



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Case #: ZBA 2012-33
Date: May 10, 2012
Recommendation: Conditional Approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: 12 Dickinson Street

Applicant Name: Helene Rodar and Pamela Ryan
Applicant Address: 12 Dickinson Street, Somerville, MA 02143
Property Owner Name: Helene Rodar and Pamela Ryan
Property Owner Address: 12 Dickinson Street, Somerville, MA 02143
Alderman: Maryann Heuston

Legal Notice: Applicants and Owners, Helene Rodar and Pamela Ryan, seek a Special Permit under SZO §4.4.1 to alter a nonconforming structure to enlarge an existing bathroom on the right side of the structure.

Zoning District/Ward: RB / Ward 2

Zoning Approval Sought: Special Permit under SZO §4.4.1

Date of Application: April 17, 2012

Dates of Public Meeting • Hearing: Zoning Board of Appeals – **May 16, 2012**

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The subject property is a single-family dwelling on a 2,966 square foot lot located south of Union Square near Cambridge. The building is 2½ stories in height with a gable roof that faces the street and contains 2,805 square feet of living space. The property is located at a bend in the road, which gives the parcel an odd shape, but the parcel exceeds the landscape requirement of 25%. Located within a Residence B district, this dwelling abuts residential properties of varying size and scale on all sides.

The subject property has not received any prior zoning relief.



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2. Proposal: Applicants and Owners, Helene Rodar and Pamela Ryan, propose to alter their single family dwelling to enlarge an existing bathroom on the right side of the building. The existing bathroom is approximately ten feet in length by 5 feet in width, or 48 square feet, and located close to the front façade of the building. One small window is centrally located on the right exterior wall. The bathroom is currently four to five feet from the property line as this boundary slants left toward the rear of the property.

The proposal includes demolition of the existing bathroom, though the foundation will remain. The enlarged bathroom will be twelve feet in length by six feet in width, or 85 square feet, and allow space for a full bathtub/shower. The enlarged bathroom would be 3'-5" to 1'-6" from the property line. One window will be installed in the center of both the front and rear façades of the addition for natural light.

3. Nature of Application: The structure is currently nonconforming with respect to several dimensional requirements including the front and side yard setbacks, and minimum lot size. Under Somerville Zoning Ordinance (SZO) §4.4.1 nonconforming single-family dwellings may only perform alterations to their nonconforming aspect through a Special Permit. As the proposal extends into the right side yard setback, this may only be altered by first obtaining a Special Permit.



Left: 12 Dickinson Street, primary and left side façade

Right: 12 Dickinson Street, primary and right side façade

4. Surrounding Neighborhood: The subject property is located in an RB district within Ward 2 near Cambridge. The building abuts residential properties of varying size and scale on all sides in a neighborhood with a moderate level of density. A majority of the surrounding residences are multi-family dwellings on small parcels.

5. Impacts of Proposal: The proposed bathroom expansion to the right side of the building will not be detrimental to the existing structure or the surrounding neighborhood.

The design for the expansion of the bathroom is similar to the existing design. There are no character-defining features that will be affected by this proposal. Although the proposal will be visible from the street, upon completion, the only exterior change to the building will be an additional foot in width to the right side of the building and an additional two feet in length. This proposal will minimally enlarge the overall footprint of the building and have a minimal impact to abutters and the surrounding neighborhood as there is a small hedge that extends the length of the right property line.

6. Green Building Practices: The Applicants note that spray foam insulation will be used to improve energy efficiency.

7. Comments:

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

Ward Alderman: Has been contacted and in an email to Staff on Thursday, April 26, 2012 Alderman Heuston stated that the Applicants have an outstanding property and she is in support of this project.

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 would not be substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing structure. There are no character-defining features that will be altered or demolished as a result of this proposal. Although the proposal will be visible from the street, the noticeable changes will be minimal once construction is complete. The enlargement of the bathroom would also have minimal impact to abutters as there is a small hedge that extends the length of the right property line and the abutting dwelling faces a different direction as there is a bend in the street at this location.

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 "promoting the health, safety, and welfare of the inhabitants of the City of Somerville; to secure safety from fire, panic and other dangers; to provide adequate light and air; to conserve the value of land and buildings; to preserve the historical and architectural resources of the City; and to encourage the most appropriate use of land throughout the City."

The proposal is consistent with the purpose of the district 6.1.2. RB - Residence Districts, which is, "To establish and preserve medium density neighborhoods of one-, two- and three-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 expansion of the existing bathroom has been designed to be compatible with the built and unbuilt surrounding area. Enlarging the bathroom one foot in width and two feet in length will minimally impact the building itself, the immediate abutters, and the surrounding neighborhood. There will only be a minimal visual impact within the neighborhood as an existing hedge, which extends the length of the lot line, abuts another dwelling that faces a different direction.

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 Special Permit to alter a nonconforming dwelling to enlarge an existing bathroom on the right side of the structure. This approval is based upon the following application materials and the plans submitted by the Applicant:	BP/CO	ISD/PIng.									
	<table><tr><th>Date (Stamp Date)</th><th>Submission</th></tr><tr><td>(April 17, 2012)</td><td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office</td></tr><tr><td>May 8, 2008 (May 9, 2012)</td><td>Plot plan submitted to OSPCD</td></tr><tr><td>April 17, 2012 (May 9, 2012)</td><td>Proposed and existing site plans submitted to OSPCD (A1.0 & A2.0)</td></tr></table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	(April 17, 2012)	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office	May 8, 2008 (May 9, 2012)	Plot plan submitted to OSPCD	April 17, 2012 (May 9, 2012)	Proposed and existing site plans submitted to OSPCD (A1.0 & A2.0)
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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	New siding type and color, roofing, trim and materials of the new addition shall match or be complimentary to the rest of the existing structure.	CO	PIng.									
3	The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau’s requirements.	CO	FP									

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.	
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12 Dickinson Street