



City of Somerville  
**PLANNING BOARD**  
City Hall 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville MA 02143

**4 SEPTEMBER 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>Absent</i>	
Luc Schuster	Alternate	<i>Present</i>	
Lynn Richards	Member	<i>Present</i>	

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

The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm and adjourned at 7:11pm.

**GENERAL BUSINESS: Meeting Minutes**

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Member Habib, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to approve the 7 August 2025 meeting minutes, as presented.

**PUBLIC HEARING: 379 Somerville Ave**

*(continued from 21 August 2025)*

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Member Habib, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to continue this hearing to 18 September 2025, at request of the applicant.

**RESULT:**

**CONTINUED**

**OTHER BUSINESS: 1 Myrtle Street**

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Member Habib, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to continue this item to 18 September 2025, at request of the applicant.

**RESULT:**

**CONTINUED**

**OTHER BUSINESS: Chapter 91 for Pedestrian Bridge at Draw Seven Park**

A representative of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) and the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) explained that the proposal is for a bicycle and pedestrian bridge over the Mystic River. A Chapter 91 signature is required by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) from each of the communities along the river. The project is located over the Mystic River and will end in Draw Seven Park on one side and next to the Encore Casino in Everett on the other. The bridge will be supported by five piers, three of

which will be in the river. There will be a steel arch over the center span. A signature is needed because the project is within filled tidelands and flowed tidelands, and it must be compliant with the regulations of Chapter 91. The bridge will promote public access to waterfront features. The project will also maintain a navigable waterway. It complies with all the fill and structure requirements and standards, promotes and preserves water-related public rights including access to the waterfront, and water-dependent uses. The bridge will comply with all engineering standards. The project schedule is currently in 25% design submission. The intention is to complete all the permitting for the project by March 2026, and design-build requests will then be sent out for proposals.

The Board discussed obtaining an opinion from the City Solicitor as to what its role is in the Chapter 91 process.

A representative of MassDOT explained that there will be a 25% design public hearing on 21 October 2025; comments from the public will then be addressed as part of the plan.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Member Habib, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to continue this item to 18 September 2025.

**RESULT:**

**CONTINUED**

### **PUBLIC HEARING: 3 Craigie Street/675 Somerville Ave**

*(continued from 21 August 2025)*

The applicant team explained that the proposal is for the redevelopment of the property known as 675 Somerville Avenue and 3 Craigie Street. This is an existing gas station and auto shop. The proposal is to demolish the existing structures and build a new 3-story, 14-unit rental building with commercial space on the first floor, in the MR3 zoning district, with no parking proposed.

The applicant team reviewed some of the abutter's concerns expressed at the last meeting. The abutter to the right asked about landscaping, and trash and recycling. A slightly updated landscape plan has been submitted. In response to a request from the abutter, all commercial deliveries will be made by the front entrance on Somerville Ave, rather than through the egress alley. Also, the proposed gate in the egress alley will have a soft close or similar feature to reduce the noise of pedestrians and cyclists. In terms of reconsidering the trash handling plan, due to concerns regarding the proximity to windows and potential disturbances, this has been considered. The applicant team stated that the current residential lobby width is at a minimum based on the Somerville Zoning Ordinance (SZO). The commercial space depth is also at a minimum based on the SZO. Any additional space to accommodate a two cubic yard dumpster, as suggested, would reduce the commercial space or residential lobby such that it would no longer comply with zoning. The transformer area in the back of the site also needs to be retained. The trash and recyclable areas will be fenced and enclosed. The recycling area will be in the back of the egress corridor, adjacent to the abutter's parking lot and their own trash recycling area. This will be located some distance from the abutter's window and will be enclosed with a 6' tall fence with a self-closing access door. The team noted that it will be constructed with materials that are compatible with the building. There was also a comment that the applicant should remove the proposed fencing which spans the length of the building to ensure unobstructed use of the fire escape and to allow for proper maintenance. The applicant agreed and the fence will be pushed back so it does not interfere with the landing of the fire escape. In regard to the comments regarding water runoff, there will be a continuous curve on the property to prevent water runoff and a drain on the landing to address any water in that area. The applicant team noted that the 10' wide egress corridor for the alley serves two purposes. First, it allows the existing non-fire rated construction of the abutter to remain as it is. It also allows for the unprotected windows to remain as is. Plantings are not recommended in the alley, as it is too dark and the way should be left clear.

The applicant team explained that the project coordinated curbside uses and restrictions with the Mobility Division. The project proposes to close three curb cuts, two on Somerville Ave and one on Craigie Street. The

applicant team submitted a Transportation Access Plan (TAP) which consists of a narrative and plans for the City to review. These illustrate access to the building by walking, biking, and driving. The designated loading zone is proposed to serve typical deliveries, and the project recognizes the Board's concerns for double parking in the Somerville bike lane. In following up with the Mobility Division, it turns out that the City has a quick-build project on Somerville Ave, which will create protected bike lanes in both directions by moving the bike lanes next to the sidewalk curb and adding new buffered areas with barriers between vehicles and parking lanes. These improvements will address the double parking concern and will be constructed before this project is complete.

The applicant team also stated that a Planning Board member previously asked about including a 3-bedroom unit in the project. This would put the applicant in the position of not meeting the various criteria for the Site Plan Approval and the Special Permit, namely, meeting the intent and purpose of the MR3 zoning district. Per Zoning Ordinance 4.1.3.D, the purpose is to create dwelling unit types, sizes, and bedroom counts for smaller households and general buildings. Thus, the applicant team is not proposing any three bedroom units. Also, this is a relatively small building of under 15,000 s.f. and, of that, only approximately 12,000 s.f. is residential. This project meets all of the Site Plan Approval and Special Permit criteria and is an improvement over the fully paved existing automotive use. The applicant team stated that this project is fully dimensionally compliant, sustainable, complementary to the neighborhood, and transit oriented.

The Board stated that this project will be an asset to the reenvisioning of Somerville Ave. The Board also stated that it is the City's responsibility to help facilitate non-solo car travel, in coordination with newly proposed projects.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Member Habib, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to approve, with the conditions outlined in the Staff Memo, the Site Plan Approval to develop a General Building in the MR3 zoning district.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Member Habib, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to approve, with the conditions outlined in the Staff Memo, the request to establish a residential housing use in the MR3 zoning district.

<b>RESULT:</b>
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<b>APPROVED</b>
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### **PUBLIC HEARING: 59 Bow Street**

The applicant team stated that the proposal is for a Major Amendment to the original approval, including a revision to the unit count and unit type mix, revisions to the floor plans and the building exterior, as well as the bicycle parking. The project was originally planned to be 15-units but is now 13. As the original unit count would have led to three affordable units, this has now been reduced to 2.6 units, and the applicant will have to pay a fractional share to the City.

The applicant team explained that the main change occurred due to the fact that the originally proposed basement became infeasible; groundwater levels were shown to be too high and shoring the foundation would be too difficult, given the proximity to existing buildings adjacent to the site. The proposal is to eliminate the basement level which was originally planned to hold the bike storage and mechanical area. This allows the applicant team to bring the bike storage room to the at-grade level, providing easier access for bikes. Due to this, the two originally proposed ground floor units will be eliminated. Additional changes are to the fifth story, where a two-bedroom unit was changed to a one-bedroom unit. This was in order to provide a new common lounge area for resident use, along with two roof decks to provide outdoor amenity space. The new roof decks are intended to replace six balconies. Electrical wires were close to the building on Bow Street, and Eversource asked the applicant team to eliminate the balconies on that side to provide proper clearance. The main change to the exterior plans is to replace the balconies with a shared roof deck. The trash room has been reconfigured to allow the vestibule to remain in the center of the building. This allowed for a slight increase to the commercial area. Instead of being

wrapped in brick the entire length, the new proposal is to wrap the building to where the massing breaks, providing a nice visual break, and then changing to a cementitious panel. In terms of the commercial space, a small change was made to add supporting posts at the entry. This area will be framed out with a brick detailing accent to highlight it. In terms of bedroom counts, there were originally three 2-bedrooms, but there are now two. The number of 1-bedroom units remains at nine, and the number of studio units decreased from three to two.

The applicant team explained that Eversource needed to provide approval of the location for the transformer vault prior to the Board approving the project. The applicant team worked with Eversource and received a work order number for the proposed location.

Chair Capuano opened public testimony. Seeing none, Chair Capuano closed public testimony. The written comment period will be left open until 9am on 12 September 2025.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Member Habib, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to continue this hearing to 18 September 2025.

<b>RESULT:</b>
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<b>CONTINUED</b>
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### **OTHER BUSINESS: Board Administration Open Discussion**

The Board agreed to table discussion on this item to a future 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](mailto:PlanningBoard@somervillema.gov)*