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

PLANNING DIVISION

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Case #: ZBA 2011-13
Date: March 3, 2011
Recommendation: Conditional Approval

PLANNING BOARD RECOMMENDATION

Site: 11 Belmont Place

Applicant Name: Andrea Shapiro and Christopher Cassel
Applicant Address: 11 Belmont Place, Somerville, MA 02143
Property Owner Name: Andrea Shapiro
Property Owner Address: 11 Belmont Place, Somerville, MA 02143
Agent Name: Katharine MacPhail
Agent Address: 42 Mount Vernon Street, Arlington, MA 02476
Alderman: Tom Taylor

Legal Notice: Applicants Andrea Shapiro and Christopher Cassel, seek a special permit to alter a nonconforming structure under SZO §4.4.1 to construct a two story addition and deck in the rear of an existing single-family residence. RB zone.

Zoning District/Ward: RB Zone / Ward 3
Zoning Approval Sought: Special Permit under SZO §4.4.1
Date of Application: February 4, 2011
Dates of Public Meeting • Hearing: Planning Board **3/3/11** • Zoning Board of Appeals **3/16/11**

Dear ZBA members:

At its regular meeting on March 3, 2011 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 3,457 square foot lot with a single-family residence situated on it near the intersection of Belmont Street and Belmont Place. The structure has 1,214 square feet of habitable space. The residence is two stories with a gable roof, not including the basement level.

2. Proposal: The Applicant is proposing to remove an existing single story volume and basement entry at the rear of the dwelling and to replace those with a two story addition, a deck on the first floor, and a new basement entry. The proposed two story addition will have a gable roof to match that of the existing structure and its footprint would be approximately 20 feet by 12.5 feet. The footprint of the proposed deck is approximately 10 feet by 18.5 feet. A series of steps will provide access from the addition to the deck and then from the deck down into the backyard. The proposed new basement entry will be approximately 4 feet wide by 5 feet deep by 9 feet high from grade. As part of the project the Applicant will also be reconfiguring an existing shed dormer to a gable dormer on the west elevation and installing new cedar clapboard siding on three sides of the structure which will be painted to match the color of the front façade.

These changes will facilitate an interior renovation and expansion. On the first floor, the kitchen will be greatly expanded, a new pantry will be created, the existing den will be expanded to create a dining room, and the existing half bath will be relocated from the rear of the structure to the center of the first floor. Sliding doors would also be installed on the rear façade to provide access to the new deck. On the second floor, the new addition would allow for one of the bedrooms to be expanded, the creation of a dressing area, and for a second full bathroom to be installed. The addition would also expand the basement area of the structure.

3. Nature of Application: This is a residential property within a RB district. The structure is currently nonconforming with respect to the minimum side yard setback on the southeast side of the property. The existing nonconformity requires the Applicant to obtain a special permit under Somerville Zoning Ordinance (SZO) §4.4.1 to construct the proposed addition. The Applicant is seeking a special permit to alter a nonconforming structure to construct a two story addition and deck at the rear of an existing single-family residence.

4. Surrounding Neighborhood: This property is located in a RB district and directly abuts a historic property, 34 Spring Street, to the northeast. The structures in the surrounding neighborhood consist predominantly of a mixture of single-, two-, and three-family dwellings between 2 and 3 stories.

5. Impacts of Proposal: There shall be minimal impacts to the surrounding neighborhood as the proposed addition would not appear to be detrimental to the immediate abutters or the surrounding area. Most of the construction and all of the excavation activities will be occurring at the rear of the existing structure with the building, the rear setback, and the fencing on the southeast side of the property acting as buffers to the residences nearby. Additionally, the homes at 32 and 34 Spring Street have substantial space between their structures and their rear lot lines, which would provide an additional buffer to the construction activities. Minimal disruption to the neighborhood or the streetscape due to construction activities is anticipated. The Board has included conditions in this special permit to help alleviate the potential dust, noise, and air quality issues that may arise from the construction processes. The excavated area will be approximately 25 feet wide by 15 feet long by 10 feet deep to pour the foundation to match the width and depth of the foundation for the existing structure. Excess soil from the excavation will be disposed of off-site and a dumpster will be located on site during construction to handle the disposal of solid waste from the project. The character of the original house will remain intact and the Applicant is proposing to install new cedar clapboard siding on three sides of the dwelling that will match the existing front facade. Furthermore, as the Applicant is only extending the existing nonconforming setback on the

southeast side of the property deeper into the lot by approximately 17 feet, there are no anticipated negative impacts from the proposal.

6. Green Building Practices: None indicated.

7. Comments:

Fire Prevention: Have been notified and are awaiting comments.

Ward Alderman: Alderman Taylor stated he is in favor of this project.

Historic Preservation: Please see the attached memorandum from Historic Preservation Planner Kristi Chase regarding the project. Historic Preservation recommends conditional approval of the project if the angle of the roof pitch and the design of the eaves on the revised shed dormer and the proposed new dormer on the addition are made to match that of the existing main roof. Staff has spoken to the Applicant's architect regarding this matter and she stated that the eaves on the revised shed dormer and the new dormer would be the same as those on the front façade. The Board has included this item as a condition as part of the special permit. With regard to the roof pitch of the revised and proposed dormers, the Applicant's architect stated they will look into this item further and they are amenable to this design aspect, so long as it does not add substantial additional cost to the project.

Existing Conditions

Date: March 3, 2011
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Existing Conditions

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.

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 "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 facilitate the adequate provision of transportation, water, sewerage, schools, parks and other public requirements; to conserve the value of land and buildings; to encourage the most appropriate use of land throughout the City; to encourage housing for persons of all income levels."

The proposal is consistent with the purpose of the district (6.1.2. RB - Residence Districts), which is, "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."

The project is compatible with the characteristics of the surrounding area. The Applicant is proposing to remove an existing single story volume and basement entry at the rear of the dwelling and to replace those with a two story addition, a deck, and a new basement entry. As part of the project the Applicant will also be reconfiguring an existing shed dormer on the west elevation to a gable dormer, which is something the Board supports, and also installing new cedar clapboard siding on three sides of the structure which will be painted to match the color of the front façade. The property will remain a two story, single-family residential use which is consistent with the surrounding neighborhood.

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. The structure will remain a two story, single-family dwelling and will continue to be used for residential purposes. The Applicant is extending the existing

nonconforming setback on the southeast side of the property deeper into the lot by approximately 17 feet and there are no anticipated negative impacts from this proposal.

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.** Furthermore, the Planning Board recommends the following conditions.

<table>
<tr><th>#</th><th>Condition</th><th>Timeframe for Compliance</th><th>Verified (initial)</th><th>Notes</th></tr>
<tr><td>1</td><td>Approval is to alter a nonconforming structure under SZO §4.4.1 to construct a two story addition and deck in the rear of an existing single-family residence. This approval is based upon the following application materials and the plans submitted by the Applicant:
<table>
<tr><th>Date (Stamp Date)</th><th>Submission</th></tr>
<tr><td>(February 4, 2011)</td><td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office</td></tr>
<tr><td>November 30, 2010
(February 17, 2011)</td><td>Plot Plan</td></tr>
<tr><td>December 28, 2010
(February 17, 2011)</td><td>Plans submitted with application (Proposed Floor Plans and Elevations)</td></tr>
<tr><td>February 18, 2011
(February 22, 2011)</td><td>Existing Floor Plans</td></tr>
</table>
Any changes to the approved site plans, elevations, or use that are not de minimis must receive SPGA approval.</td><td>BP/CO</td><td>Plng.</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>2</td><td>The Applicant shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau’s requirements.</td><td>CO</td><td>FP</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>3</td><td>New siding type and color, roofing, and materials of the addition and those on the existing structure shall all match that of the existing front facade.</td><td>CO</td><td>Plng.</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>4</td><td>The design of the eaves on the revised shed dormer and the proposed new dormer on the addition shall be made to match those of the existing main roof.</td><td>CO</td><td>Plng.</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>5</td><td>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.</td><td>During Construction</td><td>T&P</td><td></td></tr>
</table>

6	To the maximum extent feasible the Applicant will utilize strategies during construction to mitigate dust and control air quality, to minimize noise and to implement a waste recycling program for the removed debris.	During Construction	OSE/ISD	
7	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.	

Sincerely,

Kevin Prior
Chair

Cc: Owner and Applicant: Andrea Shapiro
Agent: Katharine MacPhail

Date: March 3, 2011
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Address: 11 Belmont Place

11 Belmont Place

To: Planning Division
From: Kristi Chase, Preservation Planner, and
Brandon Wilson, Executive Director
RE: Staff Recommendations 2/24/11

HPC 11.15 – 11 Belmont Place
Applicants: Andrea Shapiro and Christopher Cassel

Historic and Architectural Significance

Existing Conditions
This building has not been surveyed. It abuts the Central Atherton Spring Summer Local Historic District and is located where the stable might have been for the 1850s Hodgden House on Spring Street. 11 Belmont Place, constructed between 1884 and 1895, has little detail that points to a particular style beyond the original turned porch posts. No building permits were found beyond a 1988 bathroom remodel, indicating that the shed dormer is original to the property.

Recommendations
The HPC Design Guidelines recognize that alterations are made as a response to changing conditions and if done with respect, can enhance a property.

As to the roof and dormer, HPC Design Guidelines for roofs state that one should:

1. Preserve the integrity of the original or later important roof shape.

2. Retain the original roof covering whenever possible. If the property has a slate roof, conserve the roof slates. Slate is a near-permanent roofing material, and deterioration is generally caused by rusted roofing nails.

3. Whenever possible, replace deteriorated roof covering with material that matches the old in composition, color, size, shape, texture and installation detail.

4. Preserve the architectural features that give the roof its distinctive character, such as cornices, gutters, iron filigree, cupolas, dormers and brackets. Downspouts should be inconspicuously located and should be painted to match the color of the siding.

5. New dormers will be permitted if they are related to the forms, proportions, size and arrangement of existing windows, and constructed in matching materials and colors. If possible, new dormers should be confined to the rear of the house.

As can be seen in the Guidelines noted above the alteration of the roofline may be of concern because one should retain what is known to exist if it is visible from a public right of way. If the original shed dormer were to be altered, the same pitch as the existing roof should be used. The dormer shown seems to be of a steeper pitch than the main roof and therefore ought to be modified to the same pitch as the main roof with eaves to match.

The large addition on the rear would be minimally visible from the street and would essentially be exempt from Commission review. Therefore, the Staff finds that the proposed changes are basically in-keeping with HPC Design Guidelines and recommends approval if the roof pitches were made consistent.