



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

**STAFF**

MADELEINE MASTERS, *PLANNING DIRECTOR*  
CHRISTOPHER DI IORIO, *PLANNER/ZONING ADMINISTRATOR*  
LORI MASSA, *PLANNER/ZONING ADMINISTRATOR*  
DAWN PEREIRA, *ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT*  
FREDERICK J. LUND, *SENIOR DRAFTSMAN*

**Case #: ZBA 2008-59**  
**Date: November 6, 2008**  
**Recommendation: Conditional Approval**

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**PLANNING STAFF REPORT**

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**Site:** 20 Monmouth Street

**Applicant Name:** Bill Boehm

**Applicant Address:** 535 Albany St. #3C, Boston, MA 02118

**Property Owner Name:** Option One Mortgage Corporation /  
as of November 20, 2008: Robert Ekendahl and Chantal Holy

**Property Owner Address:** 306 Riverside Ave., Medford, MA 02115

**Alderman:** Taylor

Legal Notice: Applicant Bill Boehm & owner Option One Mortgage Corporation seek a special permit (SZO §4.4.1) to renovate a nonconforming dwelling including removing enclosed porches, making façade changes and constructing a rear porch.

Zoning District/Ward: RB / 3

Zoning Approval Sought: Special Permit (SZO §4.4.1)

Date of Application: November 5, 2008

Date(s) of Public Hearing: ZBA: December 3, 2008

Date of Decision: N/A

Vote: N/A

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**I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

1. Subject Property: The property is a two-family dwelling that is 2 ½ stories tall. It is on a 3,351 square foot rectangular lot that slopes downward from the front to the rear of the lot.
2. Proposal: The proposal is to renovate the house, including removal of an enclosed front porch and replacement with an overhang above the front steps, removal of the rear enclosed porches and shed and replacement with a two-story deck, removal of exterior stairs on the left side of the house, addition of a sloped shed dormer, and reconfiguration of windows.



20 Monmouth Street: Front (above left), Rear View from Cleveland St (above right), Left Side (below)



3. Nature of Application: The structure is currently nonconforming with respect to several dimensional requirements, including minimum lot area, and front, side and rear yard setbacks. The proposal alters the structure that is encroaching on the nonconforming front, side and rear yards. The front yard is 8 feet; the minimum front yard setback is 15 feet. The right side yard is 4 feet; the minimum side yard setback is 8 feet. The rear yard setback is 7.4 feet; the minimum rear yard setback is 10.75 feet. A shed would be removed that is 2.5 feet from the rear property line. These existing nonconformities require the Applicant to obtain a special permit under §4.4.1 of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance (SZO).

4. Surrounding Neighborhood: The surrounding neighborhood features one-, two-, and multi-family homes.

5. Impacts of Proposal: The renovations to the house would improve its appearance with new siding and removal of enclosed porches, shed, and exterior stairs. Opening closed porches reduces the visual mass and makes the building approachable. Several properties in the area are designated as Local Historic Districts. Modern elements would be added but the basic style of the house would be preserved. The shed dormer would have a steep slope such that the roof line of the house is not negatively altered. Individually Staff would not recommend all of the changes but collectively they are a coherent design approach that is distinct from but complementary to the traditional design.

6. Green Building Practices: This would be a LEED certifiable home. It would meet Energy Star standards and have photovoltaic panels.

7. Comments:

Fire Prevention: Has been contacted but has not yet provided comments.

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

## **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 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."

In considering a special permit under §4.4 of the SZO, Staff find that the alterations proposed would not be substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing structure. The proposal would not create any new nonconforming dimensions nor encroach further into the nonconforming setbacks. The floor area ratio and visual massing would be reduced with the removal of the enclosed porches and shed.

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."

Staff find that the proposal is consistent with the general purposes of the Ordinance as set forth under §1.2, which includes, but is not limited to conserving the value of land and buildings in the City.

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."

Staff find that the renovations to the house would improve its appearance with new siding and removal of enclosed porches, shed, and exterior stairs. Modern elements would be added but the basic style would be preserved. The shed dormer would have a steep slope such that the roof line of the house is not negatively altered.

### III. RECOMMENDATION

#### Special Permit under §4.4.1

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

#	Condition	Timeframe for Compliance	Verified (initial)	Notes				
1	Approval is for the renovation of a nonconforming dwelling including removing enclosed porches, making façade changes and constructing a rear porch. This approval is based upon the following application materials and the plans submitted by the Applicant:	BP/CO	Plng.					
	<table><tr><th>Date</th><th>Submission</th></tr><tr><td>November 5, 2008</td><td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office (Site Plan A1, Floor Plans A2, Floor Plans A3, Elevations A4, Elevations A5)</td></tr></table>				Date	Submission	November 5, 2008	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office (Site Plan A1, Floor Plans A2, Floor Plans A3, Elevations A4, Elevations A5)
	Date				Submission			
November 5, 2008	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office (Site Plan A1, Floor Plans A2, Floor Plans A3, Elevations A4, Elevations A5)							
Any changes to the approved site plan or elevations that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive ZBA approval.								
2	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.					

