



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
JOSEPH A. CURTATONE
MAYOR

MICHAEL F. GLAVIN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PLANNING DIVISION STAFF

GEORGE PROAKIS, *DIRECTOR OF PLANNING*
LORI MASSA, *SENIOR PLANNER*
AMIE HAYES, *PLANNER*
MELISSA WOODS, *PLANNER*
DAWN PEREIRA, *ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT*

Case #: ZBA 2014-126
Date: January 29, 2015
Recommendation: Conditional Approval

UPDATED PLANNING STAFF REPORT*

Site: 505 Medford Street aka 503b Medford Street

Applicant Name: Sophiya Thakali
Applicant Address: 12 Morton Street Somerville, MA 01245
Owner Name: Broadway Investments Inc.
Owner Address: PO box 45626 Somerville, MA 02145
Alderman: Mark Niedergang

Legal Notice: Applicant, Sophiya Thakali, and Owner, Broadway Investments Inc., seek a Special Permit for a fast food use and a Special Permit for parking relief. NB Zone. Ward 4.

Dates of Public Hearing: Zoning Board of Appeals - January 21, 2015

*This report is updated to analyze the project on the existing and proposed zoning code. Additions have been underlined, deletions have been ~~struck~~.

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The subject property is 5,510 square foot lot with single story commercial building. Existing tenants include Churrasco. There's currently a vacant storefront which was previously an arts and crafts store.
2. Proposal: Tasty Mo Mo, would like to occupy the vacant storefront. Tasty Mo Mo specializes in dumplings. To occupy the space, they need relief for a fast food use and parking relief.



Existing storefront – known as 503b Medford

3. Green Building Practices: None listed on the application.

4. Comments:

Fire Prevention: Fire Prevention has reviewed the plans and has no comments at this time.

Traffic & Parking: Traffic & Parking requests a traffic study.

Ward Alderman: Alderman Neidergang has been contacted and has no comments at this time.

II. FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMIT (SZO §7.11.10.2.a & 9.13):

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."*

Any fast food use requires a special permit with design review under SZO 7.11.10.2.a. Per SZO 9.4, 2 spaces of parking relief are also needed.

In considering a special permit under §7.11.10.2.a of the SZO, Staff find that the use proposed would not be substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing use.

The Neighborhood Business district has additional guidelines for projects that require a special permit with design review.

1. When a fourth floor is included, provide a minimum five (5) foot deep setback from the front lot line building wall, such as a balcony or deck, for the purpose of promoting a scale appropriate to surrounding neighborhoods.

There are no exterior alterations, except signage, as part of this proposal.

2. Give preference to locating on-site, off-street parking at the rear of the lot, behind the building or below street level, providing vehicular access from either a side street or alley where possible.

The project will utilize existing metered parking.

In the proposed code, this is a 4-story mixed use zoning district. Parking is not required for first floor commercial uses with less than 5,000 gross square feet of leasable area. The use will be classified as a restaurant/café/bakery and is allowed in the 4-story mixed use district.

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 provide for and maintain the uniquely integrated structure of uses in the City; and to preserve and increase the amenities of the municipality.

The proposal is consistent with the purpose of the district, which is, "To establish and preserve areas for small-scale retail stores, services and offices which are located in close proximity to residential areas and which do not have undesirable impacts on the surrounding neighborhoods."

In considering a special permit under §9.13 of the SZO the Applicant must be able to demonstrate that granting the requested special permit would not cause detriment to the surrounding neighborhood through any of the criteria as set forth under SZO §9.13, which are as follows:

- 1) increase in traffic volumes;
- 2) increased traffic congestion or queuing of vehicles;
- 3) change in the type(s) of traffic;
- 4) change in traffic patterns and access to the site;
- 5) reduction in on-street parking;
- 6) unsafe conflict of motor vehicle and pedestrian traffic.

The proposal meets the intent of ordinance. Relief from providing two parking spaces is consistent with other established businesses in the square. Parking relief in the area will not create a situation that would be a nuisance or hazard to pedestrians and adjacent properties, nor would it decrease the traffic carrying capacity of the adjacent streets or significantly compromise the on-street parking available in Magoun Square.

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."*

The property is located in Magoun Square. There is a mix of restaurants, retail stores, and offices in the Square and a residential neighborhood directly behind the property. Some of the businesses include CVS Pharmacy, Olde Magoun's Saloon, and Daddy Jones.

There are little to no impacts to the proposal. Magoun Square has seen renewed interest in the last few years and an addition unique food offering will highlight all the offerings in square and fill a vacant storefront.

5. Fast food establishments: *In special permit applications for fast-order, take-out or automobile oriented food service establishments, there shall be establishment of a need for such a facility in the neighborhood or in the City, and impacts on traffic circulation, parking and visual, physical, or historical characteristics of the particular location shall not be detrimental.*

Somerville has always embraced family owned small businesses. Although this is a take-out establishment it fits within the character of the district and will not have an impact of traffic circulation in the square.

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

This proposal will have no impact on existing 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.*

This project complies with the SomerVision plan by allowing a small business owner occupy an existing vacant storefront within a business district.

III. RECOMMENDATION

Special Permit under §7.11.10.2.a & 9.13

Based on the materials submitted by the Applicant, 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 the establishment of a fast food use and parking relief. This approval is based upon the following application materials and the plans submitted by the Applicant:	BP/CO	ISD/ Plng.							
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Date (Stamp Date)</th> <th>Submission</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>December 18, 2014</td> <td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office</td> </tr> <tr> <td>September 22, 2014</td> <td>Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (Cover, A1.0 Existing Floor Plan, A2.0 Proposed Floor Plan)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	December 18, 2014	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office	September 22, 2014	Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (Cover, A1.0 Existing Floor Plan, A2.0 Proposed Floor Plan)
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Any changes to the approved plans and use that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval.										
Pre-Construction										
2	The Applicant must contact the Engineering Department to obtain a street address prior to a building permit being issued.	BP	Engineering							
Construction Impacts										
3	The Applicant shall at his 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							
4	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							
Miscellaneous										
5	The Applicant, its successors and/or assigns, shall be responsible for maintenance of both the building and all on-site amenities, including landscaping, fencing, lighting, parking areas and storm water systems, ensuring they are clean, well kept and in good and safe working order.	Cont.	ISD							
6	Approval is for the fast food use for the Applicant, Sophiya Thakali/Tasty Mo Mo. A future tenant of this space for the fast order food use would have to come back to the ZBA for special permit approval in order to operate in this location.	Cont.	ISD							
Public Safety										
7	The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau's requirements.	CO	FP							
8	To the extent possible, all exterior lighting must be confined to the subject property, cast light downward and must not intrude, interfere or spill onto neighboring properties.	CO	Plng.							
Signage										

9	Signage shall be submitted to Planning Staff for review and approval. Lighting after 10p.m. facing residential property will be turned down or off.	CO/Cont.	Plng.	
10	The storefront windows should not be blocked by more than 30% by interior storage, signage or window coverings.	CO/Cont.	Plng.	
Final Sign-Off				
11	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.	

