



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS**  
**MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**  
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DAWN PEREIRA, *ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT*

**Case #:** ZBA 2016-24

**Date:** April 6, 2016

**Recommendation:** Conditional Approval

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**PLANNING STAFF REPORT**

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**Site:** 98 Central Street

**Applicant Name:** Aaron Drasner and Alison Pruchansky  
**Applicant Address:** 98 Central Street, Somerville MA, 02143  
**Owner Name:** Aaron Drasner and Alison Pruchansky  
**Owner Address:** 98 Central Street, Somerville MA, 02143  
**Agent Name:** NA  
**Agent Address:** NA  
**Alderman:** Mark Niedergang

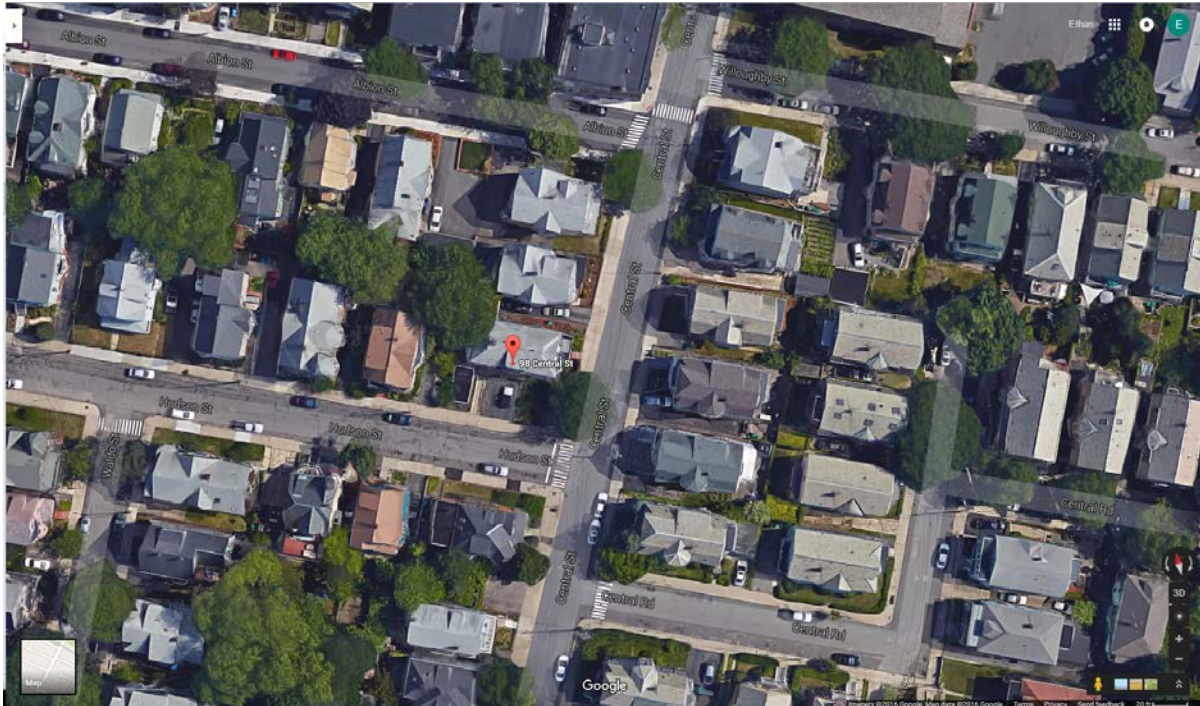
**Legal Notice:** Applicants and Owners Aaron Drasner and Alison Pruchansky, seek a Special Permit to modify a nonconforming structure by adding a dormer. RA Zone, Ward 5.

**Dates of Public Hearing:** April 6, 2016

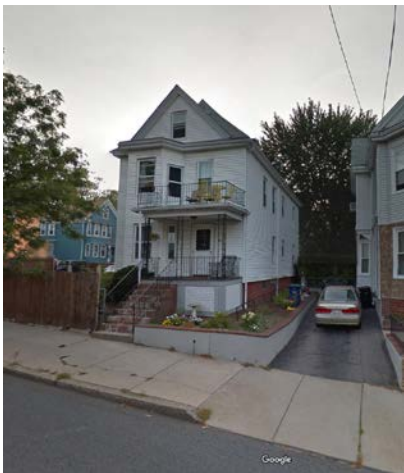
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**I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

1. **Subject Property:** The subject property is a 3,593sf lot that contains a 2-1/2 story gable roofed structure of 4,500sf with one dwelling unit on the ground floor and one dwelling unit on the top two floors.



Aerial view of property



Street view of property from Central St. (left) and Hudson St. (right)

2. Proposal: The proposal is to add a small dormer on the right side of the gable roof to increase head clearance for a new stairway. The proposal also includes the addition of a dormer on the left side of the gable roof that provides space for a master bathroom, and access to a balcony over the existing bay.

3. Green Building Practices: None listed

4. Comments:

*Ward Alderman:* has been contacted.

## II. FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMIT (SZO §4.4):

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."*

The structure is currently nonconforming with respect to the following dimensional requirements: side yard setback. The side yard setback on the right of the structure is 1.7', the requirement is 8'. The side yard setback will not be reduced, but the dormer on the right side of the structure will be constructed in the same plane as the existing wall. This alteration to a nonconforming structure requires the Applicant to obtain special permits under §4.4.1 of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance (SZO).

Section 4.4.1 states that "[l]awfully existing one-and two-family dwellings which are only used as residences, which are nonconforming with respect to dimensional requirements, may be enlarged, extended, renovated or altered by special permit granted by the SPGA in accordance with the procedures of Article 5."

In considering a special permit under §4.4 or 4.5 of the SZO, Staff find that the alterations proposed would not be substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing structure. The proposal has been designed with setbacks that minimally impact the neighbors.

### 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: The purposes of the Ordinance are to promote the health, safety, and welfare of the inhabitants of the City of Somerville; to provide for and maintain the uniquely integrated structure of uses in the City; to lessen congestion in the streets; to protect health; to secure safety from fire, panic and other dangers; to provide adequate light and air; to prevent the overcrowding of land; to avoid undue concentration of population; to facilitate the adequate provision of transportation, water, sewerage, schools, parks and other public requirements; to conserve the value of land and buildings; to preserve the historical and architectural resources of the City; to adequately protect the natural environment; to encourage the most appropriate use of land throughout the City; to protect and promote a housing stock that can accommodate the diverse household sizes and life stages of Somerville residents at all income levels, paying particular attention to providing housing affordable to individuals and families with low and moderate incomes; and to preserve and increase the amenities of the municipality.

The proposal is consistent with the purpose of the 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.

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."*

*Surrounding Neighborhood*: The surrounding neighborhood contains a mix of residential structures of various architectural styles.

*Impacts of Proposal (Design and Compatibility)*: The impacts of the proposal on the neighborhood are minimal. The proposed design will actually be more compatible with the surrounding structures than the existing structures. By adding a gabled dormer perpendicular to the main ridgeline of the structure the design is able to bring the existing bay up to a more resolved termination the current condition. The proposed condition is similar to design solutions on neighboring properties, such as 7 Hudson Street and 93-99 Central Street, and does a good job of negotiating the applicants' need for more space with the existing context.



Street view of 7 hudson street



Street view of 93 central street.

It should be noted that the proposed dormer is not more than 50% the length of the roof as measured to the lowest bearing point of the dormer on the rafters of the sloping roof to which it is attached. In this case, the hipped roof has a longer dimension at the plate (where the dormer is attached at the lowest bearing point) than it does at the ridge. The linear dimension of the plate is the metric that planning staff uses to determine the allowed length of the dormer.

5. Adverse environmental impacts: *The proposed use, structure or activity will not constitute an adverse impact on the surrounding area resulting from: 1) excessive noise, level of illumination, glare, dust, smoke, or vibration which are higher than levels now experienced from uses permitted in the surrounding area; 2) emission of noxious or hazardous materials or substances; 3) pollution of water ways or ground water; or 4) transmission of signals that interfere with radio or television reception.*

*Impacts of Proposal (Environmental)*: No adverse impacts on the surrounding area anticipated as a result of excessive noise, illumination, glare, dust smoke or vibration, or from emissions of noxious materials, or pollution of water ways or ground water, or interference with radio or television signals.



6. 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.*

*Impacts of Proposal (Circulation):* No traffic congestion or potential for accidents are anticipated as a result of this structure.

7. Housing Impact: *Will not create adverse impacts on the stock of existing affordable housing.*

8. SomerVision Plan: *Complies with the applicable goals, policies and actions of the SomerVision plan, including the following, as appropriate: Preserve and enhance the character of Somerville's neighborhoods, transform key opportunity areas, preserve and expand an integrated, balanced mix of safe, affordable and environmentally sound rental and homeownership units for households of all sizes and types from diverse social and economic groups; and, make Somerville a regional employment center with a mix of diverse and high-quality jobs. The areas in the SomerVision map that are designated as enhance and transform should most significantly contribute towards the SomerVision goals that are outlined in the table below. The areas marked as conserve are not expected to greatly increase the figures in the table since these areas are not intended for large scale change.*

9. Impact on Affordable Housing: *In conjunction with its decision to grant or deny a special permit for a structure of four or more units of housing, the SPGA shall make a finding and determination as to how implementation of the project would increase, decrease, or leave unchanged the number of units of rental and home ownership housing that are affordable to households with low or moderate incomes, as defined by HUD, for different sized households and units.*

No impact on affordable housing.

### III. RECOMMENDATION

#### Special Permit under §4.4

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

The recommendation is based upon a technical analysis by Planning Staff of the application material based upon the required findings of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance, and is based only upon information submitted prior to the public hearing. This report may be revised or updated with new recommendations, findings and/or conditions based upon additional information provided to the Planning Staff during the public hearing process.

#	Condition	Timeframe for Compliance	Verified (initial)	Notes						
1	Approval is for the Special Permit to modify a nonconforming structure. This approval is based upon the following application materials and the plans submitted by the Applicant:	BP/CO	ISD/Plng.							
	<table><tr><th>Date (Stamp Date)</th><th>Submission</th></tr><tr><td>March 3, 2016</td><td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office</td></tr><tr><td>March 31, 2016</td><td>Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (1-14)</td></tr></table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	March 3, 2016	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office	March 31, 2016	Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (1-14)
	Date (Stamp Date)				Submission					
	March 3, 2016				Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office					
March 31, 2016	Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (1-14)									
Any changes to the approved site plan or elevations/use that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval.										
<b>Construction Impacts</b>										
2	The applicant shall post the name and phone number of the general contractor at the site entrance where it is visible to people passing by.	During Construction	Plng.							
3	Approval is subject to the Applicant's and/or successor's right, title and interest in the property.	Cont.	Plng.	Deed submitted & application formed signed						
4	The Applicant shall at their expense replace any existing equipment (including, but not limited to street sign poles, signs, traffic signal poles, traffic signal equipment, wheel chair ramps, granite curbing, etc) and the entire sidewalk immediately abutting the subject property if damaged as a result of construction activity. All new sidewalks and driveways must be constructed to DPW standard.	CO	DPW							
5	All construction materials and equipment must be stored onsite. If occupancy of the street layout is required, such occupancy must be in conformance with the requirements of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices and the prior approval of the Traffic and Parking Department must be obtained.	During Construction	T&P							
<b>Design</b>										
6	An exterior light and electrical receptacle is required for the first (or all) level of the porch and an electrical receptacle is required for the second level (if there is no access to the ground).	Final sign off	Wiring Inspector							
<b>Final Sign-Off</b>										
7	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.							

