



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

11 AUGUST 2026 MEETING MINUTES

This meeting was conducted via remote participation on Zoom.

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

City staff present: Lexie Payne (Planning Division)

The meeting was called to order at 6:02pm and adjourned at 6:50pm.

GENERAL BUSINESS: MEETING MINUTES

Following a motion by Member Pavlinic, seconded by Member Fennick, the Commission voted unanimously (3-0) to approve the 24 March 2026 meeting minutes, as presented.

Following a motion by Member Pavlinic, seconded by Member Fennick, the Commission voted unanimously (3-0) to approve the 14 April 2026 minutes, as presented.

RESULT:

APPROVED

DESIGN REVIEW: 84 Washington Street

The applicant team explained that Cobble Hill is seeking Site Plan Approval to restore parking that it lost at the Cobble Hill Apartments at 84 Washington Street. This is a four-building residential senior living complex. After the City took 90 Washington Street, the taking removed parking from the 84 Washington Street senior living complex. This proposal is to replace some of that lost parking, which requires Site Plan Approval from the Planning Board. The proposal to add parking is to meet the needs of the senior residents. The existing four buildings are not proposed to change. The new parking leads to some tree removal, and new trees being planted elsewhere on site. Some of the parking spaces are partly on land next door, which is owned by the Somerville Redevelopment Authority (SRA), as a result of the taking of 90 Washington Street. To incorporate these spaces, which are partly on the SRA's land, requires permission from the SRA, which has not yet been obtained. Most of the spaces being proposed are accessible, which are needed due to this being a senior living complex. The spaces are proposed to be placed as close to the building entrances as possible and arranged in a somewhat unconventional manner due to the Somerville Zoning Ordinance (SZO) only allowing five parking spaces before needing an intermediate landscaped island in between. This limits the number of spaces that can be added to the site but also breaks up the sea of pavement. The applicant looked into preserving as many trees as possible but seeks to remove eight living trees, ten trees in total. The location of the islands was coordinated to try to preserve as many existing trees as possible on the site. The applicant walked the site with an Engineer to identify localized low depressions in the existing parking lot, where stormwater currently collects and does not enter the existing drainage network very

well. As part of this project, the applicant will add some new impervious areas and leaching catch basins. These will be 6' diameter dry wells, with 3' of stone surrounding them, and will provide some infiltration for the added impervious area. This will provide some recharge for the stormwater back into the ground and will help minimize some of the localized puddling that happens in the parking lot today. In terms of tree removal, there is a total of 128" of caliper that need to be replaced. The applicant has proposed 39 trees to install which will equate to approximately 129", though after some years, those numbers will greatly increase. The project requires Site Plan Approval, even though no buildings are changing. 29 new parking spaces will be added, of which 20 are accessible. Cobble Hill lost 36 spaces due to the taking of 90 Washington Street, and so will still have fewer spaces than before. Even adding the six additional spaces that are partly on the SRA property still leaves Cobble Hill with fewer spaces than before. Buildings 84 and 74, whose residents primarily relied on the parking lot that was lost, contain 159 residents. 45 of them have been issued parking stickers, and 22 of them have handicap placards. With the loss of the lot through the taking, these elderly residents have been walking from the two buildings to the farthest parking lot on the property. The average age of residents in both of those buildings is 75 years old.

The Commission asked about crosswalks being added as part of these parking spaces. The applicant team stated that these are proposed, though not included in detail being presented today.

The Commission noted that removal of any trees will need to be discussed with the Urban Forestry Committee and asked that the applicant make sure the species proposed are in line with the Pollinator Action Plan in order to have a tree canopy that aligns with the City's priorities.

The Commission asked about the northernmost spaces proposed and the loss of four trees. They asked if it would be feasible to shift those spaces to the plan right, where there appears to be no trees. The applicant team explained that this area is where folks pull into the site; anyone backing out of a parking space in that area would be backing into someone trying to pull into the site from the road. This is also where the existing Cobble Hill shrub is and there are some grading issues in this area.

There was discussion regarding the location of proposed crosswalks for the site.

Following a motion by Member Fennick, seconded by Member Pavlinic, the Commission voted unanimously (3-0) to recommend the plan.

RESULT:	RECOMMENDED
----------------	--------------------

OTHER BUSINESS: Check-In

It was noted that the Arts & Innovation District Urban Design Framework went before the Planning Board and was adopted on Thursday, 8 August 2026.

The Commission discussed a future in-person meeting, potentially on the 25th.

The Commission also discussed changes to zoning and the Rules of Policy and Procedure, which would allow the Commission to function more similarly to some of the other boards and commissions,

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](#).