Variance Submittal Requirements

VARIANCE SUBMITTAL CHECKLIST		
☒ Required ☐ At the request of the Zoning Board	**Variance**	**Filled Out by Applicant** Included?
Submission Forms		
Completed Submittal Checklist	☒	☐
Property Owner Authorization Form	☒	☐
Recorded Deed	☒	☐
Somerville Abutters List – *provided by Planning Division*	☒	☒
Neighboring Municipality Abutters List (within 300 ft) *– Abutters Lists must be provided in Excel (.xlsx) format*	☐	☐
Project Information		
Project Narrative	☒	☐
Any Other Supporting Documents Needed	☐	☐
Plans		
Land Title Survey	☒	☐
Existing & Proposed Site, Architectural, or Landscape Plans necessary to illustrate the requested Variance	☒	☐
Other		
Required Fees	☒	Online

Document Requirements

Format Standards

- All documents must be submitted in PDF format unless otherwise specified.
- Written materials must be 8.5”x11” portrait-oriented pages.
- Plans and illustrations must be landscape-oriented pages.
- Digital copies of all plan drawings must be full size for the appropriate scale of each drawing.
- All plan sheets must have a graphic scale and north arrow.
- All regulated dimensions and features must be properly illustrated and labeled on submitted plans.
- All plans must be prepared by an MA-registered design professional, and every page must bear the seal and signature of the responsible, registered design professional.
- All plans must include dates of preparation and revision.
- All plans must be clearly labeled.

File Naming

Digital Files should be labeled as “StreetNameStreetNumber_Description_YYYY-MM-DD.pdf”. Do not use spaces or special characters. For example, “HighlandAve93_Narrative_2026-07-01.pdf”

If updates to one or more documents are required, the Applicant must clearly label the updated set of documents in the file name.

Waivers

Applicants may submit a written request for a waiver from any of the information required for an application to the Zoning Board of Appeals. Written requests must be submitted to zoningboard@somervilema.gov and must include the following:

1. Identification of the specific item(s) a waiver is being requested from.
2. The Applicant's reasoning for why the Board should grant the waiver.

Waiver requests are scheduled to be heard at a regular meeting of the Zoning Board of Appeals within thirty (30) days. If the Board does not meet within thirty (30) days, the Chair shall grant or deny the waiver request on behalf of the Board.

Variance Narratives

Variance narratives should be a succinct but thorough description, accompanied by graphics and illustrations as necessary, identifying all variances requested for a proposal.

The narrative must include a summary of all relief requested (i.e., what is required by the Somerville Zoning Ordinance versus what is being proposed) AND identification of the specific sections and sub-section(s) of the Ordinance that relief is being requested from.

Narratives must answer the following practical difficulty questions for each requested variance:

1. What does strict enforcement of the zoning ordinance require on this lot?
2. What practical difficulty (consequence) results from strict enforcement? (physical, financial, environmental, etc.)
3. What are the benefits to the applicant of granting the variance?
4. What are the benefits to the public interest, including housing production, of granting the variance?
5. What are the detriments to the public health, safety, and welfare of the neighborhood, of granting the variance?

For example, if two variances are requested, the narrative should answer each of the five questions for the first variance AND answer each of the five questions for the second variance.