



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

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DANA LEWINTER, ALT.

**Case #:** ZBA 2009-31  
**Date:** August 20, 2009  
**Recommendation:** Conditional Approval

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**PLANNING BOARD REPORT**

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**Site:** 74 Cedar Street

**Applicant Name:** Gregory Carleton

**Applicant Address:** 74 Cedar Street, Somerville MA 02143

**Property Owner Name:** same

**Agent Name:** Derick Snare

**Agent Address:** 158 Central St, Somerville MA 02145

**Alderman:** O'Donovan

**Legal Notice:** The Applicant & Owner seeks a special permit under §4.4.1 to expand a nonconforming two-family residential structure by constructing a shed dormer and two gable dormers on the sides of the house to create a third story.

**Zoning District/Ward:** Residence B / 5

**Zoning Approval Sought:** Special Permit under §5.1 and §4.4.1

**Date of Application:** July 13, 2009

**Date(s) of Public Meeting/Hearing:** Planning Board: 8/6/09 / ZBA: 8/19/09

**Date of Decision:** N/A

**Vote:** N/A

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Dear ZBA members:

At its regular meeting on August 20, 2009 the Planning Board heard the above-referenced application. Based on materials submitted by the Applicant and the Staff recommendation, the Board voted (5-0) with James Kirylo absent, to recommend **conditional approval** of the requested **Special Permit**.

In conducting its analysis, the Planning Board found:



CITY HALL • 93 HIGHLAND AVENUE • SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS 02143  
(617) 625-6600 EXT. 2500 • TTY: (617) 666-0001 • FAX: (617) 625-0722  
[www.somervillema.gov](http://www.somervillema.gov)

## I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The subject property is a two-family dwelling on a 3072 square foot lot. The structure is 2 ½ stories and there is a one- and two-story addition in the rear of the house. There is approximately one foot between the subject house and the house to the left (southwest).

2. Proposal: The proposal is to construct two gable dormers on the right side of the house (northeast) to add headroom for two bedrooms. The proposal also includes constructing a shed dormer on the left side of the house (southwest) for a bathroom and closet. The Applicant submitted a letter explaining his family's need for the use of the third story.

Since the length of the shed dormer would be just over sixty percent of the roof's length, the half story would be considered a third story. The collective length of the gable dormers would also be just over fifty percent of the roof's length. The siding of the dormers would match that of the house.

Since the Planning Board meeting on July 16, the Applicant has redesigned the shed dormer. In the revised plan, the dormer would not jog out over the portion of the house that extends into the side yard. There are also two additional windows on the dormer that are placed proportionally on its wall.



74 Cedar St – front (l), aerial view (r)

3. Nature of Application: The structure is currently nonconforming with respect to several dimensional requirements, including minimum lot size, front, rear and side yard setbacks, and street frontage.

The proposed dormers would affect the nonconforming side yards, which are 3.3 feet and 9.6 feet. The minimum required by the Somerville Zoning Ordinance (SZO) is 8 feet for a 2 ½ story structure and 10 feet for a 3 story structure. The existing nonconformity requires the Applicant to obtain a special permit under §4.4.1 of the SZO. Three stories are allowed in the Residence B district.

4. Surrounding Neighborhood: The surrounding area is comprised of single-, two- and three-family homes. A few of the 2 ½ story structures have small shed dormers with steep pitches.

5. Impacts of Proposal: The redesigned shed dormer reduces the impact of the alteration of the



roofline of the southwest side of the house. The dormer would continue to be more than fifty percent of the length of the roof; however, it would not extend over an existing projection of the house, reducing its massing. The additional windows would account for a significant portion of the dormer's wall face and they would be symmetrically placed. The dormer would have a fairly steep pitch and the siding would match the siding on the house.

The subject house and the adjacent house are just a few feet from each other. The redesigned shed dormer was pulled back so that there would be approximately six feet from the dormer to the side property line. Since the abutting house does not have a dormer, the Board does not anticipate privacy concerns. The Applicants submitted a letter of support from this neighbor.

The design of the gable dormers on the northeast side has less of an impact on the primary roofline of the house. The gable dormers appear secondary to the predominant gable roof and ridge height. Also, the roof shingles cover much of the dormer which causes them to better blend in with the roof. The dormers would be centered symmetrically on the roof and align with the bay window and existing windows below them. Windows would account for a significant portion of the dormer's front wall face, which improves the look of dormers.

6. Green Building Practices: The Applicants listed foam insulation for maximum insulation and low flow toilets as the green building practices that they will utilize.

7. Comments:

*Fire Prevention:* "... [T]he fire alarm system will have to be brought up to the requirements for new construction."

*Ward Alderman:* Has been contacted but has not provided comments.

## **II. FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMIT (SZO §5.1 & §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 dormers proposed would not be substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing structure. The dormers would be over fifty percent of the roof's length making the structure three stories; however, the design as described in finding four addresses these concerns.

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."

One purpose of the Ordinance is to preserve the historical and architectural resources of the City; this



particularly applies to this proposal. The shed dormer would change the character of the traditional 2 ½ story gable structure; however, the Applicants have redesigned the shed dormer to reduce its impact. The Board finds that the design and placement of the gable dormers do not alter the character of the 2 ½ story gable structure. These structures are prevalent in this neighborhood and the City. This house is not designated as a Local Historic District but it contributes to the architectural fabric of the City. The Board finds that the special permit for the dormers would be consistent with the general purpose and intent of the Ordinance.

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 shed dormer has been redesigned so that it is compatible with the built surrounding area. It would be on the less public side of the house, and would not extend over the existing portion of the house that projects into the required side yard setback. The windows would be placed symmetrically and would account for a significant portion of the dormer's main wall. The dormer would be 8.75 feet from the front edge of the house and its pitch of the dormer would be fairly steep. There are a few feet between the subject property and the adjacent house; however, the redesigned dormer was reduced in size so that it would be six feet from the side property line. Since the abutting house does not have a dormer the Board does not anticipate privacy concerns and the Applicant submitted a letter of support from this Abutter.

The gable dormers are compatible with the built surrounding area. They would be centered symmetrically on the roof and align with the bay window and existing windows below them. The dormers would start below the roof ridge and would be set back slightly from the building's main wall making them appear secondary to the predominant gable roof and ridge height. Also, the roof shingles cover much of the dormer which causes them to better blend in with the roof. Windows would account for a significant portion of the dormer's front wall face, which improves the look of dormers.



**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 two 9.3'± gable dormers and one 18'± shed dormer. 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>July 13, 2009</td><td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office</td></tr><tr><td>Aug 20, 2008 (July 30, 2009)</td><td>Plans submitted to OSPCD (plot plan)</td></tr><tr><td>May 28, 2009 (July 30, 2009)</td><td>Plans submitted to OSPCD (Existing: floor plans, elevations, sections; Proposed: 2<sup>nd</sup> floor plan, NE elevation, sections)</td></tr><tr><td>Aug 14, 2009 (Aug 14, 2009)</td><td>Revised plans submitted to OSPCD (Proposed: 3<sup>rd</sup> floor plan, roof plan, SE elevation, NW elevation, SW elevation)</td></tr></table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	July 13, 2009	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office	Aug 20, 2008 (July 30, 2009)	Plans submitted to OSPCD (plot plan)	May 28, 2009 (July 30, 2009)	Plans submitted to OSPCD (Existing: floor plans, elevations, sections; Proposed: 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor plan, NE elevation, sections)	Aug 14, 2009 (Aug 14, 2009)	Revised plans submitted to OSPCD (Proposed: 3 <sup>rd</sup> floor plan, roof plan, SE elevation, NW elevation, SW elevation)
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Any changes to the approved plans that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive ZBA approval.														
2	The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau's requirements.	CO	FP											
3	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

Cc: Applicant/Owner: Gregory Carleton  
Agent: Derick Snare





