



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Case #: ZBA 2015-69
Date: September 16, 2015
Recommendation: Conditional Approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: 87 Highland Road

Applicant Name: Sean Glynn
Applicant Address: 387 Haverhill Street, Reading, MA 01867
Owner Name: Galway Realty, LLC
Owner Address: 387 Haverhill Street, Reading, MA 01867
Alderman: Mark Niedergang

Legal Notice: Applicant, Sean Glynn, and Owner, Galway Realty, LLC, seek a Special Permit per SZO §4.4.1 to expand a non-conforming Floor Area Ratio (FAR) in basement. RA zone. Ward 5.

Dates of Public Hearing: Zoning Board of Appeals – September 16, 2015

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The subject property is an existing 2 ¾ story 2-family house on a .08 acre (3,485 square foot) lot.
2. Proposal: The proposal is to finish the basement to provide additional living space for the first floor unit.
3. Green Building Practices: None provided.
4. Comments:

Fire Prevention: The smoke alarms need to be hard wired.

Ward Alderman: Mark Niedergang



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 §4.4.1 of the SZO. This section of the report goes through §4.4.1 in detail.

1. Information Supplied:

- The Staff finds that the information provided by the Applicant conforms to the requirements of §4.4.1 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 non-conforming with respect to the floor area ratio (FAR).
- The proposal will change the floor area ratio from 0.99 to 1.24. The FAR allowed in the RA zone is 0.75. Intensifying this existing non-conformity requires the Applicant to obtain a special permit under §4.4.1 of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance (SZO). This is a significant increase in the FAR. However, on a square footage basis, it brings the first floor unit more in line with the square footage of the second-to-third-floor unit.

- Total number of bedrooms in the structure is being reduced by one: The first floor/basement unit will continue to have one bedroom. The second-to-third-floor unit will reduce from five bedrooms to four.

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 §4.4.1 of the SZO, Staff finds that the alterations proposed would not be substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than those contained within the existing structure. Finishing a basement is a way of adding more square feet to a home without any impact on abutting properties since there is no change to the setbacks of the home. The reduction in bedroom count negates any need for parking relief.

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 encourage the most appropriate use of land throughout the City; and to encourage housing for persons of all income levels.
- The proposal is consistent with the purpose of the district, which is, “[t]o 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."*

- The surrounding neighborhood is a mix of residential uses.
- There are few to no impacts from the proposal. All modifications are to the inside of the home.

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

- The proposal will not impact the existing stock of affordable housing.

7. 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.

- The proposal will not contribute to the metrics of SomerVision but will allow the property owner to make some modifications within the confines of the structure.

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 to finish the basement. 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>August 26, 2015</td><td>Initial application submitted to Planning Office</td></tr><tr><td>August 26, 2015</td><td>Modified plans submitted to OSPCD later in day August 26</td></tr></table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	August 26, 2015	Initial application submitted to Planning Office	August 26, 2015	Modified plans submitted to OSPCD later in day August 26
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Any changes to the approved plan 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							
Final Sign-Off										
3	<u>The Applicant shall contact Planning Staff at least five (5) working days in advance of a request for a final inspection</u> 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.							

