



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Case #: ZBA 2013-09

Date: March 30, 2013

Recommendation: Conditional Approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: 25 Elmwood Street

Applicant Name: Paula Vancini

Applicant Address: 25 Elmwood Street Somerville, MA 02144

Property Owner Name: same as above

Property Owner Address: same as above

Agent Name: n/a

Agent Address: n/a

Alderman: Robert Trane

Legal Notice: Owner and Applicant, Paula Vancini, seek a Special Permit under SZO §4.4.1 to alter an existing, non-conforming, single-family dwelling by construction an addition within the existing non-conforming side yard setback. RB zone. Ward 7.

Zoning District/Ward: RB/Ward 7

Zoning Approval Sought: Special Permit under SZO §4.4.1

Date of Application: March 5, 2013

Dates of Public Meeting: Zoning Board of Appeals – June 5, 2013

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The subject property is a single family, 2 ½ story house, on a 3,750 square foot lot in West Somerville between Davis and Teele Squares. There is an accessory structure, a two-car garage, on the back corner of the lot. There was prior zoning relief granted in 2004 to make exterior alterations to subdivide the house into a 2-family. Those alterations were never made.

2. Proposal: The applicant proposes a rear 1-story addition to accommodate an aging parent. The addition is 406 square feet and will have a kitchen, den, bedroom, and bathroom. The addition is connected to the existing structure through a hall that connects with the existing dining area. To accommodate the addition, the concrete block garage will be demolished.

The footprint on the lot will increase from 1,200 to 1,606 square feet. The ground coverage will increase from 39% to 49% but the landscaped and pervious area will also increase from 29% to 34%. The FAR will increase to .65, a FAR of 1.0 is required in an RB district. The rear setback will be in compliance at 20.61 feet and the side yard will be reduced to 7.03 feet which is still in compliance of the SZO because of the width of the lot.

3. Nature of Application: The applicant seeks a Special Permit under SZO §4.4.1 to alter an existing, non-conforming, single-family dwelling by constructing an addition within the existing non-conforming side yard setback. The addition will be 3.14' from the right property line, the same distance as the existing structure. All other setbacks will be maintained.

There is no parking relief required. There are two existing bedrooms, per the SZO the parking requirement is 1.5 which is rounded to 2. The addition of a bedroom maintains a parking requirement of 2. The existing garage is being used as storage. The two bays are too small and the garage does not accommodate parking for most vehicles. Planning Staff views the property as having an existing non-conformity of 1 parking space. The driveway is long enough to accommodate two vehicles; the applicant has drawn a non-conforming tandem parking space on the site plan to illustrate this scenario.

4. Surrounding Neighborhood: The subject property is located within an RB District. The surrounding area is comprised of a mixture of single-, two-, and three-family homes, with a few multi-family dwellings as well, between 2½ and 3 stories. The project site is approximately 1,300 feet from the heart of Teele Square and 1,800 feet from the Davis Square Red Line stop.

5. Impacts of Proposal: Few impacts are expected on the abutting properties. The addition should not create undue shading or visual impacts on the neighboring properties since it's only one story. The rear and side setback will be maintained.

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

7. Comments:

Fire Prevention: A code compliant fire alarm system will be required. This property is to remain a single family dwelling. Note: This comment was made in regards to this application. At a later time, the property would be able to convert to a multi-family dwelling unit with an appropriate zoning review process.

Traffic & Parking: Traffic and Parking has been contacted but has not yet provided comments.

Engineering: Engineering requested a utility and grading plan and drainage report be provided. The plan and report should provide an understanding on how the applicant plans to meet the City's stormwater policy. Note: Planning Staff views this as a minor addition because the pervious area is actually being increased from 29% to 34% because the garage and some pavement leading to it will be demolished. A condition of this report is to provide a utility and grading plan and a drainage report as part of the building permit if applicable.

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

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 do not find that the alterations proposed would not be substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing structure.

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 and to provide for and maintain the uniquely integrated structure of uses in the City.

The proposal is consistent with the purpose of the district, 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.

Furthermore, the addition proposed is consistent with the housing goals stated in SomerVision, including but not limited to, Somerville being a community where people want to live, raise a family, and retire; encouraging development of units that encourage residents to stay in the community; and encouraging housing units to be designed in accordance with universal design guidelines for visitability and adaptability.

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 proposed addition is compatible with the existing and surrounding structures and uses familiar materials like clapboards and wood shingles.

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 a Special Permit under SZO §4.4.1 to alter an existing, non-conforming, single-family dwelling by constructing an addition within the existing non-conforming side yard setback. 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 5, 2013</td><td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office</td></tr><tr><td>November 15, 2012</td><td>Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (Existing Certified Plot Plan)</td></tr><tr><td>May 14, 2013</td><td>Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (Certified Plot Plan)</td></tr><tr><td>May 30, 2013</td><td>Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (1-Existing Site Plan, 2-Proposed Site Plan, 3-Proposed Floor Plan, 4-Proposed Southwest Elevation, 5-Proposed Northwest Elevation, 6-Proposed Northeast Elevation)</td></tr></table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	March 5, 2013	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office	November 15, 2012	Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (Existing Certified Plot Plan)	May 14, 2013	Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (Certified Plot Plan)	May 30, 2013	Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (1-Existing Site Plan, 2-Proposed Site Plan, 3-Proposed Floor Plan, 4-Proposed Southwest Elevation, 5-Proposed Northwest Elevation, 6-Proposed Northeast Elevation)
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Any changes to the approved site plan and elevations that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval.														
Pre-Construction														
2	The Applicant will be required to demonstrate that the updated project plans meet the current City of Somerville stormwater policy. Utility, grading, and drainage plans, stamped by a registered PE in Massachusetts, must be submitted to the Engineering Department for review and approval if applicable.	BP	Eng.											
Construction Impacts														
3	The Applicant shall at his 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											

4	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	
Design				
5	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 Insp.	
Site				
6	Landscaping should be installed and maintained in compliance with the American Nurserymen's Association Standards	Perpetual	Plng. / ISD	
Public Safety				
7	The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau's requirements.	CO	FP	
8	The addition will remain free-flowing with no obstructions to the existing structure.	Perpetual	Plng/ ISD	
Misc				
9	The Applicant, its successors and/or assigns, shall be responsible for maintenance of both the building and all on-site amenities, including landscaping, fencing, lighting, parking areas and storm water systems, ensuring they are clean, well kept and in good and safe working order.	Cont.	ISD	
Final Sign Off				
10	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.	

