



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Case #: ZBA 2012-08

Date: February 23, 2012

Recommendation: Conditional Approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: 10 Monmouth Street

Applicant Name: Briana Burton

Applicant Address: 10 Monmouth Street, Somerville, MA 02143

Property Owner Name: Briana Burton

Property Owner Address: 10 Monmouth Street, Somerville, MA 02143

Alderman: Thomas F. Taylor, Ward 3

Legal Notice: Applicant and Owner, Briana Burton, seeks a Special Permit to alter a nonconforming structure under SZO §4.4.1 to enlarge a dormer and create a bay on the rear of the house. Alterations also include by-right modifications to add a dormer.

Zoning District/Ward: RB/3

Zoning Approval Sought: Special Permit SZO §4.4.1

Date of Application: January 31, 2012

Dates of Public Hearing: Zoning Board of Appeals - Feb. 29, 2012

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. **Subject Property:** The subject property is a single family dwelling on a 3,922 square foot lot near the corner of Monmouth and Central streets. The property has 2,748 square feet of living space and a moderate amount of landscaping. The structure is 2½ stories in height with a complex roof configuration and a small gable dormer on the rear façade. The building resides in a Residence B district and abuts a residential property to the west and a modern masonry building to the east. No prior zoning relief has been given to the subject property.

This c. 1894 dwelling is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Spring Hill Historic District; National Register listing determines that the property is worthy of preservation



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according to Federal government standards. The building retains a high degree of historic integrity due to the massing, roof configuration and architectural detailing.

2. Proposal: Owner and Applicant, Briana Burton, proposes to alter her single family home by creating a new by-right gable dormer on the east façade and by enlarging an existing gable dormer on the rear façade. The proposal intends to increase the amount of habitable space on the third floor through the addition and enlargement of dormers which will increase the net square footage of the third floor by approximately 248 square feet for a total of 444 square feet. The total square footage of the house would then become 2,996 square feet. Both gable dormers are lower than the highest ridge of the house which is a steeply pitched hip roof at the northwest corner that covers a two story square projection.

The new by-right dormer for the east side of the house is to be located directly above the bay window that looks out onto the second floor balcony. This dormer would increase light and ventilation to the third floor for an additional bedroom. The dimensions of the new by-right dormer are 8 feet in width. The dormer would begin approximately two feet from the tallest ridge, which is located on the opposite façade, and end a half foot before the roofline. This dormer is proposed to rise 1.5 feet above the adjacent conical roof of the bowed bay at the southeast corner and contain three side-by-side windows that are 2 feet wide by 3.5 feet in height with 3 inch molding.

The south side, or rear façade, which currently has a small center dormer, proposes to be enlarged to become twice the size of the existing dormer. This dormer will allow additional light into the third story especially as this projection faces southwest. The dimensions of this enlarged dormer are proposed to become 12 feet 3 inches in length by 12 feet in height. The dormer would begin at the ridge of the rear gable roof and end 1 foot before the roofline. The enlarged dormer will have 3 side-by-side windows, each 2.5 feet in width by 3.5 feet in height with a 3 inch molding surround.

The original plans submitted as a part of the application had a 3 foot wide by 19 foot long suspended bay located below the enlarged dormer on the southern façade. This bay has since been eliminated from the proposal.



3. Nature of Application: The structure is currently nonconforming with respect to several dimensional requirements including the front, rear, and right side yard setback, and minimum lot size. The proposal alters the conforming left side yard through the addition of a dormer above the second story bay window. The proposal also alters the nonconforming rear yard through the expansion of a pre-existing dormer.

The existing rear yard setback nonconformity requires the Applicant to obtain a Special Permit under Somerville Zoning Ordinance (SZO) §4.4.1 to construct the proposed dormer expansion. The minimum required by the SZO is 20 feet for a 2½ story structure and the current rear yard setback is 6 feet 4 inches.

The addition of a bedroom to the third story will not require additional parking. Currently, the house has four bedrooms which already requires two parking spaces. The parking factor does not increase with more than three bedrooms.

4. Surrounding Neighborhood: The subject property is located within the Spring Hill neighborhood which has a low- to medium residential density and is primarily comprised of single-, two-, and three-family homes. A large portion of the Spring Hill neighborhood is part of the National Register Historic District and several houses within the National Register District are also designated historic at the local level. Additionally, the subject property is immediately adjacent to a modern masonry building on Central Street.

5. Impacts of Proposal: The proposed renovations to the house will not be detrimental to the structure.

The design for the by-right dormer on the east elevation will not substantially alter the look or design of the existing structure. The complex massing of the roof and character defining elements of the façade will be retained. The location of the dormer adds to the complexity of the roof, which is a character defining feature, and the pitch of the dormer roof has been increased so as to become more consistent with the steep pitch of the rest of the house. The height of the dormer is slightly taller than the adjacent conical roof; however, due to the size of the dormer, it does not compete with other projections or massing.

The design for the enlarged dormer on the south elevation will also not substantially alter the look or design of the existing structure, especially as the dormer will be minimally, if at all visible from public view.

These modifications will look out onto the roof of the modern masonry building along Central Street and a triple-decker with a three-story rear porch along Cleveland Street, which is one block south of Monmouth Street. There is a moderate amount of landscaping between the subject property and both the triple-decker and the masonry structure. Therefore, minimal impacts to the abutters and the surrounding neighborhood are anticipated from the proposed project.

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

7. Comments:

Fire Prevention: A code compliant fire alarm system and carbon monoxide detector will be required.

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

Historic Preservation: The proposed dormer on the side of the house is the one visible from the right of way. Since the dormer in the rear in the back is not visible from the right of way, it is not of concern. Staff asked that the slope of the dormer's roof match that of the main roof. The Applicants made the slope steeper but would have to reduce the width of the dormer to achieve a greater slope. Understanding that this may not be practical, the dormer design is acceptable.

II. FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMIT (SZO §4.4.1 and §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. These modifications will look out onto the roof of the modern masonry building along Central Street and a triple-decker with a three-story rear porch along Cleveland Street, which is one block south of Monmouth Street. There is a moderate amount of landscaping between the subject property and both the triple-decker and the masonry structure. Therefore, minimal impacts to the abutters and the surrounding neighborhood are anticipated from the proposed project.

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 providing for and maintaining the uniquely integrated structure of uses in the City; providing adequate light and air; conserving the value of land and buildings; preserving the historical and architectural resources of the City; and encouraging the most appropriate use of land throughout the City.

The proposal is also 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 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 alterations have been designed to be compatible with the built and unbuilt surrounding area. The creation of a new gable dormer on the east facade will retain the roof massing and not detract from the other elements of the façade. This dormer will compliment the house because its gable roof form matches the gable of the primary and west facade. The enlargement of the rear dormer will reflect a consistency in design with the new dormer on the east façade. Although the expanded dormer will be larger than the new dormer, the design is consistent in that both contain three side-by-side windows with molding, the

windows of each dormer are located in the center and just below the roofline, and both are capped with a gable. The expanded dormer will also be minimally visible from the street so the visual impact will be limited.

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 enlarge a dormer and create a bay on the rear of the house. Alterations also include by-right modifications to add a dormer. 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>January 31, 2012 (January 31, 2012)</td><td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office</td></tr><tr><td>February 9, 2012 (February 15, 2012)</td><td>Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (T1 Cover Sheet)</td></tr><tr><td>January 31, 2012 (February 15, 2012)</td><td>Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (X-1.04, X-2.01, X-2.02, X-2.03, A-1.04, A-2.01, A-2.02, & A-2.03)</td></tr><tr><td>January 31, 2012 (February 23, 2012)</td><td>Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (A-2.01)</td></tr></table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	January 31, 2012 (January 31, 2012)	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office	February 9, 2012 (February 15, 2012)	Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (T1 Cover Sheet)	January 31, 2012 (February 15, 2012)	Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (X-1.04, X-2.01, X-2.02, X-2.03, A-1.04, A-2.01, A-2.02, & A-2.03)	January 31, 2012 (February 23, 2012)	Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (A-2.01)
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Any changes to the approved elevations that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval.														
2	A code compliant fire alarm system and carbon monoxide detector will be required.	CO	FP											
3	The Architect shall update sheets A-1.02, A-1.03, A-1.04, & A-2.02 to remove the bay project, which is no longer part of the approval.	Prior to BP	PIng.											

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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