



City of Somerville
URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION
City Hall 3rd Floor, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville MA 02143

14 APRIL 2026 MEETING MINUTES

This meeting was conducted via remote participation on Zoom.

NAME	TITLE	STATUS	ARRIVED
Sarah Lewis	Co-Chair	<i>Absent</i>	
Estello Raganit	Co-Chair	<i>Present</i>	
Frank Valdes	Member	<i>Absent</i>	
Deborah Fennick	Member	<i>Absent</i>	
Andrew Arbaugh	Member	<i>Present</i>	
Tim Talun	Member	<i>Present</i>	
Martin Pavlinic	Alternate	<i>Present</i>	

City staff present: Lexie Payne (Planning, Preservation, & Zoning)

Estello Raganit, Co-Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:12pm and adjourned at 7:18pm.

GENERAL BUSINESS: MEETING MINUTES

Following a motion by Member Pavlinic, seconded by Member Arbaugh, the Commission voted unanimously (3-0) to approve the 3 March 2026 meeting minutes, as presented.

DESIGN REVIEW: 382 McGrath Highway
(continued from 28 October 2025)

The applicant team explained that some massing studies have been completed. The building will be constructed on the existing profile, with an addition on the top. The intention is to extend the building envelope to the rear side, adjacent to the setback. The floor plans were reviewed after previous concerns regarding the bedroom functions. One bedroom was reduced from the plans and turned into an office space. The proposed building will be slightly wider than the previous plan. The landscape plan, showing varying plant species, was reviewed. The open space will include chairs and green plants. The Green Score for this project is 0.3.

The Commission asked about how the planting area on the ground can be accessed from the rear yard. The applicant team reviewed where on the plans the accessibility is located. The Commission stated that there seem to be lightwells or bike racks shown on the plan that will not allow for room to access the rear yard. The applicant team discussed removal of some of the window wells from the plan.

The applicant team stated that there will be a ramp into the building. The Commission noted that a ramp will require railings and level landings on both ends. It does not appear there will be room for these items. The ramp will need to show the proper width, slope, and other details on the plan. There were concerns expressed that the proposed ramp would not meet ADA compliance.

The Commission asked how many bike spaces are required for the building. The applicant team stated that there will be ten indoors and two adjacent to the entrance on the rack. The Commission noted that there are only eight true bike spaces on the plan, as the rack cannot be used due to its location next to the structure.

The Commission asked if the raised planter on the sidewalk can be counted toward the Green Score. Staff noted that if the planters are on the streetscape and not part of the property line, they do not count. The Commission expressed concern regarding maintaining the landscape in the small space available.

The Commission also expressed concern regarding the grading of the site. More information is needed regarding the grading on the left side of the site. The wood privacy fence is noted to be on a concrete wall, and the wall needs to be drawn to the correct thickness on the plan. It is unclear how the building will be sitting on this grade of the site.

The Commission noted that the plan shows two stairs that both open internally to the building, and one means of egress from the building. The Commission asked about a second means of egress out of the building, which would impact the site plan.

The Commission explained that the site conditions do not express that this building can actually be built to the property line, as there will be no light for anyone living on the bottom floor of the building in terms of the proposed light wells.

Following a motion by Member Pavlinic, seconded by Member Arbaugh, the Commission voted unanimously (3-0) to continue the hearing for 382 McGrath Highway.

RESULT:

CONTINUED

DESIGN REVIEW: 359 Lowell Street

(continued from 13 January 2026)

The applicant team explained that the proposal is to keep the existing exterior wall and add two floors on top. The material for the exterior wall will be renewed. The proposal looks to reduce the unit size to two. The design includes wheelchair accessibility, and a rooftop green space. The project aims for net-zero status, with materials including 8" fiberboard and vertical siding. The four temporary parking spots for bikes were shown on the plans.

The Commission stated that the landscaping on the roof terrace has been diversified a bit from the last submittal. The plan would benefit from a landscape architect as there appears to be some spacing and plant selection issues. Some of the spacing of the paths likely does not meet the turning radius requirements for an outdoor space. Also, the pervious pathways should not be counted as pervious on a roof. It is unclear if this will achieve the Green Score.

The Commission noted that there is additional fenestration on the revised plan, which is a benefit. Details and samples of the materials should be submitted.

Following a motion by Member Arbaugh, seconded by Member Pavlinic, the Commission voted unanimously (3-0) to continue the hearing for 359 Lowell Street.

RESULT:

CONTINUED

OTHER BUSINESS: Update on In-Person Meetings

Staff explained that Tufts has not yet sent a response to the question regarding use of the building. Additional staff members, approximately four, will be needed to run these in-person meetings. The Commission asked if there are any other buildings in the City available to meet in. The Commission noted that Zoom could be set up on a

computer in the room in order for the recording secretary to continue to attend the meetings. Staff stated that they would continue to look into this as well.

The Commission asked to target May 12th for an in-person meeting. Staff stated that this is a good goal to work toward.

Following a motion by Member Talun, seconded by Member Arbaugh, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) that it would prefer to meet in-person for its 12 May 2026 meeting.

RESULT:	RECOMMENDED
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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.](#)