



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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PLANNING DIVISION

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Case #: ZBA 2016-16
Site: 7 Gould Avenue
Date of Decision: March 16, 2016
Decision: Petition Approved with Conditions
Date Filed with City Clerk: March 29, 2016

ZBA DECISION

Applicant Name:	Alex Van Praagh
Applicant Address:	95 Antrim Street, #3, Cambridge MA 02139
Property Owner Name:	Alex Van Praagh
Property Owner Address:	95 Antrim Street, #3, Cambridge MA 02139
Agent Name:	N/A

Legal Notice: Applicant & Owner, Alex Van Praagh seek a Special Permit to modify a nonconforming structure by adding a second level rear addition.

<u>Zoning District/Ward:</u>	RB zone/Ward 3
<u>Date of Application:</u>	February 10, 2016
<u>Date(s) of Public Hearing:</u>	March 16, 2016
<u>Date of Decision:</u>	March 16, 2016
<u>Vote:</u>	4-0

Appeal #ZBA 2016-16 was opened before the Zoning Board of Appeals at Somerville City Hall on March 16, 2016. Notice of the Public Hearing was given to persons affected and was published and posted, all as required by M.G.L. c. 40A, sec. 11 and the Somerville Zoning Ordinance. After one hearing of deliberation, the Zoning Board of Appeals took a vote.



DESCRIPTION:

The proposed addition would add approximately 1,200sf of floor area, and convert both units from two-bedroom to three-bedroom units. The geometry of the front portion of the house would remain relatively unchanged, while a 1-1/2 story addition would be added on top of the existing flat roofed rear portion of the existing structure, and a portion of the basement would be finished. One unit would be split between the basement and the first floor, the second unit would share the second and third floors. The portion of the basement in the rear of the lot would not count as a story as the ceiling height is less than 5' above the average finished grade abutting the building.

FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMIT (SZO §4.4):

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 Board 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."*

The structure is currently nonconforming with respect to the following dimensional requirements: front yard, rear yard, and side yard setbacks.

The current front yard setback is 9', 10' is required. The front yard setback will be reduced to 4.7' by the addition of a front porch. The current rear yard setback is approximately 2.2', 20' is required. The rear yard setback will not be impacted. The side yard setback is currently 11.5' on one side, and 2.5-3.6' on the other. 8' is required for 2-1/2 story buildings. The side yard setback will not be impacted on the 2.5-3.6' side, but the side yard on the 11.5' side will be reduced to 8' where the stair comes down from the second unit. The rear of the structure will be made taller on both the nonconforming side yard and rear yard. This alteration to a nonconforming structure requires the Applicant to obtain special permits under §4.4.1 of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance (SZO).

Section 4.4.1 states that "[l]awfully existing one-and two-family dwellings which are only used as residences, which are nonconforming with respect to dimensional requirements, may be enlarged, extended, renovated or altered by special permit granted by the SPGA in accordance with the procedures of Article 5."

In considering a special permit under §4.4 or 4.5 of the SZO, the Board finds that the alterations proposed would not 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 The purposes of the Ordinance are to promote the health, safety, and welfare of the inhabitants of the City of Somerville; to provide for and maintain the uniquely integrated structure of uses in the City; to provide adequate light and air; to prevent the overcrowding of land; to conserve the value of land and buildings; to preserve the historical and architectural resources of the City; to adequately protect the natural environment; to encourage the most appropriate use of land throughout the City; to protect and promote a housing stock that can accommodate the diverse household sizes and life stages of Somerville residents at all income levels, paying particular attention to



providing housing affordable to individuals and families with low and moderate incomes; and to preserve and increase the amenities of the municipality.

The proposal is consistent with the purpose of the district, which is, RB - Residence Districts. To establish and preserve medium density neighborhoods of one-, two- and three-family homes, free from other uses except those which are both compatible with and convenient to the residents of such districts.

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."*

Surrounding Neighborhood: The surrounding neighborhood contains a mix of residential structures ranging from 1-1/2 to three stories, of various cladding materials and architectural styles, many with numerous additions and nonconforming front yard and side yard setbacks.

Impacts of Proposal (Design and Compatibility): The proposed addition significantly increases the size of the structure; however, it does so in a thoughtful and sensitive way that breaks up the overall massing, and actually brings the structure closer to the scale of the surrounding buildings. The detailing, materials and architecture of the proposal will be a significant improvement over the existing structure, and will help improve the overall character of both Gould and Arnold Avenues. If approved, the proposal will transform a relatively nondescript home into one of the nicer homes in the neighborhood, and will hopefully serve as an example to other developers and contractors that will do work in the area.

*(See example of applicant's previous development work in Somerville on last page of Staff Report)

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.*

Impacts of Proposal (Environmental): No adverse impacts on the surrounding area anticipated as a result of excessive noise, illumination, glare, dust smoke or vibration, or from emissions of noxious materials, or pollution of water ways or ground water, or interference with radio or television signals.

6. Vehicular and pedestrian circulation: *The circulation patterns for motor vehicles and pedestrians which would result from the use or structure will not result in conditions that create traffic congestion or the potential for traffic accidents on the site or in the surrounding area.*

Impacts of Proposal (Circulation): No traffic congestion or potential for accidents are anticipated as a result of this structure.

6. Housing Impact: *Will not create adverse impacts on the stock of existing affordable housing.*

7. SomerVision Plan: *Complies with the applicable goals, policies and actions of the SomerVision plan, including the following, as appropriate: Preserve and enhance the character of Somerville's neighborhoods, transform key opportunity areas, preserve and expand an integrated, balanced mix of safe, affordable and environmentally sound rental and homeownership units for households of all sizes and types from diverse social and economic groups; and, make Somerville a regional employment center with a mix of diverse and high-quality jobs. The areas in the SomerVision map that are designated as enhance and transform should most significantly contribute towards the SomerVision goals that are outlined in the table below. The areas marked as conserve are not expected to greatly increase the figures in the table since these areas are not intended for large scale change.*



8. Impact on Affordable Housing: *In conjunction with its decision to grant or deny a special permit for a structure of four or more units of housing, the SPGA shall make a finding and determination as to how implementation of the project would increase, decrease, or leave unchanged the number of units of rental and home ownership housing that are affordable to households with low or moderate incomes, as defined by HUD, for different sized households and units.*

DECISION:

Present and sitting were Members Orsola Susan Fontano, Danielle Evans, Josh Safdie and Anne Brockelman with Richard Rossetti and Elaine Severino absent. Upon making the above findings, Danielle Evans made a motion to approve the request for a Special Permit. Anne Brockelman seconded the motion. Wherefore the Zoning Board of Appeals voted **4-0** to **APPROVE** the request. In addition the following conditions were attached:

#	Condition	Timeframe for Compliance	Verified (initial)	Notes						
1	Approval is for the Special Permit to modify a nonconforming structure. This approval is based upon the following application materials and the plans submitted by the Applicant:	BP/CO	ISD/PIng.							
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Date (Stamp Date)</th> <th>Submission</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>February 10, 2016</td> <td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office</td> </tr> <tr> <td>March 3, 2016</td> <td>Plans submitted to OSPCD (1-18)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	February 10, 2016	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office	March 3, 2016	Plans submitted to OSPCD (1-18)
	Date (Stamp Date)				Submission					
February 10, 2016	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office									
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Any changes to the approved site plan or elevations/use that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval.										
Pre-Construction										
2	The Applicant shall submit a proposed drainage report, stamped by a registered PE in Massachusetts that demonstrates compliance with the City's stormwater policy.	BP	Eng.							
3	The Applicant must contact the Engineering Department to coordinate the timeline for cutting or opening the street and/or sidewalk for utility connections or other construction. There is a moratorium on opening streets from November 1st to April 1st and there is a list of streets that have additional opening restrictions.	BP	Eng							



4	New sanitary connection flows over 2,000 GPD require a removal of infiltration and/or inflow by the Applicant. This will be achieved by submitting a mitigation payment, established by the City Engineers Office, to the City based on the cost per gallon of I/I to be removed from the sewer system and a removal ratio of 4:1. If a different ratio of removal or mitigation payment amount is adopted by the Board of Aldermen prior to the Applicant receiving a Certificate of Occupancy, payment will be adjusted to the BOA rate. The Applicant shall work with Engineering and meet this condition before a certificate of occupancy is issued.	BP	Eng.	
Construction Impacts				
5	The applicant shall post the name and phone number of the general contractor at the site entrance where it is visible to people passing by.	During Construction	Plng.	
6	Approval is subject to the Applicant's and/or successor's right, title and interest in the property.	Cont.	Plng.	Deed submitted & application formed signed
7	The Applicant shall at their expense replace any existing equipment (including, but not limited to street sign poles, signs, traffic signal poles, traffic signal equipment, wheel chair ramps, granite curbing, etc) and the entire sidewalk immediately abutting the subject property if damaged as a result of construction activity. All new sidewalks and driveways must be constructed to DPW standard.	CO	DPW	
8	All construction materials and equipment must be stored onsite. If occupancy of the street layout is required, such occupancy must be in conformance with the requirements of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices and the prior approval of the Traffic and Parking Department must be obtained.	During Construction	T&P	
Design				
9	Applicant shall provide final material samples for siding, trim, windows, and doors to Planning Staff for review and approval prior to construction.	BP	Plng.	
10	An exterior light and electrical receptacle is required for the first (or all) level of the porch and an electrical receptacle is required for the second level (if there is no access to the ground).	Final sign off	Wiring Inspector	
Site				
11	Landscaping should be installed and maintained in compliance with the American Nurserymen's Association Standards;	Perpetual	Plng. / ISD	
12	The electric, telephone, cable TV and other such lines and equipment shall be placed underground from the source or connection. The utilities plan shall be supplied to the Wiring Inspector before installation.	Installation of Utilities	Wiring Inspector	
Public Safety				



13	The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau's requirements.	CO	FP	
Final Sign-Off				
14	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.	



Attest, by the Zoning Board of Appeals:

Orsola Susan Fontano, *Chairman*
Danielle Evans
Josh Safdie
Anne Brockelman (Alt.)

Attest, by the Administrative Assistant:

Dawn M. Pereira

Copies of this decision are filed in the Somerville City Clerk's office.
Copies of all plans referred to in this decision and a detailed record of the
SPGA proceedings are filed in the Somerville Planning Dept.

CLERK'S CERTIFICATE

Any appeal of this decision must be filed within twenty days after the date this notice is filed in the Office of the City Clerk, and must be filed in accordance with M.G.L. c. 40A, sec. 17 and SZO sec. 3.2.10.

In accordance with M.G.L. c. 40 A, sec. 11, no variance shall take effect until a copy of the decision bearing the certification of the City Clerk that twenty days have elapsed after the decision has been filed in the Office of the City Clerk and no appeal has been filed, or that if such appeal has been filed, that it has been dismissed or denied, is recorded in the Middlesex County Registry of Deeds and indexed in the grantor index under the name of the owner of record or is recorded and noted on the owner's certificate of title.

Also in accordance with M.G.L. c. 40 A, sec. 11, a special permit shall not take effect until a copy of the decision bearing the certification of the City Clerk that twenty days have elapsed after the decision has been filed in the Office of the City Clerk and either that no appeal has been filed or the appeal has been filed within such time, is recorded in the Middlesex County Registry of Deeds and indexed in the grantor index under the name of the owner of record or is recorded and noted on the owner's certificate of title. The person exercising rights under a duly appealed Special Permit does so at risk that a court will reverse the permit and that any construction performed under the permit may be ordered undone.

The owner or applicant shall pay the fee for recording or registering. Furthermore, a permit from the Division of Inspectional Services shall be required in order to proceed with any project favorably decided upon by this decision, and upon request, the Applicant shall present evidence to the Building Official that this decision is properly recorded.

This is a true and correct copy of the decision filed on _____ in the Office of the City Clerk, and twenty days have elapsed, and

FOR VARIANCE(S) WITHIN

_____ there have been no appeals filed in the Office of the City Clerk, or
_____ any appeals that were filed have been finally dismissed or denied.

FOR SPECIAL PERMIT(S) WITHIN

_____ there have been no appeals filed in the Office of the City Clerk, or
_____ there has been an appeal filed.

Signed _____ City Clerk Date _____

