



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department

To: Board of Zoning Appeal
From: Harvard Square Advisory Committee
Date: August 18, 2022
Re: **18 Brattle Street (case BZA-183930)**

IRAM FAROOQ
Assistant City Manager for
Community Development

SANDRA CLARKE
Deputy Director
Chief of Administration

KHALIL MOGASSABI
Deputy Director
Chief of Planning

Overview

The Harvard Square Advisory Committee (the “Committee”) met on Wednesday, August 17, 2022 to discuss the special permit application by Cava Mezze Grill, LLC d/b/a Cava for a Quick-Service Food Establishment that meets the definition of a Formula Business. 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, Sara Li, Steven Ng, Alexandra Offiong, Matt Simitis, and Nicola Williams. After discussion, the Committee decided to forward a report to the BZA with a positive recommendation, with 10 members present voting in favor and one abstaining.

Proposal Description

The applicant proposes to operate a Quick-Service Food Establishment (previously called a Fast Order Food Establishment). While Fast Order/Quick-Service Food Establishments are allowed as-of-right in the base zoning district (Business B), the use requires a special permit from the BZA because it qualifies as a Formula Business and is located in the Harvard Square Overlay District. The proposed business occupies 1,995 square feet of Gross Floor Area. It is proposed to be primarily carry-out, with five counter seats inside the establishment.

Committee Comments

Committee members were generally supportive of the proposed food use in this location and recommended that the use be approved. Committee members also appreciated the design of the storefront, which maintains the character of the building and the curved glass storefront windows.

Committee members voted to transmit the following specific comments for the BZA’s consideration if granting a special permit:

- More interior seating would be desired; it was suggested that counter seating should be included in both bay windows, rather than having one bay dedicated to carry-out orders. This would help provide greater activation of the storefront, particularly in colder months when people will want to eat indoors.

344 Broadway
Cambridge, MA 02139
Voice: 617 349-4600
Fax: 617 349-4669
TTY: 617 349-4621
www.cambridgema.gov

- Committee members noted that there is no street parking or loading directly in front of the establishment, and had concerns that customers or delivery services making car pick-ups might have difficulty stopping nearby. If cars stop in the travel lanes, it would disrupt traffic and could be an enforcement problem for the City. It was noted that third-party pick-up and delivery has become common for many Harvard Square businesses and the operator may not be able to fully control this type of activity, but it remains a strong concern for some members. The operator could try to make drivers aware that there is no stopping directly in front.
- Later business hours would be preferred to promote nighttime activity; after hours, storefronts should have a sufficient amount of lighting to promote a feeling of safety. Members asked that a rendering of the storefront at night be created.
- The operator should be responsible for ensuring that trash from food containers and bags does not result in litter in public space. The operator indicated that in other locations they have staff participate in collecting trash in public areas throughout the day, and would be willing to do so here.

There were no comments from the public.

Respectfully submitted for the Committee,

Jeff Roberts

Director of Zoning and Development
Community Development Department