



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS**  
**OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**  
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**PLANNING DIVISION**

**STAFF**

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**Case #:** ZBA 2010-36  
**Date:** August 12, 2010  
**Recommendation:** Conditional Approval

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**PLANNING STAFF REPORT**

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**Site:** 221 Morrison Avenue

**Applicant Name:** Ron and Linde Dynneson

**Applicant Address:** 221 Morrison Avenue, Somerville, MA 02144

**Property Owner Name:** same

**Alderman:** Rebekah Gewirtz

Legal Notice: Applicants/Owners Ron and Linde Dynneson seek a Special Permit with design review under SZO §7.11.3.g to establish use as a Historic Bed and Breakfast, construct a 1,149 sq ft addition to the rear of the non-conforming structure (§4.4.1), and provide one parking space per every three guest rooms (§9.5.3.d).

Zoning District/Ward: Residence A/ Ward 6

Zoning Approval Sought: Special Permit §4.4.1; Special Permit with design review §7.11.3.g;  
Special Permit §9.5.3.d

Date of Application: July 13, 2010

Dates of Public Meeting/Hearing: Planning Board: 08/24/2010; ZBA: 09/01/2010

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**I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

1. Subject Property: The subject property is a 2.5-story owner-occupied bed and breakfast on an approximately 8,000 square foot lot. The property is located on Morrison Avenue in Davis Square. Morrison Avenue is a two-way residential street with on-street residential parking on one side of the street. The property is approximately 1,000 feet away from the Davis Square Red Line Station. The Board of Aldermen designated the property as a local historic district in July 2010.

2. Proposal: The proposal is to construct a 2.5-story, 1,149 sq ft addition on the rear of the structure.



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The addition is approximately 27' by 23' and will include a basement workshop, a private owners' kitchen, and half bath on the first floor, two new guest rooms with full baths on the second floor, and two roof decks, a full bath, and mezzanine on the third floor. The entry to the addition will be accessible per Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (MAAB) requirements. The applicants also plan to make by-right interior renovations to the structure, including a basement laundry area, a MAAB accessible guest room and bath, a reconfigured stairway, and a full bath.



*221 Morrison Ave*



*221 Morrison Ave, view of driveway*



*221 Morrison Ave, rear yard*

3. Nature of Application: The proposal establishes a Historic Bed and Breakfast as the primary use of the property. A Historic Bed and Breakfast with six rooms or less requires a special permit with design review under SZO 7.11.3.g. The property is currently considered a single-family dwelling with the accessory residential use of a tourist home with three rooms for rent. In 2006, the ZBA granted the Applicants a special permit to increase the number of guest rooms from two (by right) to three.

The proposal also requires a special permit under §9.5.3.d to utilize the Historic Bed and Breakfast parking provisions which allow one space for the dwelling plus one for every three guestrooms pursuant to ZBA approval of a parking management plan.

The structure is currently nonconforming with respect to minimum lot size and side yard setback. Under §4.4.1 "Lawfully existing non-conforming structures other than one- and two-family dwellings may be enlarged, extended, renovated or altered only by special permit authorized by the SPGA in accordance with the procedures of Article 5." A special permit is required to construct an addition to this nonconforming structure.

4. Surrounding Neighborhood: The immediate neighborhood is predominantly residential, with a mix of single-, two-, and three-family homes. The property is in close vicinity to both RB and CBD zoning districts and to College Avenue, a highly traveled street in Davis Square. The Davis Square T Station is about a two minute walk from the property.

5. Impacts of Proposal: The proposal will increase the length of the structure by approximately 23ft towards the rear of the property. Although the existing structure is non-conforming with respect to the left side yard, the addition will be compliant with the minimum setback requirement of 8ft.

One Norway Maple in the left side yard will be removed, and an existing shed will be shifted back by about 15ft. The addition will have a left side yard setback of 8'5" and will be located across from the fenced rear yard of the neighboring structure. The right side yard setback will be 14'5". A landscaped island and fence separates the property from the neighboring driveway and structure to the right. The rear yard setback will be reduced from approximately 71ft to 54ft, but the existing brick patio and landscaped terrace area will remain between the addition and the rear yard abutter.

The proposal will allow for a greater number of guests at the Morrison House Bed and Breakfast. While this expansion could generate additional vehicle trips, the Applicants state that given the property's location, most guests either do not come with cars or choose not to use their cars during their stay.

6. Green Building Practices: The proposed addition will meet or exceed the energy requirements of the building code through the use of features like high-R value insulation, high performance windows, low-flow plumbing, programmable thermostats, and recycled building materials.

7. Comments:

*Fire Prevention:* William Lee reviewed the proposal and stated: "In accordance with Mass. General Laws Chapter 148, section 26H, it will be required to have a complete automatic sprinkler system, and therefore will need a low voltage fire alarm system, monitored by a licensed central station company."

*Historic Preservation:* The Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) is reviewing the proposal and its approval is required for any modifications that will be visible from the street. Kristi Chase will submit the official HPC decision following their August 17<sup>th</sup> meeting.

*Traffic & Parking:* Terence Smith reviewed the proposal and stated: "The applicant seeks a special permit to establish use of a Historic Bed and Breakfast and construct a 1,149 sq ft addition to the rear of the non-conforming structure and provide three off street parking spaces. Per the Somerville Zoning Ordinance (SZO) 4 parking spaces are required. The applicant is one parking space short of the SZO requirements."

"The property (221 Morrison St) is in close proximity to Davis Square and accessible by public transportation to the greater Boston area. The applicant anticipates that lodgers to their establishment will use the public transportation system to/from their Bed and Breakfast. Traffic and Parking does not disagree with this premise. Also the applicant has submitted a 'Parking Plan' providing a scenario/plan indicating how vehicles will be tandem parked on the applicant's property if required by using the existing driveway. This 'Parking Plan' is well thought out and would not result in non resident permit vehicles parking on the local streets. Traffic and Parking has no objections to this 'Parking Plan'. Traffic and Parking has no objections to this application."

*Ward Alderman:* Alderman Gewirtz reviewed the application and stated that she supports it.

## **II. FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMIT SZO §5.1.4 & 5.1.5):**

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."

*Use:* The Applicant requires a special permit with design review to establish a Historic Bed and Breakfast use under §7.11.3.g of the SZO. The proposal meets the requirements for a Historic Bed and Breakfast described under §7.12.3: The Applicants are providing no more than the permitted number of guest rooms and the guest rooms do not include cooking facilities. A common gathering area is maintained for guest use. Only one dwelling unit is occupied by the Applicants and the facility is the Applicants' principal residence. The Applicants will be on the premises and responsible for implementing the submitted parking management plan.

*Structure:* Staff finds that the alterations proposed would not be substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing structure. The addition extends two feet above the existing roofline, but the impact on the appearance of the structure from the street is minimal. There are no proposed major changes to the front façade; however, the exterior work subject to approval by the Historic Preservation Commission will enhance the structure and begin to restore it to its original condition. The Applicant is working with the HPC and Staff to ensure that the design and materials are complimentary and sympathetic to the historic style of the structure.

The subject property is also well landscaped, and despite the proposed addition will continue to more than meet the minimum landscaping requirement of 25 percent.

The project also complies with the applicable design guidelines for developments within a residence zone under §5.1.5 of the SZO:

- The structure is generally of the same size and proportions as those existing in the neighborhood. A range of building styles exists in the vicinity and many structures have similar depth and height.
- The proposed addition is consistent with the architecture of the existing structure in terms of window dimensions and roof lines. The proposed addition is compatible with the scale of the existing structure and is not overly large or clashing.
- No change to the dimensions of the existing driveway is required to meet the parking requirements under §9.5.3.d. The width of the driveway where it meets the public sidewalk is less than 12ft and the parking area is screened from an existing patio with an open-grid wooden fence.

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: providing for and maintaining the uniquely integrated structure of uses in the City; conserving the value of land and buildings; and preserving the historical and architectural resources of the City.

The proposal is also consistent with the purpose of Residence A district, which is, “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.” In recently creating the new Historic Bed & Breakfast Use, the Board of Aldermen found that bed and breakfasts could be compatible with Residence A districts provided that they were subject to special permit.

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.”

*Use:* The Historic Bed and Breakfast use is compatible with the surrounding area, which is comprised of one- and two-family homes on the immediately adjacent parcels as well as retail, restaurants, and offices closer to Davis Square. The bed and breakfast has successfully operated within the neighborhood since 2001.

*Structure:* The proposed addition corresponds to the historic character of the existing structure. The changes will create space for three additional guest rooms without altering the overall design of the structure. The addition is also compatible with the surrounding neighborhood, as discussed above.

5. Vehicular and pedestrian circulation: The circulation patterns for motor vehicles and pedestrians which would result from the use or structure will not result in conditions that create traffic congestion or the potential for traffic accidents on the site or in the surrounding area.

The proposal to establish use as a Historic Bed and Breakfast with three additional guest rooms has minimal impact on existing traffic circulation and will not increase the potential for traffic accidents. The Parking Plan describes how the Applicants will coordinate guest vehicles, keeping all guest keys in order to reorganize and prevent cars from becoming blocked. This is a practical strategy to accommodate day to day situations as well as those of full capacity.

### **III. RECOMMENDATION**

#### **Special Permit with Design Review under §5.1.4 & 5.1.5**

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 establishment of use as a Historic Bed and Breakfast, the construction of a 1,149 sq ft addition to the rear of the non-conforming structure, and the provision of one parking space per every three guest rooms. 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, 2010</td><td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office</td></tr><tr><td>July 29, 2010</td><td>Plans submitted to OSPCD (Floor plans and Site Plan, AE100-104, AS001)</td></tr><tr><td>July 29, 2010</td><td>Plans submitted to OSPCD (Elevations, A201-202, AE201-202)</td></tr></table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	July 13, 2010	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office	July 29, 2010	Plans submitted to OSPCD (Floor plans and Site Plan, AE100-104, AS001)	July 29, 2010	Plans submitted to OSPCD (Elevations, A201-202, AE201-202)
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Any changes to the approved site plan or elevations that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval.												
2	The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau's requirements.	CO	FP									
3	The Applicant shall comply with all requirements of the Historic Preservation Commission.	BP	Plng									
4	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.									

