



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
PLANNING BOARD
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Case #: ZBA 2008-72
Date: January 16, 2009
Recommendation: Conditional Approval

PLANNING BOARD REPORT

Site: 29 Ames Street

Applicant Name: Nancy Roche
Applicant Address: 29 Ames Street, Somerville, MA 02145
Property Owner Name: same
Alderman: O'Donvan

Legal Notice: Applicant & Owner: Nancy Roche seeks a special permit (SZO §4.4.1) to alter a nonconforming dwelling by adding a third story dormer.

Zoning District/Ward: RA / 5

Zoning Approval Sought: Special Permit (SZO §4.4.1)

Date of Application: December 10, 2008

Date(s) of Public Meeting / Hearing: Planning Board: January 15, 2008 / ZBA: January 21, 2008

Date of Decision: N/A

Vote: N/A

Dear ZBA members:

At its regular meeting on January 15, 2008 the Planning Board heard the above-referenced application. Based on materials submitted by the Applicant and the Staff recommendation, the Board voted (5-0), to recommend **conditional approval** of the requested **Special Permit**.

In conducting its analysis, the Planning Board found:

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The subject property is a two-family dwelling on a 4254 sf lot. The first floor of the building is rented by the owners of the building, who inhabit the second and the half story above. The structure is 2 ½ stories with an existing 7' long shed dormer on the north side roof. The structure is sided in wood shingles.

2. Proposal: The proposal is to construct a gable dormer on the left side of the structure, adjacent to the existing shed dormer, to allow for the addition of a bathroom and closet in the half story. The proposed dormer would be 14'3" in length and combined with the shed dormer would be less than 50% of the length of the sloping roof. It would be set back approximately 20' from the front edge of the house and located to the rear of the existing dormer.

3. Nature of Application: The structure is currently nonconforming with respect to several dimensional requirements, including minimum lot size, lot area per dwelling unit, front and rear yard setbacks, building height and a side yard setback.

The proposed dormer would increase the area of the structure within the nonconforming side yard, which is 2.9' deep; the minimum side yard setback required in this district is 8'. The existing nonconformity requires the Applicant to obtain a special permit under §4.4.1 of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance (SZO).

4. Surrounding Neighborhood: The surrounding neighborhood is comprised of one- and two-family homes. In the immediate area, most structures are 2 ½ stories with gable roofs, many featuring small gable and/or shed dormers.

6. Green Building Practices: None.

7. Comments:

Alderman: Alderman O'Donovan has been contacted but has not yet provided comments.

Fire Prevention: Deputy Chief Keenan: "The proposal regarding the addition of a third story dormer will require that the fire alarm system protection be added to the proposed dormer and also that the entire building will have to have the fire alarm system brought up to current code because of the addition of a bedroom as required by the Massachusetts State Building Code."

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 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."

In considering a special permit under §4.4 of the SZO, the Board finds that the alterations proposed would not be substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing structure. The Applicant has worked with Staff and agreed to change the style of the dormer from a shed with a shallow slope to a gable. Though the gable and shed combination dormer is not a typical design, the Board finds the contrasting styles of the combined dormer visually appealing in an unconventional way which serves to add to the character of the Queen Anne style house and neighborhood. In general, the Board finds the

gable dormer to be a more preferred architectural style than the shed dormer and to be more in character with the architecture of the City. The design of the proposed dormer would maintain the predominant ridge height, and the roof shingles covering the dormer would cause it to better blend in with the 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 dormer proposed is consistent with the purpose of the Ordinance to preserve the historical and architectural resources of the City. The Board finds that the proposed dormer adds to the character of the traditional 2 ½ story gable 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.”

The dormer is designed in a manner that is compatible with the built surrounding area as outlined in finding two, compliance with standards.

III. RECOMMENDATION

Special Permit under §4.4.1

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

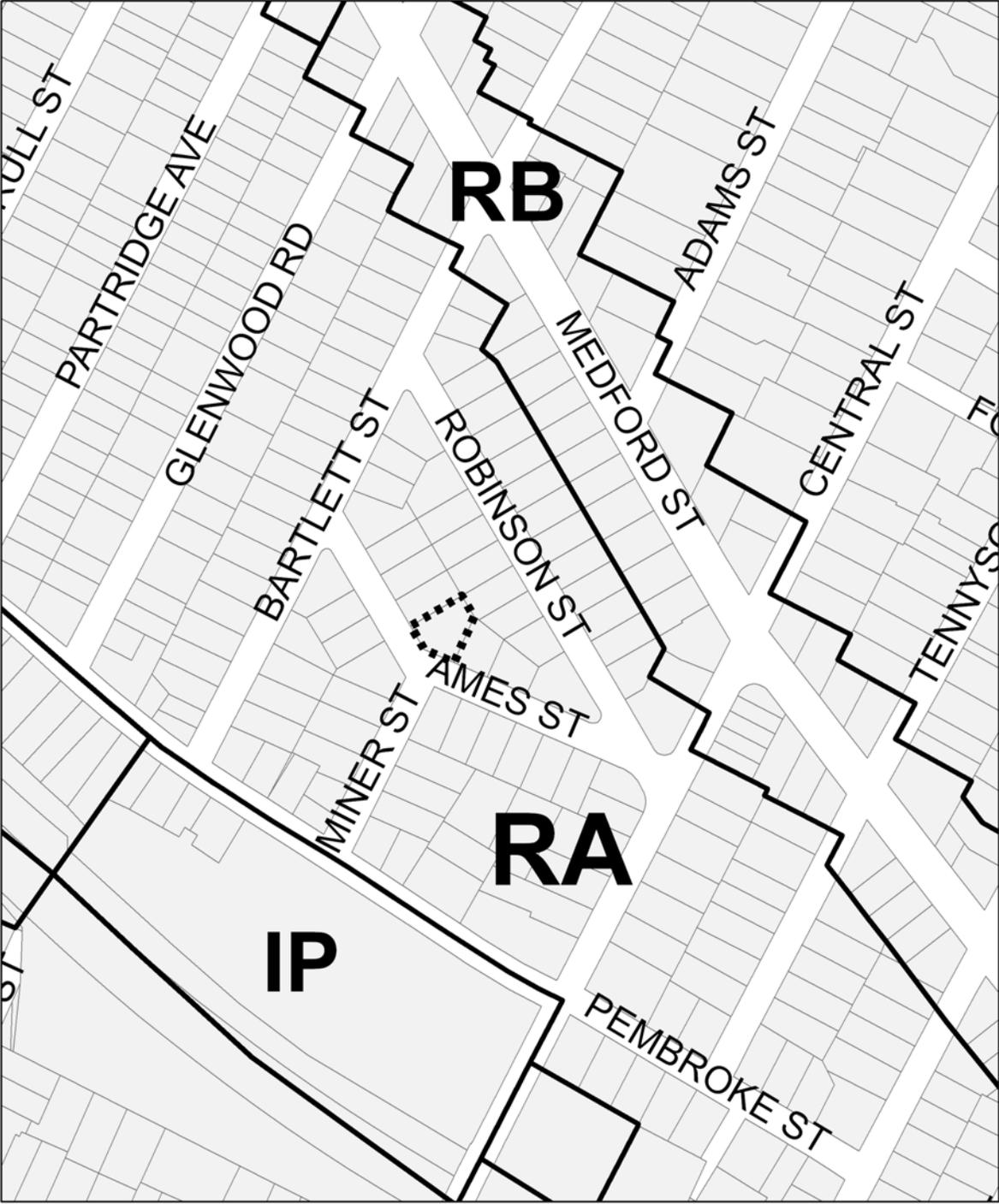
#	Condition	Timeframe for Compliance	Verified (initial)	Notes						
1	Approval is for the construction of a 14' ± gable dormer on the left side of the dwelling. This approval is based upon the following application materials and the plans submitted by the Applicant:	BP/CO	Plng.							
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Date (Stamp Date)</th> <th>Submission</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>(12/10/08)</td> <td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1/12/09(1/13/09)</td> <td>A2.0, A2.2 Elevations A1.3 Third Floor Plan</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	(12/10/08)	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office	1/12/09(1/13/09)	A2.0, A2.2 Elevations A1.3 Third Floor Plan
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Any changes to the approved elevations that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive ZBA approval.										
2	The siding materials and colors used shall match the existing structure.	CO	Plng.							

3	Fire alarm system protection shall be added to the proposed dormer and the entire building shall be brought up to current fire code.	CO	FP	
4	The Applicant shall contact Planning Staff at least five working days in advance of a request for a final sign-off on the building permit 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.	

Sincerely,



Kevin Prior
Chairman



29 AMES STREET