



City of Somerville
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS
City Hall 3rd Floor, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville MA 02143

17 SEPTEMBER 2025 MEETING MINUTES

This meeting was conducted via remote participation on Zoom.

NAME	TITLE	STATUS	ARRIVED
Susan Fontano	Chair	<i>Present</i>	
Anne Brockelman	Vice Chair	<i>Present</i>	
Ann Fullerton	Member	<i>Absent</i>	
Zachary Zaremba	Member	<i>Absent</i>	
Brian Cook	Alt. Member	<i>Present</i>	
Sisia Daglian	Alt. Member	<i>Present</i>	

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

The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm and adjourned at 6:51pm.

Member Cook sat as the Acting Clerk. Members Cook and Daglian sat as voting members.

GENERAL BUSINESS: Meeting Minutes

Following a motion by Acting Clerk Cook, seconded by Vice Chair Brockelman, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to approve the 20 August 2025 meeting minutes, as presented.

PUBLIC HEARING: 872 Broadway (ZP25-000064) (ZP25-000065)

(continued from 20 August 2025)

Following a motion by Acting Clerk Cook, seconded by Vice Chair Brockelman, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to approve the request to continue the hearing for 872 Broadway to 1 October 2025.

RESULT:

CONTINUED

PUBLIC HEARING: 8-8a Melvin Street (ZP25-000047) (ZP25-000048) (ZP25-000049)

(continued from 20 August 2025)

The applicant team explained the plan has been revised to show the dormer reduced to 11'7". They stated that this will meet the requirement for the dormer separation. A window was removed from the plan, and there are now two windows instead of three shown. There is still a zoning violation with this dormer configuration as the plan is over the 36" solid wall width allowed. The proposed kitchen is not ideal for the affordable apartment, and the request is to move back to the 13'1" dormer originally proposed.

Chair Fontano opened public testimony.

The Board asked if this is actually being marketed as an affordable unit. The applicant team stated that it is an officially approved affordable unit.

The applicant team explained that, with the 11'7" dormer, only the window variance would still be needed. The Board stated that the dormer face width standard is not met, leading to the requested ZP25-000048 variance.

The Board noted that it looks as though the window was reduced in size, and there was a question regarding if a new violation was thus created, leading to additional relief being needed. Staff explained that this was reviewed by the Inspectional Services Division (ISD), and no additional compliance issues were found.

The Board discussed criterion 1; this is an existing structure, in the given configuration. The nature of the existing structure limited the ability to create an affordable unit. The existing dormer is too large and in violation. This requires a Hardship Variance for the dormer face width. Literal compliance would require a significant financial hardship. For criterion 2, there is some financial hardship to not grant the Hardship Variance as either the entire unit would have to be torn out or would not be useful as an affordable unit. In terms of criterion 3, there is no detriment to the public good, or the nature of the requirements for the Neighborhood Residence (NR) zoning district.

Seeing no public comments at this time, Chair Fontano closed public testimony.

Following a motion by Acting Clerk Cook, seconded by Member Daglian, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to approve the Hardship Variance for ZP25-000048 for relief from the Somerville Zoning Ordinance dormer face width standards, for a dormer face width of 11'7", when the maximum allowed with the newly revised dimensions would be 8'4", and based on the hardship criteria findings as discussed and with the conditions set forth in the second Supplemental Staff Memo, dated 11 September 2025.

RESULT:

APPROVED

The applicant team formally requested to withdraw items ZP25-000047 and ZP25-000049.

Following a motion by Acting Clerk Cook, seconded by Vice Chair Brockelman, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to approve the request for the withdrawal without prejudice of ZP25-000047 and ZP25-000049.

RESULT:

APPROVED

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 ZoningBoard@somervillema.gov