



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Case #: ZBA 2010-83

Date: Jan 20, 2011

Recommendation: Conditional Approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: 9 Porter Ave

Applicant Name: Susan Evans

Applicant Address: 9 Porter Ave, Somerville MA 02143

Property Owner Name: Susan Evans & Joseph X. Sullivan

Property Owner Address: 9 Porter Ave, Somerville MA 02143

Alderman: Sean O'Donovan

Legal Notice: Applicant Susan Evans and Owners Susan Evans & Joseph X. Sullivan seek a special permit to alter a non-conforming structure under SZO §4.4.1 to construct a second story addition and adjust window locations in the side and rear yards of an existing single-family residence.

Zoning District/Ward: RA / 5

Zoning Approval Sought: Special Permit SZO §4.4.1

Date of Application: Dec 28, 2010

Dates of Public Meeting • Hearing: Planning Board 1/20/11 • Zoning Board of Appeals 2/2/11

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The subject property is comprised of three parcels under the same ownership that total 8051 sf. While these parcels are separate on paper, they are merged for the purposes of zoning. There is a single-family house that was constructed circa 1890 on one lot and the two adjacent lots are unbuildable. Porter Ave is a narrow street that ends in front of the house and there is a significant downward slope to the west. The house has two stories with approximately 1270 nsf. There is an existing single story addition on the rear side and a porch on the front side of the structure.



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2. Proposal: The proposal is to construct a two-story addition on the west side of the house and a second story above the existing one-story section on the north side. The proposal also includes enlarging the existing front porch to wrap around the west (left) side of the house, adding an entry porch at the rear of the house to allow the renovation of the interior to enlarge the dining room, bedroom and kitchen. The use of the single-family house and the number of bedrooms (2) will not change. Historically appropriate siding and windows will replace the vinyl siding and character-defining features water tables, belt courses and decorative shingles will be installed. The purpose of the project is to restore the historic character to the original Victorian cottage, modify the interior to better accommodate the owners' changing needs and to increase the building's environmental performance.



3. Nature of Application: The structure is currently nonconforming with respect to several dimensional requirements, including lot area, street frontage and side yard setback. The rear yard of 12.3 feet is conforming with the reduction allowed for the shallow lot size. The proposed addition on the rear of the house would affect the nonconforming side yard setback. The nonconforming side yard from the existing one-story portion of the house is 2 feet and the minimum in this district is 8 feet. This portion of the house will extend upwards to two stories. This existing nonconformity requires the Applicant to obtain a special permit under §4.4.1 of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance (SZO).

4. Surrounding Neighborhood: The surrounding neighborhood is comprised of mostly single-family houses.

5. Impacts of Proposal: The renovations to the house will restore its historic character as a Victorian cottage. The additions do not appear to be detrimental to the immediate abutters or the surrounding area. The proposal will increase the mass of the structure in the rear;

however, the rear yard setback will remain conforming and the side yard will not be reduced further. No windows are proposed on the second story. On the first story, one window will be eliminated and another window will be shifted towards the back of the house. The addition is not expected to further impact privacy or shadows on the neighboring structure.

6. Green Building Practices: The Applicants stated that they will include the following in the renovation to improve the environmental performance of the dwelling: high-performance windows; dense-pack cellulose and spray-foam insulation; high-efficiency furnace and point-of-use hot water heaters; energy-efficient appliances, lighting and plumbing features; and sustainable building materials

including fiber cement exterior siding, recycled and reusable finish materials and FSC-certified wood products.

7. Comments:

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

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

II. FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMIT (SZO §4.4.1 & 5.1):

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 will increase the mass of the structure in the rear; however, the rear yard setback will remain conforming and the side yard will not be reduced further. No windows are proposed on the second story. On the first story, one window will be eliminated and another window will be shifted towards the back of the house, which is greater than 3 feet from the property line. The house adjacent to the subject property ends before the location of the addition to the rear of the house so the change in window location is not anticipated to be impactful.

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 maintain the uniquely integrated structure of uses in the City. It is consistent with the purpose of the RA district, by preserving and enhancing this single-family home.

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 in a manner that is compatible with the built and unbuilt surrounding area. The additions and renovations to the siding and detailing of the house will improve its overall appearance and restore its historic character as a Victorian cottage.

III. RECOMMENDATION**Special Permit under §4.4.1 & 5.1**

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 to construct a second story addition in the side and rear yards of an existing nonconforming single-family residence. 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>Dec 28, 2010</td><td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office</td></tr><tr><td>Dec 28, 2010</td><td>Plans submitted to OSPCD (Site plan, (1) existing floor plan, (2) existing elevations, (3) proposed floor plan, (4) proposed elevations, (5) proposed renderings)</td></tr></table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	Dec 28, 2010	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office	Dec 28, 2010	Plans submitted to OSPCD (Site plan, (1) existing floor plan, (2) existing elevations, (3) proposed floor plan, (4) proposed elevations, (5) proposed renderings)
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Any changes to the approved plans that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval.										
2	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.							

