



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

Condominium Review Board

Katjana Ballantyne, Mayor

Monday, December 22, 2025

6:03 pm.

Interim Staff Liaison & Inclusionary Housing Specialist

Benjamin Wyner

Board Members

Zachary Zasloff, Chair

Kate Byrne, Vice-chair

Alix Simeon

Jennifer Tsolas

Meeting Minutes

December 22, 2025 – 6:03 PM

Virtual Hearing

Board Members present: Zachary Zasloff, Kate Byrne, Alix Simeon, Jennifer Tsolas

Staff present: Ben Wyner, Inclusionary Housing Specialist; Joe Theall, Housing Counsel; Lisa Davidson, Housing Director

Chair Zasloff convened the meeting at 6:03 PM. He read the following information aloud: Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2025, this meeting of the Condominium Review Board will be conducted via remote participation. We will post an audio recording, audio-video recording, transcript, or other comprehensive record of these proceedings as soon as possible after the meeting on the City of Somerville website and local cable access government channels.

1. MEETING CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order with a call for attendance made by Chair Zasloff.

Responses were as follows:

Chair Zasloff Present

Vice-chair Byrne Present

Member Simeon Present

Member Tsolas Present

With four in attendance there was a quorum, and the meeting was called to order.

2. ADMINISTRATIVE

a. MEETING MINUTES

I. NOVEMBER 2025

Chair Zasloff opened the floor to the Board for any comments on the November 2025 meeting minutes; seeing none, the floor was closed.

On a motion duly made a roll call vote was called and it was voted 4-0:

Chair Zasloff- yes

Vice-chair Byrne-yes

Member Simeon- yes

Member Tsolas- yes

To approve the meeting minutes for November 2025.

II. APPROVAL OF 2026 MEETING DATES AND DEADLINES

Chair Zasloff opened the floor to the Board to discuss the schedule of proposed 2026 meeting dates and application deadlines; Vice-chair Byrne suggested moving the December meeting one week earlier to avoid proximity to Christmas; Chair Zasloff and Board staff agreed this was feasible. Member Tsolas supported the change and proposed also adjusting the November meeting, currently scheduled the Monday before Thanksgiving. Chair Zasloff concurred, and staff confirmed both changes were possible and would prepare revised dates for review at the Board's January meeting. Vice-chair Byrne asked if combining November and December meetings was an option. Chair Zasloff noted no prior discussion on this, and staff suggested scheduling twelve meetings annually but revisiting availability in the fall. Chair Zasloff proposed instead holding a single meeting in early December to finalize year-end applications. Vice-chair Byrne agreed, and staff committed to reviewing the calendar for a combined November/December meeting date. Housing Counsel Theall confirmed combining the meetings made sense and advised voting on the remaining 2026 dates to set January's meeting. With no further questions or comments the floor was closed.

On a motion duly made a roll call vote was called and it was voted 4-0:

Chair Zasloff- yes

Vice-chair Byrne-yes

Member Simeon- yes

Member Tsolas- yes

To approve the proposed 2026 dates and deadlines with the acknowledgement that the Board would revisit some dates at a future meeting.

3. NEW BUSINESS

a. APPLICATIONS FOR FINAL/COURTESY PERMITS

WARD 7 PRECINCT 3

17-19 High Street

Application of Sangye Dongshi, seeking a Final Conversion Permit for Unit #1 & Unit #2 at 17-19 High Street. Attorney Anne Vigorito attended as representative on behalf of the applicant. Attorney Vigorito noted that the required notice period for the units had passed with the preliminary permits having been approved in November 2024. She then detailed the additional materials submitted along with the final permit request.

Chair Zasloff opened the floor to the Board; seeing none, the floor was closed.

Chair Zasloff opened the floor to public comment; seeing none, the floor was closed.

On a motion duly made a roll call vote was called and it was voted 4-0:

Chair Zasloff- yes

Vice-chair Byrne-yes

Member Simeon- yes

Member Tsolas- yes

To grant a Final Conversion Permit for Unit #1 & Unit #2 at 17-19 High Street.

WARD 7 PRECINCT 3

155-157 Boston Avenue

Application of 155 Boston Ave Somerville LLC, Lucas Mendes Garcia, James P. Douglas, Caitlin M. Merullo Managers seeking a Final Conversion Permit for Unit #1, Unit #2 & Unit #3 at 155-157 Boston Avenue. Attorney Matthew Spang attended as representative on behalf of the applicant. Attorney Spang explained that the preliminary permits for the units were issued in July of 2025, and additional materials had since been submitted. Chair Zasloff then noted that since the last hearing, the applicant had also made payment for conversion of a third unit. Attorney Spang shared that they had initially applied for a courtesy permit for the third unit, but after conversations with Board staff had discovered that the unit was not entirely new construction, and therefore would require a conversion permit instead of a courtesy one.

Chair Zasloff opened the floor to the Board; seeing none, the floor was closed.

Chair Zasloff opened the floor to public comment; seeing none, the floor was closed.

Prior to voting, Board member Tsolas pointed out that there was a question in the chat from someone in attendance. Board staff noted that he would ask the individual which agenda item their question was in relation to, so that the attendee could speak at the appropriate time.

On a motion duly made a roll call vote was called and it was voted 4-0:

Chair Zasloff- yes

Vice-chair Byrne-yes

Member Simeon- yes

Member Tsolas- yes

To grant a Final Conversion Permit for Unit #1, Unit #2 & Unit #3 at 155-157 Boston Avenue.

b. PRELIMINARY CONDOMINIUM CONVERSION PERMITS

WARD 3 PRECINCT 2

12 Pleasant Avenue

Application of SCLT Community Land LLC, Ben Baldwin Manager, seeking a Preliminary Rental Conversion Permit for Unit #1, Unit #2, Unit #3, Unit #4, Unit #5 & Unit #6 at 12 Pleasant Avenue. Ben Baldwin attended to speak on the application. Mr. Baldwin requested an amendment to the preliminary permit issued in March 2025. The applicant intends to convert the property into affordable condominiums for current income-eligible tenants. Mr. Baldwin explained that some tenants were not eligible for enhanced protections when the property was purchased, and certain notice periods have expired. He requested a 6-month extension of the notice period for Unit #1. Unit #2 tenants have vacated and received relocation payments. Chair Zasloff then asked to confirm his understanding that the request in question was just to extend the notice period by 6 months for unit #1. Mr. Baldwin confirmed and then sought clarification on whether the notice period for unit #2 should also be extended for consistency. Board staff suggested aligning notice periods with other units expiring in 2029 and noting that they would end when an offer to purchase is made to an income-eligible buyer. This approach would provide flexibility for filing the Master Deed. Mr. Baldwin expressed concern about potential delays if tenants in unit #1 remain until 2029 but confirmed all units will be sold as deed-restricted, regardless of whether current tenants purchase. Chair Zasloff asked if Housing Counsel Joseph Theall had anything to share. Attorney Theall clarified that tenants with enhanced protections may remain until their notice period expires, but Unit #1 and Unit #2 tenants were not low-moderate income and thus not entitled to such protections.

Chair Zasloff opened the floor to the Board; seeing none, the floor was closed.

Chair Zasloff opened the floor to public comment; seeing none, the floor was closed.

Prior to making a motion to vote, Chair Zasloff asked for guidance on how to properly state the motion. Board staff suggested that it can be phrased as a motion to approve an amendment to the preliminary permit; an approach which Attorney Theall confirmed.

On a motion duly made a roll call vote was called and it was voted 4-0:

Chair Zasloff- yes

Vice-chair Byrne-yes

Member Simeon- yes

Member Tsolas- yes

To amend the Preliminary Rental Conversion Permit for 12 Pleasant Avenue by extending the notice period for unit #1 by six months.

WARD 4 PRECINCT 1

81 Wheatland Street

Application of 81 Wheatland LLC, Robert Egan Manager, seeking a Preliminary Rental Conversion Permit for Unit #1, Unit #2 & Unit #3 at 81 Wheatland Street. Attorney Mark Sheehan attended as representative on behalf of the applicant. Attorney Sheehan noted the three-unit property was purchased vacant and remains vacant. He detailed the application materials that had been submitted. He also noted that a fire occurred in July 2025, rendering the property uninhabitable; the prior owner sold the property in damaged condition. He emphasized the applicant had no relationship with former tenants and was not involved during their displacement.

Chair Zasloff opened the floor to the Board; Board members began by seeking clarity on the fire timeline and former tenants' relocation. Attorney Sheehan recounted that the fire occurred in July of 2025, and the applicant had not made an offer on the property while the former tenants were still in their units. He confirmed the applicant did not interact with tenants prior to the sale and relocation assistance was not part of the sale agreement. With no further questions or comments the floor was closed.

Chair Zasloff opened the floor to public comment; Freud Caries, a former tenant of 81 Wheatland Street, explained that he had requested access to salvage belongings from the building following the fire; expressed frustration with lack of assistance from both prior owner and applicant. He felt that the new owner should not simply purchase the property without consideration for the seventeen former tenants who were displaced and lost their homes and all their possessions. Chair Zasloff noted that there are liabilities around damaged or condemned buildings, which may be the reason that former tenants were not permitted entry. Albert Deler Hernandez then spoke and introduced himself as a former housemate of Mr. Caries at 81 Wheatland Street. He shared concerns about overcrowding with seventeen residents in the 3-unit building at one time, and possible fire risk, and said he conveyed these concerns on multiple occasions to the prior owner. He also described facing financial hardship post-displacement and requested assistance with the recovery of personal items. Both tenants noted City support was limited to temporary housing and small stipends; described feeling abandoned by the City and the property ownership. With no further questions or comments the floor was closed.

Chair Zasloff re-opened the floor to the Board; Vice-chair Byrne stated her belief that the property was most likely an illegal rooming house. Members expressed frustration that some tenant displacement issues fall outside the Board's purview. Vice-chair Byrne and member Tsolas raised moral concerns about lack of communication with former tenants and suggested exploring Ordinance

amendments for future cases. Board member Tsolas noted a possible previous precedent that may have been set where there was water damage in a property, and the Board had decided to table the application for that property while the current owner considered giving financial compensation to tenants that had been displaced. She recalled the former tenants had received some compensation in that instance. Chair Zasloff emphasized responsibility lies with the prior owner and criticized City inaction, noting repeated displacement cases due to fires. Board staff noted that at the discussion was beginning to stray from the matter of the application at hand. Staff Liaison recommended using staff as a resource to gather more information about how the City currently protects its residents from displacement and what the response is when there is displacement due to a fire. Chair Zasloff agreed and requested that City staff provide a staff report on the City's displacement response and the prior owner's history of compliance with City Ordinances. Chair Zasloff then closed the floor for public commentary and re-opened the floor to the applicant's representative.

Attorney Sheehan provided some additional context, sharing that the property was inaccessible prior to the purchase. He also noted that conditions made belongings unsalvageable due to fire, smoke, and chemical damage. He reiterated that while he understood the Board's objections, the applicant had complied with Ordinance requirements. Board member Tsolas responded and noted that the property listing that is still posted online states that group showings are allowed, and that you have to sign a waiver in order to view the property. She noted the poor optics of that language on the listing, considering everything former tenants have shared. The Board expressed a desire to deliberate on potential Ordinance amendments for future cases. Seeing no further comment, Chair Zasloff then motioned to close the floor for Board discussion and asked Attorney Theall if he would provide any guidance on how to proceed.

Attorney Theall suggested that if the Board's deliberation had concluded that they must render a decision within 60 days. He noted that while staff can provide some additional information to the Board, it's important to make the distinction between what is currently within the jurisdiction of the Board, as opposed to larger City service discussions. The Board's consensus was not to table the application as the the outcome following that review would likely be unchanged.

On a motion duly made a roll call vote was called and it was voted 3-1:

Chair Zasloff- yes

Vice-chair Byrne- abstain

Member Simeon- yes

Member Tsolas- yes

Board staff described some uncertainty about having a majority with a member abstaining, and Chair Zasloff and Attorney Theall clarified their understanding that a majority was attained. The motion passed.

To grant a Preliminary Rental Conversion Permit for Unit #1, Unit #2 & Unit #3 at 81 Wheatland Street.

WARD 4 PRECINCT 3
373 Medford Street

Application of Xiyu Zhou, seeking a Preliminary Non-Rental Conversion Permit for Unit #1, Unit #2 & Unit #3 at 373 Medford Street. Attorney Mark Sheehan attended as representative on behalf of the applicant. He detailed the property as previously owner-occupied and vacant since the applicant's purchase. He then recounted the supporting materials submitted alongside the application.

Chair Zasloff opened the floor to the Board; Board member Tsolas posed to the applicant's representative a question of if all units on the property were owner-occupied. Attorney Sheehan clarified that in addition to the previous owner occupant living in the home, there were other family members, such as the owner's daughter and his husband, living in another one of the units. Board member Tsolas then continued to note that the Board has seen these sort of scenarios in the past, and while applicants may make generalizations on behalf of everyone living in the unit, some of the family members in one of the units at a property may consider themselves rent-paying tenants, despite being the owner's family members. She suggested that it might be helpful to also hear from other people that resided in units for applications that are submitted as owner-occupied so the Board can corroborate those facts. Attorney Sheehan then responded to explain that his office always includes in the affidavits information about any rent-paying tenant, so when the owner indicates that there were no tenants that verifies there was no one paying rent to the former owner. He emphasized that these affidavits are sworn statements which holds significant weight for his clients. Board member Tsolas thanked Attorney Sheehan for his clarification. With no further questions or comments the floor was closed.

Chair Zasloff opened the floor to public comment; seeing none, the floor was closed.

On a motion duly made a roll call vote was called and it was voted 4-0:

Chair Zasloff- yes

Vice-chair Byrne-yes

Member Simeon- yes

Member Tsolas- yes

To grant a Preliminary Non-Rental Conversion Permit for Unit #1, Unit #2 & Unit #3 at 373 Medford Street.

WARD 6 PRECINCT 1

333 Highland Avenue

Application of Fan Wang & Marc Wagner, seeking a Preliminary Rental Conversion Permit for Unit #1A, Unit #1B, Unit #2 & Unit #3 at 333 Highland Avenue. This application was a continuance of a hearing initially opened on August **, 2025 and continued by the Board. Fan Wang attended to speak on the application. Ms. Wang began by describing the property as being vacant when purchased in June of 2025, with all tenants vacating prior to the completion of the sale. She then noted all the materials that had been submitted alongside the application, including some additional documentation to directly address concerns the Board had voiced in the prior hearing for this application. She mentioned proof of efforts to obtain information about the specifics of the former tenants' lengths of residency in their units on the property as an example of this.

She also gave clarification on the fire safety inspection and land survey conducted before the purchase of the property. She noted that these were both standard due diligence for property purchase. She explained that no condo conversion activities occurred while tenants occupied units. She also objected to the August 2025 hearing process, citing limited opportunity to speak.

Chair Zasloff opened the floor to the Board; Board Member Tsolas requested further details on the fire inspection and land survey. Ms. Wang explained that the fire inspection was coordinated by prior owner and required for the completion of the home sale. She also described the land survey as standard practice and noted that land surveys were strictly necessary for correcting lot size records. With no further questions or comments the floor was closed.

Chair Zasloff opened the floor to public comment; seeing none, the floor was closed.

Chair Zasloff noted not having been present at the August Board meeting when the hearing began but felt comfortable moving to vote as he had reviewed materials from the Board's August meeting. Chair Zasloff began a motion to grant a preliminary rental permit for the property. Before a vote could be taken, Board member Tsolas requested the opportunity to continue to speak with her fellow Board members.

Chair Zasloff re-opened the floor to the Board; Member Tsolas expressed frustration over limited information and lack of third-party verification. She noted feeling that staff, current and prior, had not supplied the necessary and requested information. Board Staff then provided a fire inspection summary and confirmed compliance with normal standards as shared by Fire Prevention staff. Vice-chair Byrne then spoke and noted that she favored the applicant making payments to former tenants, with Chair Zasloff noting that applicants often incur legal fees to avoid relocation payments, and while not necessarily required, a proactive payment by the applicant could be commendable. With no further questions or comments the floor was closed.

Chair Zasloff then made a motion to grant a preliminary rental conversion permit for the property. On a motion duly made a roll call vote was called and it was voted 1-3:

Chair Zasloff- yes

Vice-chair Byrne- abstain

Member Simeon- no

Member Tsolas- abstain

To grant a Preliminary Rental Conversion Permit for Unit #1A, Unit #1B, Unit #2 & Unit #3 at 333 Highland Avenue

Chair Zasloff asked to clarify the Board's next steps. Attorney Theall recommended the Board should take an action tonight, and that there may be another motion that does pass with a majority of the Board's support. He

explained that if the Board denied the permit, they should also ensure they establish the factual basis for such a denial.

Chair Zasloff re-opened the floor to the Board; Board member Simeon noted his agreement with Vice-chair Byrne's preference to attach the condition of relocation payments made to former tenants. Board member Tsolas did not feel like there was a clear basis for requiring the applicant to make relocation payment and would therefore be willing to change her vote despite her reservations about doing so. The applicant declined the suggestion that she could make relocation payments, citing no legal obligation and financial constraints. Board member Tsolas asked if there would be an affordable unit required at the property under the City's zoning ordinance. Board staff confirmed that affordability requirements would not be applicable, as there are no new units were being added. Vice-chair Byrne noted that she would like to see the owner and tenants have a direct conversation and come to an understanding and took some issue with the applicant's refusal to make any consideration to help the former tenants.

Chair Zasloff then requested additional guidance from Housing Counsel Theall. Attorney Theall explained that if the Board felt they needed additional information to make a determination they could continue the hearing to a subsequent meeting. He also noted that there was nothing in the Ordinance that would allow the Board to mandate a meeting between the owner and former tenants, and that the Board should focus on considerations of evidence of whether "intent to convert" as defined in the Ordinance could be established with respect to this application.. With no further questions or comments the floor was closed.

Chair Zasloff then made a subsequent motion to grant a preliminary rental conversion permit for the property. On a motion duly made a roll call vote was called and it was voted 2-2:

Chair Zasloff- yes

Vice-chair Byrne- abstain

Member Simeon- no

Member Tsolas- yes

To grant a Preliminary Rental Conversion Permit for Unit #1A, Unit #1B, Unit #2 & Unit #3 at 333 Highland Avenue

Board staff again had some uncertainty about the motion having passed, but it was clarified that a majority of 3 members would be needed for a motion to pass, regardless of a member of the Board having abstained.

Chair Zasloff re-opened the floor to the Board; Chair Zasloff shared that he would continue to vote yes, based on what could be done within the confines of the Ordinance. Board members asked for information regarding the former tenants and their lack of attendance. Board staff noted that hearing notices had been sent on December 8th and received acknowledgements from the former tenants of having received the hearing notice. Board members acknowledged challenges in balancing anti-displacement goals with ordinance constraints. Board member Tsolas then noted that while she had some additional information

regarding the fire inspection, that former Board staff had not addressed her request for information regarding the land survey and the tenant's claim that the purpose of the survey went beyond lot size. Attorney Theall then spoke and noted that the purpose of the land survey was something that was discussed internally by staff following the previous hearing, and is something that the Housing Division and City aren't necessarily in a position to label as standard or non-standard market practice. He suggested the Board make their findings based on a more-probable-than-not standard. He then encouraged the Board to continue to ask questions of the applicant and Board staff to help them with their determination. Board staff noted that from his experience with developments that include affordable units, projects of differing plot sizes will change tenure from rental to condominiums and vice versa. He considered if this can be valuable information when considering if a land survey, prior to the purchase of a property, is likely to directly relate to the creation of condominiums. With no further questions or comments the floor was closed.

Chair Zasloff then made a subsequent motion to grant a preliminary rental conversion permit for the property. On a motion duly made a roll call vote was called and it was voted 4-0:

Chair Zasloff- yes

Vice-chair Byrne- yes

Member Simeon- yes

Member Tsolas- yes

To grant a Preliminary Rental Conversion Permit for Unit #1A, Unit #1B, Unit #2 & Unit #3 at 333 Highland Avenue.

4. ADJOURN

Chair Zasloff motioned to adjourn at 8:35 pm which Vice-chair Byrne seconded. The meeting was adjourned.