



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Case #: ZBA 2013-14

Date: March 28, 2013

Recommendation: Conditional Approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: 9 Monmouth Street

Applicant Name: Monmouth Street Development, LLC
Applicant Address: 66 Cranberry Lane, Neeham, MA 02492
Property Owner Name: Monmouth Street Development, LLC
Property Owner Address: 66 Cranberry Lane, Neeham, MA 02492
Agent Name: Richard Di Girolemo, Esq
Agent Address: 424 Broadway, Somerville, MA 02145
Alderman: Thomas Taylor

Legal Notice: Applicant and Owner, Monmouth Street LLC, seeks a Special Permit under SZO §7.11.1.b to add one dwelling unit and living space, which includes two dormers and a rear addition, and a Special Permit under SZO §9.4.d.2 for one space of parking relief. RB zone. Ward 3.

Zoning District/Ward: RB zone / Ward 3

Zoning Approval Sought: Special Permits under SZO §7.11.1.b and 9.4.d.2

Date of Application: February 25, 2013

Dates of Public Hearing: Zoning Board of Appeals – **Wednesday, April 3, 2013**

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The subject property is a 7,762 square foot lot comprised of a two-family dwelling located near the intersection of Summer and Central streets. The dwelling currently has 4,744 square feet of living space with a .61 floor area ratio (FAR) and almost half of the parcel is landscaped. The dwelling is 2½ stories in height with a complex roof configuration due to various modifications made over time. A driveway is located to the left of the structure and could accommodate more than one



vehicle. The building resides in a Residence B district and is surrounded by single-, two-, and multi-family buildings.

In addition, this building is designated historic at the national level. Historic designation at the national level identifies the property as worthy of preservation according to Federal government standards. The building, c. 1850, is historically known as the George Hook House and is unique because the structure survives from the mid-nineteenth century, when Central Street was lined with sizable estates that included landscaped drives and substantially sized houses as well as outbuildings and extensive grounds. The building illustrates Italianate features, many of which have been altered, but remains distinctive for the stepped elevation.

There has been no prior zoning relief.



9 Monmouth Street

2. Proposal: Applicants and Owners, Monmouth Street Development LLC, propose to alter this two-family dwelling through the addition of a third unit and living space, which includes two dormers and a rear addition. The Applicants and Owners also propose one space of parking relief due to the addition of one dwelling unit.

Modifications to the front façade include the addition of a central tower component as well as window and porch modifications. The tower component, which was likely an original component taken down at a later date, will be located above the front entrance with one window to create a third story massing. All windows will be replaced with historically appropriate two-over-two windows. Two new windows, 3.5 feet in length by 2 feet in height, will be installed in the half story above the right side porch. The entry porch railings and columns will be removed; the columns will be replaced with historically appropriate porch supports.

Modifications to the left side elevation include the addition of a shed dormer and window modifications. A shed dormer, approximately 22 feet in length, will be added to the main massing of the left side roof plane. Three new windows would also be added to the façade of the dormer. One of three dormer windows would be consistent with existing windows on the left side façade, three feet in width by five feet in height, while two other windows would be 2.5 feet in width by 2.5 feet in height. All existing windows will be replaced with historically appropriate two-over-two windows.



9 Monmouth Street, aerial view

A small two-story addition, which would provide an additional 120 square feet for both the first and second floors, would be added behind the main massing. This addition would also incorporate a two-story porch along the length of the rear addition, looking into the rear yard. Doors would be added that open onto this porch along with various window modifications. Some windows will be slightly relocated or removed completely, but all new and existing windows will have historically appropriate two-over-two windows.

Modifications to the rear façade include the addition of a shed dormer, the demolition of an enclosed rear entry porch, and various window modifications. A 13 foot shed dormer would be added to the rear slope of the main roof, above the two-story rear addition. A small 2.5 foot square window would be added to the façade of the dormer, located toward the center of the roof plane. The rear entry porch, to be demolished, is located behind the rear addition and would remain as open space. The existing window on the first story would be replaced with a historically appropriate two-over-two window while the small window on the second story would be removed. Two new windows, three feet in width by five feet in height, would be added to each story of the rear façade.

Modifications to the right side façade include relocating windows and the demolition of a second enclosed rear entry porch. The second rear entry porch to be demolished is located at the rear of the addition. All existing windows will be replaced with historically appropriate two-over-two windows

while two windows, located in the rear addition, will be removed. One new window will be added to the first story of the right wing and several windows will be added to the first story of the rear addition.

The dwelling is currently comprised of two units. Unit 1, located on the first floor, is a two bedroom unit, while Unit 2, located on the second and third floors, is a four bedroom unit. The Applicant proposes that Unit 1 will continue to encompass the entire first floor; however, a third bedroom and living space for a games/media room will be added; the total square footage would be approximately 2500 square feet. Unit 2 will continue to encompass portions of the second and third floors, but would share this space with the new third unit. Unit 2 would become a two bedroom unit with an office or a potential third bedroom and be approximately 1400 square feet. Unit 3 would be a three bedroom unit with approximately 1500 square feet.

3. Nature of Application: The structure is currently a two-family dwelling. Under the Somerville Zoning Ordinance (SZO) §7.11.1.b, a two-family dwelling may add one additional dwelling unit. In accordance with SZO §4.4.1, nonconforming three-family dwellings may only be altered and enlarged by Special Permit, even if the alteration or enlargement does not impact the nonconforming aspect of the structure. Therefore, the proposal to add one dwelling unit, as well as additional living space, requires Special Permit approval.

The Applicant also seeks parking relief for the addition of one dwelling unit. The existing two-family dwelling is currently nonconforming with regard to parking, which requires four parking spaces. In accordance with SZO §9.4.d.2, if the new use is calculated to require two additional spaces, then 50% of this requirement shall be provided. The new three-family use is calculated to require two additional parking spaces; 50% of this requirement is one additional parking space. Therefore, the Applicant requests relief from providing one additional parking space.

4. Surrounding Neighborhood: The subject property is located within the Spring Hill neighborhood which has a low- to medium residential density and is primarily composed of single-, two-, and three-family dwellings. A large portion of the Spring Hill neighborhood is part of a National Register Historic District. There is also a Cambridge Health Alliance facility located on the corner of Monmouth and Central streets and a church is located nearby on Central Street.

5. Impacts of Proposal: The proposed addition of one dwelling unit and living space will not be detrimental to the structure.

The Applicant recognizes that this is a historically significant property and has met with Historic Staff as well as the Massachusetts Historical Commission to determine how a third dwelling unit and additional living space could be appropriately incorporated into the structure. The design proposed will enhance this historic structure through the tower component, which was likely an original massing component. The shed dormers and rear addition have been designed to be inconspicuous and still retain architectural features such as double brackets. In addition, the two-story porch to be added to the rear addition will allow for private outdoor space.

6. Green Building Practices: There are no green building practices noted on the application.

7. Comments:

Fire Prevention: Has been contacted and at a weekly meeting on 3/14/2013, Fire Prevention verbally explained that due to the extent of the renovations to the subject property, this multi-family dwelling will need to install sprinklers.

Historic Preservation: Historic Staff explained that the subject structure is a National Register property and is part of the Spring Hill National Register Historic District. The Applicant has worked with Historic Staff as well as the Massachusetts Historical Commission to ensure the proposed changes are appropriate for this historically significant property. Historic Staff believes these changes will rehabilitate the property and appropriately enhance the building.

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

Ward Alderman: Alderman Taylor has requested information regarding the proposal but has not specified any comments or concerns with the project.

II. FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMIT (SZO §7.11.1.b and §9.4.d.2):

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."

Due to the addition of a third dwelling unit, §7.11.1.b, and in accordance with SZO §4.4, Staff find that the alterations proposed would not be substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing structure. The addition of one dwelling unit does not alter the structure or the property in a negative manner. The additional square footage that would be added to the dwelling is proposed in a manner that is consistent with the historic context of the neighborhood and retains the architectural detail of the dwelling. The additional living space, created through two shed dormers and a rear addition, predominantly look into the rear yard and a parking lot. The shed dormer, to be located on the left side façade, will look to the neighboring property; however, the left side yard setback is more than 15 feet. In addition, trees and fencing separate these two properties.

Additionally, the requested parking relief for one space should have a minimal impact to abutters and the surrounding neighborhood. The property currently has one driveway that can accommodate more than one vehicle. Monmouth Street is not heavily traversed by car and the subject property is located within an area of the City that offers easy access to public transportation.

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 Residence B district, §6.1.2, 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 design to add one dwelling unit and living space will enhance the property in a manner consistent the historic nature of the structure and the neighborhood. The additional living space, created by two shed dormers and a two-story rear addition, predominantly look into the rear yard and a parking lot. The shed dormer, to be located on the left side façade, will look to the neighboring property; however, the left side yard setback is more than 15 feet in width. In addition, trees and fencing separate these two properties.

5. Vehicular and Pedestrian Circulation: The circulation patterns for motor vehicles and pedestrians which would result from relief of one parking space for the subject property does not suggest a change in conditions that create traffic congestion or the potential for traffic accidents on the site or in the surrounding area.

The subject property currently has one driveway that can accommodate more than one vehicle. However, the subject property is located within close proximity to public transportation, and therefore the requested parking relief for this proposal does not appear to be detrimental to the surrounding area or the abutters.

III. RECOMMENDATION

Special Permit under §7.11.1.b and §9.4.d.2

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 add one dwelling unit and living space, which includes two dormers and a rear addition, and a Special Permit for one space of parking relief. 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>(February 25, 2013)</td><td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office</td></tr><tr><td>January 17, 2013 (March 27, 2013)</td><td>Plot plan submitted to OSPCD</td></tr><tr><td>March 7, 2013 (March 26, 2013)</td><td>Existing and Proposed plans submitted to OSPCD (EX1, EX2, EX3, EX4,EX5, A1, A2, A3, A4, A5 &A6)</td></tr></table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	(February 25, 2013)	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office	January 17, 2013 (March 27, 2013)	Plot plan submitted to OSPCD	March 7, 2013 (March 26, 2013)	Existing and Proposed plans submitted to OSPCD (EX1, EX2, EX3, EX4,EX5, A1, A2, A3, A4, A5 &A6)
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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	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									
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	CO	PIng.									
4	The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau’s requirements.	CO	FP									
5	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	PIng.									

9 Monmouth Street, aerial view

