



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS**  
**MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**  
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**Case #:** ZBA 2013-29

**Date:** May 9, 2013

**Recommendation:** Conditional Approval

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**PLANNING STAFF REPORT**

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**Site: 25 Madison Street**

**Applicant Name:** Rachael Traub

**Applicant Address:** 25 Madison Street, Somerville, MA 02143

**Property Owner Name:** Rachael Traub

**Property Owner Address:** 25 Madison Street, Somerville, MA 02143

**Alderman:** Thomas Taylor

Legal Notice: Applicant and Owner, Rachael Traub, seeks a Special Permit under SZO §4.4.1 to enlarge the front entry porch of an existing single-family dwelling. RA zone. Ward 3.

Zoning District/Ward: RA Zone / Ward 3

Zoning Approval Sought: Special Permit under SZO §4.4.1

Date of Application: April 16, 2013

Dates of Public Hearing: Zoning Board of Appeals – **Wednesday, May 15, 2013**

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**I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

1. Subject Property: The subject property is a 3,000 square foot parcel of land comprised of a single family dwelling. The structure is 2½ stories with a gable end roof located along the streetscape and a more complex roof configuration at the rear of the structure. The parcel is located between School and Sycamore streets near City Hall and the High School. The property has a net floor area of 1,790 square feet and a 0.60 floor area ratio (FAR). The property is located in a Residence A district, which is composed of single, two- and three-family dwellings.

There has been no prior zoning relief; however, a by-right addition was completed in December 2011, which consisted of a small rear addition and deck.



2. Proposal: Applicant and Owner, Rachael Traub, proposes to enlarge the front entry porch of an existing single-family dwelling. The existing entry porch, which is unsafe and unstable, measures approximately seven feet in width by approximately four feet in depth, and encroaches within the ten foot minimum front yard setback. The Applicant proposes to extend the depth of the porch by approximately 2.5 feet, which would align the front of the porch with the front of the projecting polygonal bay, located to the right of the porch. The proposal would retain 6.5 feet between the porch and the sidewalk, and the new porch posts and railings would remain consistent with what currently exists.



*25 Madison Street,  
front and left side façades*

3. Nature of Application: The structure is currently nonconforming with respect to dimensional requirements that include minimum lot size and front yard setback. In accordance with the Somerville Zoning Ordinance (SZO) §4.4.1, a nonconforming single-family dwelling may increase a nonconforming dimension through Special Permit approval. Therefore, enlarging the front entry porch requires Special Permit approval.

4. Surrounding Neighborhood: The subject property is located in a Residential A district between School and Sycamore streets, near City Hall and the High School. The surrounding residential neighborhood is composed of single, two- and three-family dwellings while Highland Avenue is composed of a mix of civic, office, retail and residential uses.

5. Impacts of Proposal: The proposal to extend the depth of the front entry porch by 2.5 feet will not be detrimental to the structure.

Enlarging the front entry porch will enable the occupants to more fully utilize the porch, as more than an entry stoop. The additional 14 square feet of space would encourage more use of this outdoor space and add more eyes to the street. There will likely be no impact on the surrounding neighborhood as the additional space does not increase the number of cars, people, or usable floor area.

6. Green Building Practices: Decking with a high recycled content will be used, as noted 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):**

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. Enlarging the front entry porch will enable the occupants to more fully utilize the porch, as more than an entry stoop. There will likely be no impact on the surrounding neighborhood as the additional space does not increase the number of cars, people, or usable floor area.

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 provide for and maintain the uniquely integrated structure of uses in the City; to protect health; 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 Residential A district, §6.1.1, 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."

The proposal, to enlarge the front entry porch by an additional 14 square feet, is compatible with the site and the neighborhood. This project will enable the occupants to more fully utilize the porch, as more than an entry stoop. The additional square feet of space would encourage more use of this outdoor space and add more eyes to the street. There will likely be no impact on the surrounding neighborhood as the additional space does not increase the number of cars, people, or usable floor area.

**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 to enlarge the front entry porch of an existing single-family dwelling. 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>(April 16, 2013)</td><td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office</td></tr><tr><td>February 16, 2013 (May 6, 2013)</td><td>Site plan submitted to OSPCD (Sheet 1-1)</td></tr><tr><td>February 16, 2013 (May 6, 2013)</td><td>Renovation plan submitted to OSPCD (Sheet ZBA1)</td></tr></table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	(April 16, 2013)	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office	February 16, 2013 (May 6, 2013)	Site plan submitted to OSPCD (Sheet 1-1)	February 16, 2013 (May 6, 2013)	Renovation plan submitted to OSPCD (Sheet ZBA1)
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Any changes to the approved site plan or elevations that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval.												
Construction Impacts												
2	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									
Design												
3	New siding type and color, roofing, trim and materials of the addition shall match or be complimentary to the rest of the existing structure.	BP	Plng.									
4	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									
Public Safety												

5	The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau's requirements.	CO	FP	
<b>Final Sign-Off</b>				
6	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.	

*25 Madison Street*