



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department

To: Board of Zoning Appeal

From: Harvard Square Advisory Committee

Date: March 6, 2024

Re: **1 Brattle Square (Van Leeuwen Ice Cream) – Positive Recommendation**

IRAM FAROOQ
Assistant City Manager for
Community Development

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Deputy Director
Chief of Administration

Overview

The Harvard Square Advisory Committee (the “Committee”) met on Wednesday, March 6, 2024 to discuss a special permit application for a Van Leeuwen Ice Cream location at 1 Brattle Square. The meeting was conducted pursuant to the provisions of Section 20.50 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance in advance of the applicant’s request for a special permit from the Board of Zoning Appeal (BZA). Committee members present were Allison Crosbie, Lauren Curry, Jemel Derbali, John DiGiovanni, Frank Kramer, Kari Kuelzer, Alexandra Offiong, Matt Simitis (Chair), Nicola Williams. Absent was Steven Ng. After discussion, the Committee decided to forward a report to the BZA with a positive recommendation with comments. There were nine (9) members present voting in favor and none (0) against.

Proposal Description

The Applicant is proposing an approximately 1,375 square foot retail ice cream shop in a portion of the vacant ground floor of the 1 Brattle Square building in Harvard Square. Fast Order/Quick-Service Food Establishments in the Harvard Square Overlay District require a special permit from the Board of Zoning Appeal if they are considered a Formula Business. Van Leeuwen Ice Cream is a nationwide chain with over 50 retail locations. In considering applications for Special Permits for Fast Order or Quick-Service Food Establishments, the BZA shall find that in addition to other criteria specified in Zoning Section 10.40, that the requirements of Section 11.31(a)-(g) are also met. HSAC has reviewed the application and prepared this recommendation to be submitted to the BZA.

Presenting for the applicant was Jaclyn LaBanca, Director of Store Development. The proposal explained the redevelopment of the former GNC retail space with an ice cream shop.

Public Comments

Denise Jillson, Executive Director of the Harvard Square Business Association, spoke favorably of the application and noted that Van Leeuwen was already a member of the Harvard Square Business Association.

Committee Comments

The Committee voted to recommend that the applications be approved by the BZA and to transmit the below summary of comments:

- The Committee members asked questions about seating capacity, table placement, and the history of partnerships with local vendors.

- Members encouraged adding tables and chairs outside, if permitted, to create a more inviting atmosphere for customers.
- Although there was no call for specific conditions, there was an emphasis placed on the use of biodegradable containers, the layout of trash receptacles, and appropriate delivery hours to avoid congestion during busy hours.
- The Committee expressed encouragement to the Applicant to provide longer operating hours but understands that the hours submitted are a business decision. Any conditions included by the BZA relative to operating hours should allow flexibility for staying open later. The Committee is supportive of closing as late as 1 am.

Recommendations

Members of the Committee were supportive of the applicant’s proposal.

Respectfully submitted for the Committee,



Mason Wells

Community Development Department