



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

17 JULY 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); Sarah Lewis (Planning Preservation, & Zoning); Sarah White (Planning, Preservation, & Zoning)

The meeting was called to order at 6:02pm and adjourned at 7:11pm.

GENERAL BUSINESS: Meeting Minutes

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Vice Chair Aboff, the Board voted unanimously (6-0) to approve the 1 May 2025 meeting minutes, as amended.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Vice Chair Aboff, the Board voted unanimously (6-0) to approve the 15 May 2025 meeting minutes, as presented.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Vice Chair Aboff, the Board voted unanimously (6-0) to approve the 5 June 2025 meeting minutes, as presented.

PUBLIC HEARING: 483 Broadway
(continued from 5 June 2025)

- Babbitt Design proposes to develop a Commercial Building in the MR4 zoning district, which requires Site Plan Approval (ZP25-000002).
- Babbitt Design proposes alcohol sales use in the MR4 zoning district, which requires a Special Permit (ZP25-000004).

These two cases were discussed concurrently.

The applicant team explained the plan previously submitted did not accurately reflect the conditions next door; the plans have been adjusted. The existing bike lane has a 3' gap for every other parking space between the bike lane and the parking area, for door swings, etc. This led to the original design in keeping the bike lane where it currently exists with the 3' buffer. The proposed loading/unloading will occur once a week on Tuesdays. The plan shows bike stations which can accommodate six bikes. An alternative design would be to keep the parking tight to the sidewalk, creating a bend in the bike lane which cars would have to cross to park. This may be a less safe alternative but would make loading/unloading easier.

Staff stated that the plans have not yet been reviewed by Mobility. The location of the existing bike lane was determined by the City. Mobility should review the proposed options and alternatives.

The Board explained that the initial request was regarding how to discourage unloading from occurring outside of the path shown on the plans. It was noted that the application could be conditioned on review from Mobility, as they did sign off on the previous iteration.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Vice Chair Aboff, the Board voted unanimously (6-0) to approve, with the conditions discussed, the Site Plan Approval to develop a commercial building in the Mid-Rise 4 zoning district with the recommended conditions from the Staff Memo, dated 27 May 2025.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Vice Chair Aboff, the Board voted unanimously (6-0) to approve, with the conditions described in the Staff Memo dated 27 May 2025, the request to establish an alcohol sales use in the MR-4 zoning district.

RESULT:

APPROVED

OTHER BUSINESS: Assembly Square Neighborhood Plan

Staff explained that the Board's comments and concerns have been consolidated into broad categories of connectivity, infrastructure, and sustainability. A presentation was made on these items.

The Board asked about the feasibility of a 60/40 residential-commercial split in terms of a new school. Staff confirmed that this was analyzed but would not be financially viable without additional City resources.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Vice Chair Aboff, the Board voted unanimously (6-0) to adopt the Assembly Square Neighborhood Plan.

RESULT:

ADOPTED

OTHER BUSINESS: Rules of Procedure & Policy

The Board reviewed the proposed amendments to the Rules of Procedure & Policy. Staff explained that there is a proposed slight alteration to the text related to the change in the number of ground story commercial spaces. The proposal is to add text to address that the increase in the number of ground story commercial spaces could be handled through minor Site Plan Approval. It was suggested that the Board consider a matrix regarding what types of development activity require Site Plan Approval.

The Board encouraged Staff to review the zoning ordinance to see where it could be streamlined.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Vice Chair Aboff, the Board voted unanimously (6-0) to adopt the proposed amendments to the Rules of Procedure & Policy of the Planning Board.

RESULT:

ADOPTED

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