



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Case #: ZBA 2011-38

Date: June 16, 2011

Recommendation: Conditional Approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: 32 Concord Avenue

Applicant Name: Jein Park & Nicholas Choly

Applicant Address: 32 Concord Ave, Somerville MA 02143

Property Owner Name: same

Property Owner Address: same

Alderman: Maryann Heuston

Legal Notice: Applicant/Owner Jein Park & Nicholas Choly seek a special permit to alter a nonconforming structure under SZO §4.4.1 to construct dormers on an existing two-family residence creating a third story.

Zoning District/Ward: RB / 2

Zoning Approval Sought: Special Permit §4.4.1

Date of Application: May 10, 2011

Dates of Public Hearing: Zoning Board of Appeals June 22, 2011

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. **Subject Property:** The subject property is a two-family dwelling on a 4,000 sf lot. The structure is 2 ½ stories with a gable roof. There are no dormers on the roof.

2. **Proposal:** The proposal is to add two shed dormers to the house, one on each side of the house. The dormers will provide space for an existing staircase with insufficient headroom, two bedrooms on the third floor and a bathroom for a growing family. The proposal increases the net square feet of the third floor by 117. The dormers start below the ridge of the house and are pulled back from the main wall of the house significantly for portions of the dormers. Twelve feet of the dormer on the right side of the house will come to the main wall of the house and 12 feet 9 inches will be setback



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significantly so that there is a small area that will provide required headroom in the bathroom. The right dormer will have a 9 foot section that will come to the main wall of the house and a 12 foot section that will be setback significantly to provide windows and a closet space for a bedroom. The windows will account for a large portion of the front wall of the dormers and trim and corner board detailing is proposed that matches the trim on the house.

32 Concord Ave: left side (l), right side (r)



3. Nature of Application: The structure is currently nonconforming with respect to several dimensional requirements, including minimum lot size, landscaped area, side yard setback and street frontage.

The proposed dormers would affect the nonconforming right side yard, which is 3.5 feet. The minimum required by the Somerville Zoning Ordinance (SZO) is 7.16 feet for a 2 ½ story structure and 9.16 feet for a 3 story structure with the reduction allowed for a narrow lot. The existing nonconformity requires the Applicant to obtain a special permit under §4.4.1 of the SZO.

The house will become a 3 story structure because the dormers length will be greater than 50 percent of the length of the structure.

The two additional bedrooms will require one additional parking space which is satisfied by the existing driveway. The first floor unit has one bedroom and the second and third floor unit currently has two bedrooms and will have four if the dormers are permitted. The parking requirement will be four spaces and the applicant states that the driveway holds more than four spaces. The dimensions of the spaces are nonconforming; however, this is an existing situation that will not be changing as a result of this application.

4. Surrounding Neighborhood: The surrounding neighborhood is comprised of two-, three- and multiple unit dwellings. Several of the houses on the street have shed dormers.

5. Impacts of Proposal: Large shed dormers can greatly alter the appearance of 2 ½ story houses which make up much of the fabric of the City. The Applicant took great care in trying different designs for the dormers to minimize alteration of the roofline. The final design is a compromise which keeps the clean lines of the shed dormers but pulls them back to reduce their massing and weight on the roof.

6. Green Building Practices: None listed on the application form.

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. One the side of the house that has an insufficient setback, there is a driveway on the adjacent parcel between the subject house and the neighbor's house so privacy issues are not an anticipated concern. One the other side, there is a fourteen foot setback from the dormer to the lot line. The design impacts of the proposal are below in finding 4.

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 conserving the value of land and buildings and encouraging the most appropriate use of land throughout the City. The proposal is also consistent with the purpose of the Residence B zoning district in that it allows for additional living space within a two-family house.

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 are generally concerned when large shed dormers are proposed because they can greatly alter the appearance of 2 ½ story houses which make up much of the fabric of the City. The Applicant underwent several design changes and alternative dormer styles to add the amount of living space on the third floor that they require for their family while keeping the gable roof as the predominate element on the house. The final design is a compromise which keeps the clean lines of the shed dormers but pulls them back to reduce their massing and weight on the roof. The dormers are also set down from the ridge of the house and incorporate many windows and trim and corner board details to improve their appearance.

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

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 construction of 2 shed dormers to create a third story. 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>May 10, 2011</td><td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office</td></tr><tr><td>Jun 14, 2011</td><td>Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (Site Plan, Attic Floor Plan, Elevations of 4 sides of building)</td></tr></table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	May 10, 2011	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office	Jun 14, 2011	Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (Site Plan, Attic Floor Plan, Elevations of 4 sides of building)
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Any changes to the approved 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 color, materials and trim details on the house shall match or be complimentary to the rest of the house.	CO	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.							

