



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

**STAFF**

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FREDERICK J. LUND, *SENIOR DRAFTSMAN*

**Case #:** ZBA 2007-21-R0808  
**Date:** September 12, 2008  
**Recommendation:** Conditional Approval

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**PLANNING STAFF REPORT**

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**Site:** 1 Glenwood Road  
**Applicant/Owner Name:** James Murray  
**Applicant/Owner Address:** 114 Broadway, Somerville, MA  
**Alderman:** O'Donovan

Legal Notice: Applicant/Owner seeks to revise an SPSR project approved under §7.11.2.e with special permits granted under §4.5.3 by replacing three sets of double windows with glass block.

Zoning District/Ward: RA / 5  
Zoning Approval Sought: Revision to Special Permits ZBA 2007-21  
Date of Application: August 27, 2008  
Date(s) of Public Hearing: ZBA: September 17, 2008  
Date of Decision: N/A  
Vote: N/A

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**I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

1. Subject Property: The subject property is a former municipal garage and storage facility of masonry construction located on an approximately 4656 square foot lot located at the northeast corner of Vernon Street and Glenwood Road. The existing structure is flat-roofed and one-story high at the corner, and rises to 2.5-stories further into the block, with a stepped gable fronting Glenwood Road and continuing back into the rear of the property. This structure covers almost the entire lot, with only inches to spare in places along the rear lot lines.

In 2007, the site received an SPSR, two special permits, and variance approval for conversion of a former municipal building into a three-family structure. Most of the work has been completed at the site, resulting in a restored historic masonry exterior, and installation of new windows that were previously boarded up.

2. Proposal: The Applicant seeks approval for improvements made to the structure that were inconsistent with the 2007 permit. Specifically, three pairs of double-hung windows (as shown in the approved plans) have been replaced with glass block. Two pairs are located at the corner of the building, with one pair

on the Glenwood Road side and the other on the Vernon Street side; the third pair is to the left of the garage door.

The applicant states that he was unaware of the requirement to obtain approval to make these “field revisions”, having purchased the site subsequent to its permitting. The reason for the request is to improve the privacy in the interior (corner windows) and to respond to interior conditions that would be incompatible with clear operational windows (a stairwell to the left of the garage door).



Views of structure prior to conversion

3. Nature of Application: As the site is subject to a prior ZBA approval and staff have not deemed the changes to be *de minimis*, any changes to the approved plans required ZBA approval in a noticed hearing.

## II. FINDINGS FOR REVISION TO SPECIAL PERMIT ZBA 2007-17

In order to grant a special permit with site plan review, the SPGA must make certain findings and determinations as outlined in §5.2.5 of the SZO.

The Planning Staff find that the proposed changes are benign and would not adversely impact the character of this formerly industrial building, would have no impact on the approved use, and would not impact the findings of the original approval, including the following:

1. Information Supplied: The Applicant must comply "with the information requirements in Section §5.2.3;"
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 with site plan review."
3. Purpose of the District: The Applicant has to ensure that the project "is consistent with the intent of the specific zoning district" ("to establish and preserve quiet neighborhoods of one- and two-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 "Is designed in a manner that is compatible with the existing natural features of the site and is compatible with the characteristics of the surrounding area, and that the scale, massing and detailing of buildings are compatible with those prevalent in the surrounding area."
5. Consistency with Purposes of the Ordinance: The proposal will remain "consistent with: 1) the purposes of this Ordinance, particularly those set forth in Article 1", including "to conserve the value of land and buildings".
6. Functional Design: Not applicable.

7. Impact on Public Systems. Not applicable.
8. Environmental Impacts. Not applicable.
9. Consistency with Purposes.
10. Preservation of Landform and Open Space. Not applicable.
11. Relation of Buildings to Environment. Not applicable.
12. Stormwater Drainage. Not applicable.
13. Historic or Architectural Significance. Planning staff find that the changes to the structure are neutral in their effect on the building's historic or architectural significance. As the site was historically industrial, glass block is an appropriate material, and one whose use the ZBA previously blessed elsewhere in this building's rehabilitation.
14. Enhancement of Appearance: Planning Staff find that the proposed changes are neither harmful nor particularly beneficial to the building's appearance.
15. Lighting. Not applicable.
16. Emergency Access. Not applicable.
17. Location of Access. Not applicable.
18. Utility Service. Not applicable.
19. Prevention of Adverse Impacts. Not applicable.
20. Signage. Not applicable.
21. Screening of Service Facilities. Not applicable.

### III. RECOMMENDATION

#### Revision to Special Permit under §7.11.2.e

Based on the above, Staff finds that this application complies with the requirements for granting a special permit with site plan review as set forth under §5.2.5, and recommends **CONDITIONAL APPROVAL** of the requested **REVISION TO THE SPECIAL PERMIT with SITE PLAN REVIEW**.

Although the Planning Staff is recommending approval of the requested revisions, the following conditions should be added to the permits:

#	Condition	Timeframe for Compliance	Verified (initial)	Notes						
1	This approval is for the modification of an approved three-family dwelling as depicted in the plans below:	BP/CO	ISD/Plng.							
	<table><tr><th>Plan Date</th><th>Submission</th></tr><tr><td>8/8/7</td><td>Originally approved plans as modified by:</td></tr><tr><td>“OSPCD Rec’d 8/27/08”</td><td>Revised elevations showing glass block</td></tr></table>				Plan Date	Submission	8/8/7	Originally approved plans as modified by:	“OSPCD Rec’d 8/27/08”	Revised elevations showing glass block
	Plan Date				Submission					
	8/8/7				Originally approved plans as modified by:					
	“OSPCD Rec’d 8/27/08”				Revised elevations showing glass block					
Any changes to the presently approved use or site plan that are not <i>de minimis</i> or specifically delegated to staff review below must receive ZBA approval.										