



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Case #: ZBA 2011-21

Date: May 4, 2011

Recommendation: Conditional Approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: 201 Powder House Boulevard

Applicant Name: Dan Walsh, Owens Corning Basement Finishing System

Applicant Address: 60 Shawmut Road, Canton, MA 02021

Property Owner Name: Andy and Nicole Mueller

Property Owner Address: 201 Powder House Boulevard, Somerville, MA 02144

Alderman: Robert Trane

Legal Notice: Applicant Dan Walsh and owners Andy and Nicole Mueller, seek a Special Permit under SZO §4.4.1 for relief under the provisions of SZO §8.5.E. to finish a portion of the basement to add a family room to an existing two-family residence. RA zone.

Zoning District/Ward: RA / Ward 7

Zoning Approval Sought: Special Permit under SZO §4.4.1

Date of Application: March 4, 2011

Dates of Public Hearing: Zoning Board of Appeals **5/4/11**

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The subject property consists of a two-family home on a 3,214 square foot lot near the intersection of Powder House Boulevard and Dow Street. The structure currently has 2,438 square feet of habitable space. The residence is two stories, not including the basement level.

2. Proposal: The Applicant would like to renovate a portion of the existing basement to create a family room for use by the property owner/resident of the structure. The proposed finished portion of the basement would add approximately 630 square feet of habitable space to the structure. The side walls of the basement would be finished with the Owens Corning Finishing System and steel studs, and a fire rated wall would separate the proposed living room from the storage area that would be



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retained in the rear of the basement. Additionally, a drop ceiling would be installed around the support beams of the structure in the proposed finished portion of the basement.

3. Nature of Application: Dimensional requirements in the RA district are governed by the Somerville Zoning Ordinance under the provisions of §8.5.a, §8.5.b, §8.5.e, §8.5.h, §8.5.i, and §8.5.j. To renovate the basement level the existing conditions require relief from the SZO for an existing nonconforming structure under the provisions listed above. Additionally, the FAR of the structure not including the basement level (0.76), exceeds the maximum allowable FAR for an RA district (0.75). Therefore a special permit is required under SZO §4.4.1 to exceed nonconforming dimensions and legalize the basement as habitable space.

4. Surrounding Neighborhood: The property is located in an RA district. The surrounding neighborhood consists of predominantly two- and three-family homes between two and three stories in height, similar to the subject property.

5. Impacts of Proposal: There shall be no impacts to the surrounding neighborhood for the construction process will take place in the basement level of the structure. Therefore, with construction impacts limited to the interior of the building, no significant disruption to the neighborhood is anticipated. All waste from the project will be transported away by the contracting company to their warehouse and disposed of in their dumpster.

6. Green Building Practices: The Applicant stated in the application that all interior work will be of green building practices using the Owens Corning Basement Finishing System.

7. Comments:

Fire Prevention: Have been notified and are awaiting comments.

Ward Alderman: Alderman Trane has been notified but has not provided comments.



201 Powder House Boulevard

II. FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMIT (SZO §4.4.1):

In order to grant a special permit, the SPGA must make certain findings and determinations as outlined in §5.1.4 of the SZO. This section of the report goes through §5.1.4 in detail.

1. Information Supplied: The Staff finds that the information provided by the Applicant conforms to the requirements of §5.1.2 of the SZO and allows for a comprehensive analysis of the project with respect to the required Special Permits.

2. Compliance with Standards: The Applicant must comply "with such criteria or standards as may be set forth in this Ordinance which refer to the granting of the requested special permit."

In considering a special permit under §4.4 of the SZO, Staff does not find that the alterations proposed would be substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing structure.

3. Consistency with Purposes: The Applicant has to ensure that the project "is consistent with (1) the general purposes of this Ordinance as set forth in Article 1, and (2) the purposes, provisions, and specific objectives applicable to the requested special permit which may be set forth elsewhere in this Ordinance, such as, but not limited to, those purposes at the beginning of the various Articles."

The proposal is consistent with the general purposes of the Ordinance as set forth under §1.2, which includes, but is not limited to promoting "the health, safety, and welfare of the inhabitants of the City of Somerville; to protect health; to secure safety from fire, panic and other dangers; to provide adequate light and air; to conserve the value of land and buildings; and to encourage the most appropriate use of land throughout the City."

The existing structure is a pre-existing nonconforming structure that is consistent with the purpose of the RA district. The district is designed to "establish and preserve quiet neighborhoods of one- and two-family homes, free from other uses except those which are both compatible with and convenient to the residents of such districts." While the structure does not meet the dimensional or the FAR requirements of the district, it is typical in size and setbacks to typical homes in the RA district. Furthermore, the renovations to the existing basement will not require any changes to the existing exterior of the structure.

4. Site and Area Compatibility: The Applicant has to ensure that the project "(i)s designed in a manner that is compatible with the characteristics of the built and unbuilt surrounding area, including land uses."

No impacts are anticipated from the finishing of the existing basement to create a family room.

5. Adverse environmental impacts: The proposed use, structure or activity will not constitute an adverse impact on the surrounding area resulting from: 1) excessive noise, level of illumination, glare, dust, smoke, or vibration which are higher than levels now experienced from uses permitted in the surrounding area; 2) emission of noxious or hazardous materials or substances; 3) pollution of water ways or ground water; or 4) transmission of signals that interfere with radio or television reception.

No adverse impacts are anticipated from this project. All proposed work and elements to be added as part of the project will be in the basement of the structure. Furthermore, no additional bathroom fixtures will be added to the existing structure and all new lighting will be interior as well.

III. RECOMMENDATION**Special Permit under §4.4.1**

Based on the above findings and subject to the following conditions, the Planning Staff recommends **CONDITIONAL APPROVAL** of the requested **SPECIAL PERMIT**.

The recommendation is based upon a technical analysis by Planning Staff of the application material based upon the required findings of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance, and is based only upon information submitted prior to the public hearing. This report may be revised or updated with new recommendations, findings and/or conditions based upon additional information provided to the Planning Staff during the public hearing process.

#	Condition	Timeframe for Compliance	Verified (initial)	Notes						
1	Approval is for relief under the provisions of SZO §8.5.E. to finish a portion of the basement to add a family room to an existing two-family residence. This approval is based upon the following application materials and the plans submitted by the Applicant:	BP/CO	Plng.							
	<table><tr><th>Date (Stamp Date)</th><th>Submission</th></tr><tr><td>(March 4, 2011)</td><td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office</td></tr><tr><td>(April 15, 2011)</td><td>Plans submitted to OSPCD</td></tr></table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	(March 4, 2011)	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office	(April 15, 2011)	Plans submitted to OSPCD
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Any changes to the approved site plan that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval.										
2	The structure shall remain a two-family house, and no additional dwelling units shall be added	Cont.	ISD							
3	The Applicant shall contact Planning Staff at least five working days in advance of a request for a final inspection by Inspectional Services to ensure the proposal was constructed in accordance with the plans and information submitted and the conditions attached to this approval.	Final Sign Off	Plng.							



201 Powder House Boulevard