



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Case #: ZBA 2010-30
Date: June 9, 2010
Recommendation: Conditional Approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: 8 Partridge Avenue

Applicant Name: Stephen Trombley

Applicant Address: 152 Central Street #1, Somerville, MA 02145

Property Owner Name: same

Agent Name: none

Alderman: Sean O'Donovan

Legal Notice: Applicant/Owner Stephen Trombley seeks a special permit (SZO §4.4.1) to demolish and reconstruct the rear and sidewalls and second level front wall of a nonconforming dwelling, raise the second level, expand a deck in the rear yard, and alter the front entry way.

Zoning District/Ward: Residence A/Ward 5

Zoning Approval Sought: Special Permit (§5.1 and §4.4.1)

Date of Application: June 1, 2010

Dates of Public Meeting/Hearing: Planning Board: 6/24/2010; ZBA: 7/14/2010

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The subject property is a single family dwelling on a 2,240 square foot lot. The structure is 1 1/2 stories and approximately 1,340 net square feet. There is a driveway to the left of the house and a small landscaped space in the front right. The rear yard is primarily paved.

2. Proposal: The proposal is to raise the existing second story from 4' to 7.5' and extend the rear entry and existing deck. The height of the building would increase from 20.4 feet to 23.6 feet. The proposal entails the demolition and reconstruction of the north, south, and rear sidewalls, and the removal of the second level front wall. This work is necessary due to extensive termite damage and substandard existing framing. The proposal also reorients the front steps to the street and adds a covered



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landing above the front entry. The design emulates that of the structure at 4 Partridge Avenue (see image below). A tree will be removed from the front yard and both the front and back yard will be replanted.



8 Partridge Avenue



Partridge Avenue looking northeast, 8 Partridge in the right corner

3. Nature of Application: The structure is currently nonconforming with respect to several dimensional requirements, including minimum lot size, landscaped area, and front and side yard setbacks. The proposal affects the nonconforming side yard setback, which is 3.2 feet along right side of the house; the minimum side yard setback is 5 feet. The proposal will increase the height of the existing building and extend the rear deck by 2.6 feet along the nonconforming side yard. The proposal will also add a landing and railing above the front entry within the nonconforming front yard setback. The existing front yard setback is 4.7 feet, while the minimum is no less than 10 feet. These existing nonconformities require the Applicant to obtain a special permit under §4.4.1 of the SZO. The landscaping will be increased from 6% to 37%, exceeding the landscaping requirement of 25%.

4. Surrounding Neighborhood: The surrounding neighborhood of Winter Hill consists predominately of one-, two-, and multi-family homes.

5. Impacts of Proposal: The proposal will increase the height of the structure; however, the height will not exceed that of several single-family homes on surrounding properties. The second story addition does not include windows along the nonconforming side yard and is not expected to further impact the neighboring structure. The rear yard and left side yard setback will remain conforming.

6. Green Building Practices: The applicant will install new energy efficient doors, windows, and insulation, as well as fast growth bamboo flooring. Gas hot water heating will replace the current electric heat.

7. Comments:

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

Ward Alderman: Requested additional information about the application but has not provided any follow up comments.

Historic: In regards to the proposed alterations to 8 Partridge Avenue, the Historic Preservation Commission's primary concern is that the characteristic streetscape be retained. The building, despite many alterations retains the massing and form characteristic of the neighborhood. These houses were developed by Horace Partridge in a stripped down Italianate form with bay windows, deep eaves and eave returns but minimal bracketing. They were rental property for lower middle class families and did not have a lot of detail. The iteration and repetition of the roof lines and the eave returns form the rhythm of the streetscape. These buildings are typical of workers housing constructed in the last quarter of the 19th century. While 8 Partridge does not retain the eaves, several other buildings on the street do. The Commission is particularly interested that those aspects of the building be retained such as the roof pitch, depth of eaves and eave returns that form the streetscape.

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 will not be substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing structure. The renovation will address issues of termite damage and inadequate framing, bringing the structure up to code and improving the safety of the neighborhood. To the extent possible for a nonconforming structure, the proposal complies with the standards of the zoning ordinance. The renovation raises the average roof height by approximately 3 feet and the addition of 2.5 feet for a deck in the side yard is minimally impactful. The second story addition does not include windows along the nonconforming side yard and is not expected to further impact the neighboring structure. The landing and railing above the front entry will add some character to the structure. The additional landscaping will be an improvement to the lot which is currently only minimally landscaped.

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. The proposal is also consistent with the purpose of the district, which is, "[t]o 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 "(i)s designed in a manner that is compatible with the characteristics of the built and unbuilt surrounding area, including land uses."

The proposal is designed to be compatible with the existing house and surrounding area. The Applicant based the design on the structure at 4 Partridge Avenue, and the additions will not deviate from the scale of neighboring properties. The Applicant is also working with Staff to modify the roof design to preserve the existing pitch, in keeping with the historic roof lines of the block.

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
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1	Approval is for the demolition and reconstruction of the first level rear and sidewalls and the second level front wall, construction of a raised second level, expansion of a deck in the rear yard, and alterations to the front entry way of a nonconforming structure. 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>June 1, 2010</td><td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office</td></tr><tr><td>May 20, 2010</td><td>Plans submitted to OSPCD (Elevation and floor plans, Sheet A1)</td></tr><tr><td>May 24, 2010</td><td>Plans submitted to OSPCD (Plot plan)</td></tr><tr><td>June 22, 2010</td><td>Plans submitted to OSPCD (revised proposal description)</td></tr></table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	June 1, 2010	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office	May 20, 2010	Plans submitted to OSPCD (Elevation and floor plans, Sheet A1)	May 24, 2010	Plans submitted to OSPCD (Plot plan)	June 22, 2010	Plans submitted to OSPCD (revised proposal description)
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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 submit a revised plan with a modified roof design. The design will include a roof pitch conforming to that of the existing structure and the addition of eave returns. Roof design shall be subject to the approval of Historic Preservation and Staff.	ZBA Hearing	Plng.											
4	The applicant shall receive all required demolition permits from Historic Preservation and ISD.	BP	ISD											
5	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.											

