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# CITY OF SOMERVILLE

Office of Strategic Planning & Community Development

**TO:** Planning Board  
**FROM:** Planning & Zoning Division  
**DATE:** 29 July 2020  
**RE:** CZC #20-000059, 152-158 Broadway  
Neighborhood Meeting Minutes

This memo summarizes the neighborhood meeting for 152-158 Broadway, that is required by the Somerville Zoning Ordinance.

**Meeting Date:** 29 July 2020

**Meeting Time:** 6pm

**Meeting Location:** virtually via the Zoom meeting platform

**Attendees from the Applicant Team:**

Pat Buonopane, CMD, Project Owner, Rich DiGirolamo, Legal Counsel to CMD, Matthew Littell, Utile Architecture & Planning, Ian Kenney, Utile Architecture & Planning, Michael D'Angelo, Landscape Architect, Stephen Siragusa, DCI Transportation Engineer, Stephen Sawyer, DCI Site/Civil Engineer

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In addition to minutes, the Director of Planning & Zoning shall keep a public record of the neighborhood meeting that includes, but may not be limited to:

- Copies of all materials provided by the applicant at the meeting
- A list of those persons and organizations contacted about the meeting and the manner and date of contact
- A roster or signature sheet of attendees at the meeting

The aforementioned are an appendices to this report. Additional information includes:

93 Highland Avenue  
Somerville, MA 02143  
(617-625-6600 ext.2500  
TTY: (617) 666-0001  
www.somervillema.gov  
www.somervillezoning.com

## MINUTES

Ian Kenney gave an introduction to the team and an overview of the project for attendees, discussing the approach to Site Plan Approval standards and requirements, including massing, site strategy, landscape amenities and streetscape, as well as the Net Zero density bonus, and the intent of the project not to provide parking on the site.

The Ward Councilor, Matt McLaughlin, spoke briefly to explain the aspects of the zoning in place to mitigate impact for a project that seeks to provide less parking than is required by the Somerville Zoning Ordinance, particularly the limitation on resident access to city resident parking stickers.

CC, a Rush Street neighbor, noted a perception that the area is currently overcrowded and that he had a concern about further congestion not only with residents but also with visitors, delivery vehicles, and trash collection, as well as with the idea that a project would be seeking not to provide required parking so soon after the seven year process to pass the zoning that left this parcel out of the walkshed for transit. Concerned that the project would not be heard by the Zoning Board and that the community would not have an opportunity to follow up further on the process.

Ian Kenney from the project team noted that the proposal would be closing a curb cut and would work with the City to provide a drop off and pick up zone to facilitate deliveries and trash removal.

Ward Planner Rebecca Lyn Cooper noted that the project would not be seeking relief from the ZBA but would have a hearing before the Urban Design Commission as well as a second neighborhood meeting before proceeding to be heard by the Planning Board.

Attorney Rich DiGirolamo reiterated that the project is not going before the ZBA because the team is not seeking relief under the Ordinance but that there would be further public hearings and review by the Planning Board.

RP, a Broadway neighbor, noted that though the zoning permits the size of building proposed, it seemed much larger than the neighborhood currently supports, and added the concern that the current bike lane would be blocked with delivery and moving vehicles, noting that they would like to see a pick up and drop off area. They also noted a concern that even if residents were not able to obtain parking stickers, there would still be cars from visitors, so the parking issue needs to be carefully considered.

JM, a Mt Pleasant St neighbor, asked about the number of units and noted that the building seemed more like a college dorm than a typical housing development.

Ian Kenney of the project team discussed the Net Zero density bonus the team would be using and noted that there would be 45 total units, and that the average size of a unit would be a little under 500 square feet with full kitchens, bathrooms, and in unit laundry for each. Additionally, some of the units had private balconies and all would have access to a community outdoor space as well, all as permitted by the current zoning.

Attorney Rich DiGirolamo discussed other developments by this owner and noted that the tenancy turnover tends to be about 33% per year, and mostly composed of longer term residents who want to access the amenities of the city and are interested in a smaller floor plan units, not typically a college transient tenancy.

Owner Pat Buonopane added that in his other buildings the tenancy is typically young professionals who work in downtown Boston and like the proximity to amenities and transit, and that it tends to be a longer term residency rather than a transient population, with vacancies filled quickly.

JM went on to note that they had been involved in Somerville for the past ten years and had been working to promote the development of housing for families, rather than smaller studios

Owner Pat Buonopane reiterated that the tenancy for his buildings tended to be young professionals working but not living downtown, looking to further their education at the graduate level and to spend money in their local communities.

JM reiterated the desire that the community establish housing for larger families.

JC, a neighbor, agreed with the desire for larger units for families and asked about the potential for a mix of different sized units rather than just studios, but also noted that the neighborhood is well served by transit and that the streetscape along Broadway is under utilized, with empty storefronts that could be supported by more residents. They also approved of eliminating the curb cut and supported not providing parking, as well as asking about the Net Zero Ready building details, specifically whether that would apply to construction as well as ongoing operation of the building.

Ian Kenney noted that passivhaus, the Net Zero pathway the team has chosen to take, measures the operation of the building rather than construction itself, with the idea that once the building is complete, the level of construction and insulation enables heating and cooling systems to be smaller and more efficient. The team will engage with the process and have the project reviewed at many stages, with the goal of having a project that has a very low energy use and is set up for future net zero operation.

TL, a Cross Street neighbor, noted that this location provided a good place for people not to need a car at all, being in walking distance from Sullivan Station and multiple bus routes, as well as walking distance from Stop & Shop, and so they were supportive of closing the curb cut and not providing parking. They noted that the project made sense as drawn but asked if the neighborhood might benefit from going another story taller for more residents and more foot traffic along Broadway. They shared the concern about blocking of the bike lane and asked if it would be possible for the team to explore a curb protected bike lane.

Ian Kenney observed that the bike lane work on Broadway is complete for the moment and that the project team would work with the existing conditions, but that they would look to coordinate with Planning and Mobility on the location and design of the pick up and drop off lane.

Ward planner Rebecca Lyn Cooper noted that the bike lane work is complete for now but that she would facilitate coordination with the team and with OSPCD's Mobility Division, and that there would be a public process going forward to follow up on future streetscape work.

RP, a Broadway neighbor, noted that they appreciated the thoughtful aspects of the design, as they were an improvement over some earlier proposals for the neighborhood.

CM, a Broadway neighbor strongly agreed with the comments of others that a blend of unit counts was needed and that the community should not just be geared toward young professionals. They indicated support for the lack of parking but noted a concern that there were not enough car share facilities within walking distance, and that more bike share options should be provided, as local bike share stations were always empty. Finally, they indicated that they appreciated that bike storage for the project would be easily accessible and close to the building entry lobby.

LX, a neighbor, asked if there would be a recording available to be shared after the meeting. Ian Kenney of the project team noted that he would coordinate with the Councilor and Ward Planner and see what could be arranged.

Owner Pat Buonopane noted that they would continue to explore the coordination of a pick up and drop off area, and pointed out that the entrance had been designed to provide convenient access for package delivery to minimize the time that delivery vehicles would remain at the front of the building and that the team would continue to work closely with Planning staff and DCI.

Ian Kenney noted that there was currently a drop off area to the north of the site.

Councilor Matt McLaughlin spoke to ask the team to continue to coordinate with Ward Planner Rebecca Lyn Cooper on the unit count and the details of the public process, noting that the project would be going before the Urban Design Commission and then the Planning Board, so there would be an opportunity for the public to be heard there as well, but noted that the meeting with the Planning Board was some ways off and there would be time to work out issues with the proposal.

Rich DiGirolamo, attorney for the project spoke to note that there would be another neighborhood meeting where the team would report back on their response to items raised this evening. He thanked Councilor McLaughlin for hosting the meeting and the attendees for their participation.

Ian Kenney thanked all attendees and closed the meeting.