



City of Somerville

# PLANNING BOARD

City Hall 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville MA 02143

**TO:** Planning Board  
**FROM:** Planning & Zoning Staff  
**SUBJECT:** 201B Highland Ave, P&Z 21-019  
**POSTED:** June 27, 2021

**RECOMMENDATION:** Approve with Conditions (SP)

Staff memos are used to communicate background information, analysis, responses to public comments, review of statutory requirements and other information from the Planning & Zoning staff to the Review Board members.

This memo summarizes the development review application submitted for 201B Highland Ave, identifies any additional discretionary or administrative development review that is required by the Somerville Zoning Ordinance, and provides related analysis or feedback as necessary. The application was deemed complete on June 6, 2021 and is scheduled for a public hearing on July 15, 2021. Any Staff recommended findings, conditions, and decisions in this memo are based on the information available to date prior to any public comment at the scheduled public hearing.

## LEGAL NOTICE

Emily Lagasse proposes to establish a Pet Day Care or Training commercial service principal use, which requires a Special Permit.

## SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL

Emily Lagasse, owner of Petwell Supply, currently operates a retail use for pet supplies and services. She is proposing establishing a Pet Day Care and Training principal use for dogs, in addition to the current use, on the same site.

## ANALYSIS

201B Highland Ave is located in a Transit Area in the MR3 zoning district close to the neighborhoods of Magoun Square and Winter Hill, represented by Ward 5 Councilor Mark Niedergang.

The applicant has an established business at the location, Petwell Supplies, which currently provides pet supplies, dog walking, pet sitting, and grooming. Because there is adequate additional space on site and customers have expressed a need for dog daycare services, the Pet Day Care or Training use makes sense as a complementary function that the applicant wishes to add to her current operation. Adapting to the new use will only require internal renovations. Petwell Supplies identifies as independently owned and operated, and woman led.

The applicant's plans including converting a 200 square foot unused upstairs office as well as a 900 square foot basement into spaces for dogs during daycare hours. The office space would accommodate 4 small dogs, and the basement space would accommodate 9 large dogs. The applicant based her capacity on the ASPCA (American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) recommendation that pet daycares allow for 50-100 square feet per dog, depending on their size.

Attendees to the neighborhood meeting on May 5 had entirely positive things to say about Emily and her current operations, praising her attentiveness, and customer service. Those in attendance were nearby residents, many of whom were also customers. All in attendance endorsed her plan to expand her services to a doggy daycare and expressed excitement for seeing more dogs at the store and utilizing the service. Some in attendance inquired about her plans for handling capacity if demand is higher than her maximum capacity. The applicant answered that she can create partnerships with other daycares in the region to take extra dogs if the situation arises. Another question was about the construction process. The applicant clarified the internal renovations will be minimal and aimed at ensuring a safe environment for the animals. The applicant also informed staff that she has consulted with the abutting businesses at 201 Highland Ave and they approve of her request.

Staff does not have concerns about traffic or parking accommodations given the current use conditions and the small scale of the proposed operation.

## **CONSIDERATIONS & FINDINGS**

The Planning Board is required by the Somerville Zoning Ordinance to deliberate each of the following considerations at the public hearing. The Board must discuss and draw conclusions for each consideration, but may make additional findings beyond this minimum statutory requirement.

### Special Permit Considerations

1. The comprehensive plan and existing policy plans and standards established by the City.
2. The intent of the zoning district where the property is located.
3. Methods or techniques for noise mitigation to limit noise for other users of the building and abutting properties.
4. Operational procedures for cleaning the interior and exterior of the site and trash storage and removal.
5. Amount of on-site landscaping.

Information relative to the required considerations is provided below:

1. The comprehensive plan and existing policy plans and standards established by the City.

The proposal will help to achieve the following goals from SomerVision, the comprehensive Master Plan of the City of Somerville:

- Promote municipal financial self-determination and reduce fiscal dependence on state aid and residential taxes and fees.
  - Make Somerville a regional employment center with a mix of diverse and high-quality jobs.
2. The intent of the zoning district where the property is located

The proposal is consistent with the intent of the MR3 zoning district which is, in part: “To create, maintain, and enhance areas appropriate for smaller scale, multi-use and mixed-use buildings and neighborhood serving uses.”

3. Methods or techniques for noise mitigation to limit noise for other users of the building and abutting properties.

Staff is not concerned with noise since close abutters are other commercial uses and the closest residential building on 203 Highland Ave is set back from 201 Highland Ave.

4. Operational procedures for cleaning the interior and exterior of the site and trash storage and removal.

Applicant is familiar with and prepared to engage in safe and appropriate practices regarding trash and waste disposal related to the Pet Daycare use.

5. Amount of on-site landscaping.

Applicant is planning to adapt a small unused alley in the property near the parking area as a potty break area for select dogs unable to take walks (elderly or injured). This would consist of adding turf and ensuring dog fencing around the area.

## **PERMIT CONDITIONS**

Should the Board approve the required Special Permit to establish a Cannabis Retail Sales use, Planning & Zoning Staff recommends the following conditions:

### Validity

- Approval is limited to Petwell Supplies and is not transferable to any successor in interest.
- This Decision must be recorded with the Middlesex County Registry of Deeds prior to applying for a Certificate of Occupancy.

### Public Record

- A copy of the Recorded Decision stamped by the Middlesex South Registry of Deeds must be submitted for the public record.
- Physical copies of all submittal materials as permitted by the Review Boards must be submitted for the public record in accordance with the document format standards of the ISD/PB/ZBA Submittal Requirements.