly discussed with Staff.

Following a motion by Member Ruane, seconded by Member Valdes, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to continue this case to the next meeting at which the applicant team is ready.

RESULT:

CONTINUED

DESIGN REVIEW: 382 McGrath Highway

(continued from 12 December 2023, and 9 January 2024)

The applicant team reviewed the amended plans, including additional façade options, bike parking, and the potential of street trees. The first-floor level was lowered to allow for one continuous ADA compliant ramp into the main façade. A bike storage room was added to the first floor and two additional planter boxes were added to the front of the building.

There was discussion regarding the proposed façade materials; concerns were raised regarding the proposed use of Hardie Board and potential issues where the three proposed materials meet on the building. The discussion also included the need to consider the roof as part of the building's aesthetic. The applicant team noted that they are working with a sustainability consultant regarding the code and net zero compliance.

The Commission discussed proposed design guidelines including a materials board prior to a building permit, and a mockup panel of the materials once under construction. As part of the materials submission, details are needed regarding the type of cementitious panel; this needs to be a high-density panel with through color. The equipment location on the roof that meets net zero and passive house standards also needs to be shown in different views.

Following a motion by Member Fennick, seconded by Member Valdes, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to recommend the preferred façade option to move forward.

Following a motion by Member Valdes, seconded by Member Fennick, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) that the design guidelines have been met.

Following a motion by Member Talun, seconded by Member Fennick, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) that the additional recommendations and design guidance be incorporated.

Additional Design Guidance:

1. The applicant will return to the Commission with a materials palette prior to the Building Permit for a materials review that will explain how the building meets the ground.
2. Show any significant changes to the floor plan that might have taken place for ADA or other reasons.
3. Show the type of high density through color cementitious panel and the details around soffit edge and vertical projection.
4. Provide additional three-dimensional renderings showing the equipment location on the roof to meet the passive house and net zero standards.
5. Also, during construction, there will be an onsite mockup panel to show how those materials are detailed and work together.

RESULT:

RECOMMENDED

OTHER BUSINESS: 152-158 Broadway (Material Palette Review)

There was discussion regarding approving building materials online and the potential issues it might cause due to variations in lighting and camera quality. The Commission agreed that materials should be sent to City Hall for review by Commissioners.

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.