



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

14 JANUARY 2026 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>	
Olivia Mobayed	Member	<i>Present</i>	
Ann Fullerton	Member	<i>Present</i>	
Zachary Zarembo	Member	<i>Present</i>	
Brian Cook	Alt. Member	<i>Present</i>	
Sisia Daglian	Alt. Member	<i>Present</i>	

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

The meeting was called to order at 6:05pm and adjourned at 7:01pm.

Member Brockelman sat as the Acting Clerk.

GENERAL BUSINESS: Board Elections

Vice Chair Brockelman nominated Orsola Susan Fontano as Chair of the Somerville Zoning Board of Appeals and she accepted. There were no other nominations.

The Board voted unanimously (7-0) to nominate Orsola Susan Fontano as Chair of the Somerville Zoning Board of Appeals.

Member Fullerton nominated Anne Brockelman as Vice Chair of the Somerville Zoning Board of Appeals and she accepted. There were no other nominations.

The Board voted unanimously (7-0) to nominate Anne Brockelman as Vice Chair of the Somerville Zoning Board of Appeals.

As there were no volunteers, there was agreement that the Board members would rotate through the position of Clerk.

The Board voted unanimously (7-0) that the Board members would rotate through the position of Clerk.

GENERAL BUSINESS: Executive Session

Following a motion by Vice Chair Brockelman, seconded by Member Cook, the Board voted unanimously (7-0) to enter into an Executive Session at 6:10pm for the purpose of discussing an Open Meeting Law complaint.

The Board reconvened at 6:29pm. It was noted that votes were taken during the Executive Session, regarding the Open Meeting Law complaint.

PUBLIC HEARING: 17 Hudson Street (ZP25-000094)

(continued from 17 December 2025)

Following a motion by Vice Chair Brockelman, seconded by Member Fullerton, the Board voted unanimously (7-0) to continue this hearing to 4 February 2026, at request of the applicant.

RESULT:

CONTINUED

PUBLIC HEARING: 66 Union Square Plaza (ZP25-000100)

(continued from 17 December 2025)

The applicant team explained that Bank of America is proposing to rebrand an existing ATM vestibule. There are two sign panels proposed, one in the front and one at a right angle towards the building. By code, the vestibule can only have one sign panel, and the sign on the right of the vestibule is blank. The applicant is proposing to place their logo on the side of the vestibule above the glass, which will not be illuminated.

Chair Fontano opened public testimony.

The applicant team explained that the right side of the vestibule was designed and intended for branding. The applicant would like to be able to have the exposure from the logo sign. This is not believed to be visual clutter or detrimental to the area. It will affect the company's branding and cause a hardship to not be able to install the logo sign. Other companies in this area are allowed to have signs and branding on various sides of their businesses. There are two available sides for signage.

The Board discussed the issue with this application meeting all the Hardship Variance criteria.

Some Board members noted that there is a store nearby which has small logos bookmarking an awning, similarly to what is being proposed. A variance can be granted if it is defensible, meaning that the deviation is not substantial or significant in comparison with the intent and purpose of the district. This will not be an impactful change to the neighborhood. Also, this is a unique building, as the frontage is small. The nature of the building could be a hardship. However, the sidewalk in this area is quite wide, making it easy to see the front of the building from the street. The decision could depend on how the proposed sign is categorized.

Other Board members stated that they prefer a crisper look and less signage. The building is otherwise marked with the applicant's logo and signage. There does not seem to be a hardship for this sign request. The burden is on the applicant to show a hardship.

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

Following a motion by Vice Chair Brockelman, seconded by Member Fullerton, the Board voted unanimously (0-5) to approve the requested Hardship Variance to install a non-compliant sign for 66 Union Square Plaza. Therefore, the motion failed and the Hardship Variance was denied.

RESULT:

DENIED

NOTICE: These minutes constitute a summary of the votes and key discussions at this meeting. A recording of these proceedings can be found online here: [Agendas, Minutes, & More.](#)