



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

15 MAY 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>Absent</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); Emily Hutchings (Planning, Preservation, & Zoning)

The meeting was called to order at 6:01pm and adjourned at 7:55pm.

GENERAL BUSINESS: Meeting Minutes

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Member Habib, the Board voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the 3 April 2025 meeting minutes, as presented.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Member Habib, the Board voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the 17 April 2025 meeting minutes, as presented.

PUBLIC HEARING: 362-368 Mystic Avenue

(continued from 1 May 2025)

The applicant team explained that there was one outstanding item from the last hearing involving the delivery of traffic count data to the Mobility Division. Those counts were conducted at the end of last week and submitted. There was also some reformatting of previous traffic count data which was done last year, and this was also provided. The count data provided was part of the traffic study but did not change the findings of the study. This was needed for record keeping and data collection for the Mobility Division.

Staff stated that the Mobility Division has reviewed all of the updated documents and has confirmed that all of the requested data has been received. They are not recommending any changes to what was initially proposed for conditions and information.

There was discussion regarding this property being considered conserved by the City.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Member Habib, the Board voted (4-0-1), with Member Richards abstaining, to approve, with the conditions laid out in the Staff Memo, the request to establish a Cannabis Retail Sales Use in the MR5 zoning district.

RESULT:

APPROVED

The Board recessed at 6:19 p.m. and entered a joint hearing with the Land Use Committee at 6:30 p.m.

The Board resumed its meeting at 6:44 p.m.

OTHER BUSINESS: Joint Hearing with the Land Use Committee

- Mayor Ballentyne requesting ordainment of an amendment to Article 2 and Article 10 of the Zoning Ordinance to revise definitions and the green score calculation of columnar trees (File #25-0737).

The Board explained that, when calculating the green score and defining trees, the proposed amendment is to consider not just the height and length of the tree, but also the girth. A recommendation was made to the Land Use Committee to modify the language in the amendment, instead of using the language regarding measuring from the diameter at breast height, to instead use language regarding measuring from the canopy.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Member Habib, the Board voted unanimously (5-0) to recommend adoption of this proposed amendment to the Land Use Committee with the proposed language change.

RESULT:	RECOMMENDED
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OTHER BUSINESS: Assembly Square Neighborhood Plan

Staff explained that the Assembly Square Neighborhood is a transform area which has been undergoing transformation since around 2000. The first draft of this Plan was released in 2022 and there has since been a Fiscal Impact Study done on the area.

Staff presented the draft Neighborhood Plan. The Plan contains five main themes: building great new places, nature and sustainability, street design, community and connection, and growing revenue. There are four main areas included in the plan: Assembly Marketplace, the Middlesex Corridor, Assembly Square South, and the Assembly Point-Micro District. The plan proposes changes to street layouts, building heights, and commercial development, while considering existing infrastructure such as MWRA easements.

There was discussion regarding the need for a comprehensive parking plan. The overall goal is to reduce parking in this area. This will be further addressed during the zoning phase after the Plan's adoption.

The Board emphasized the importance of expanding green spaces in Somerville. Native plantings should be focused on.

There was discussion regarding infrastructure needs, such as focusing on power distribution and stormwater management. This could explore microgrids as part of future zoning plans. The Board discussed family-friendly goals in the Plan, including increasing three- and four-bedroom units. Also, there could be a need for improved transit access.

Concerns were raised regarding inconsistencies in the Plan dealing with infiltration items and an elevated bike path, as well as the lack of connectivity to the Ten Hills neighborhood. The Board mentioned that a parking district for Assembly Square could help to better manage parking and support local businesses.

There was discussion about the potential for civic facilities, such as post offices and libraries. Staff stated that some aspects can be planned, while others will naturally develop as density of the area increases.

The Board stated that the housing component of the Plan seems light on details. Staff explained that the plan envisions 40%-50% residential development, with residential buildings flanking the central spine. The intention is to bring Assembly Square more in line with the rest of the City in terms of housing.

The Board agreed to discuss this topic further at its 5 June 2025 meeting.

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