



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Case #: ZBA 2014-56 (re-opened)
Date: October 7, 2015
Recommendation: Denial

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: 204 Morrison Avenue

Applicant & Owner Name: Ronald & Linde Dynneson

Applicant & Owner Address: 221 Morrison Avenue, Somerville, MA 02144

Alderman: Rebekah L. Gerwitz

Legal Notice: Applicants and Owners, Ronald and Linde Dynneson, seek a revision, SZO §5.3.8 to case ZBA 2014-56 to increase the amount of impervious area originally approved for the project. The original approval was for a Special Permit with Design Review under SZO §7.11.3.g for a change in use to a Historic Bed and Breakfast. The Applicants also received a Special Permit under SZO §4.4.1 to alter a non-conforming structure, which included the addition of dormers and an enlargement of the existing rear addition. RA zone. Ward 6.

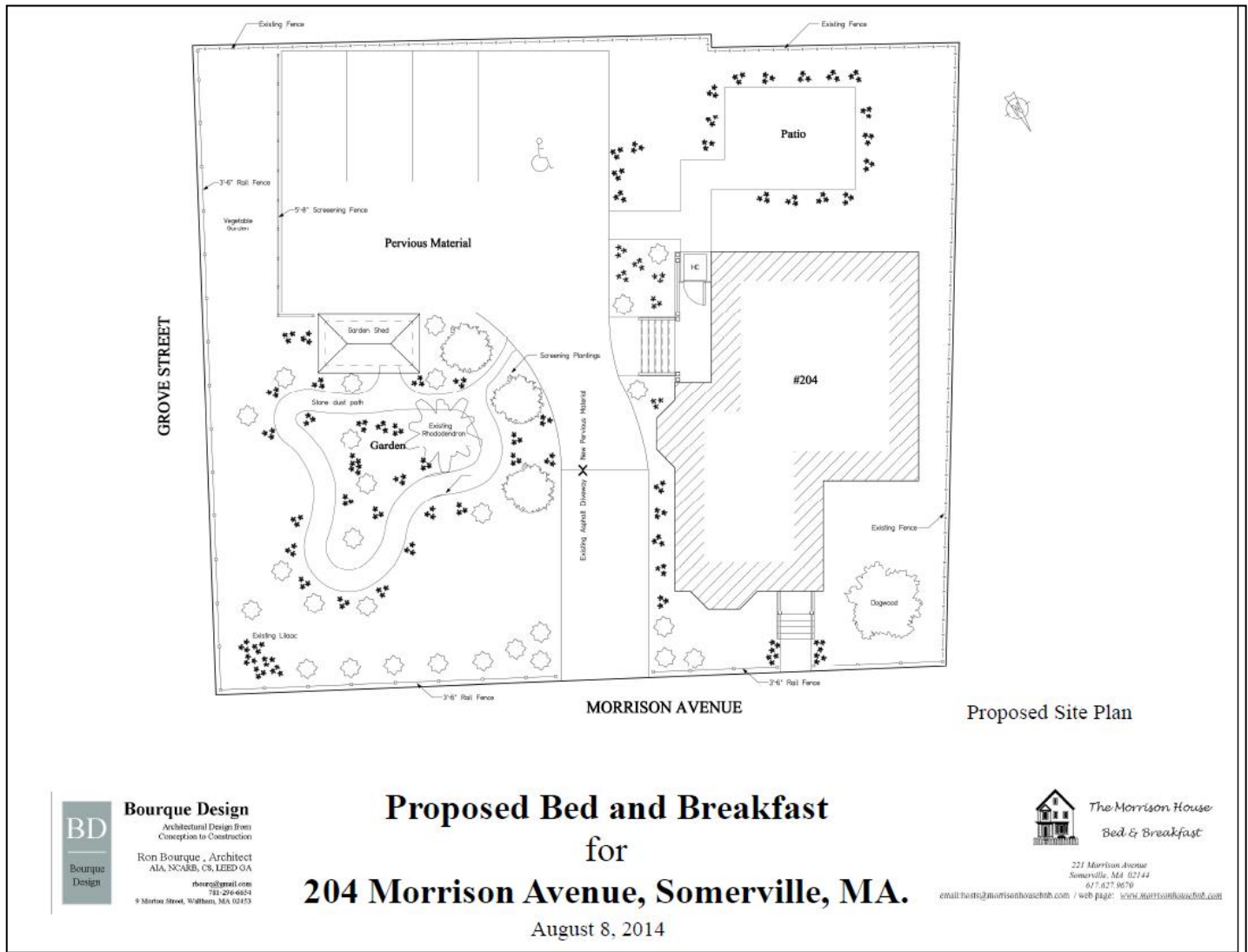
Dates of Public Hearing: **Wednesday, October 7, 2015**

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Subject Property: The subject parcel is 9,115 square feet and is comprised of a 2 ½ story dwelling that is currently undergoing renovations, including a rear addition. This property was designated as a single-structure Local Historic District (LHD) in 2014 in order to be converted into a bed and breakfast under Somerville's Historic Bed & Breakfast ordinance. In 2014 the ZBA approved the changes to the structure and lot as shown in **Fig. 1** below. The original ZBA approval is attached as is the Staff report for the 2014 ZBA case hearing. The Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) also approved the proposed site plans and building changes in 2014 as part of case **HPC 2015.060**.

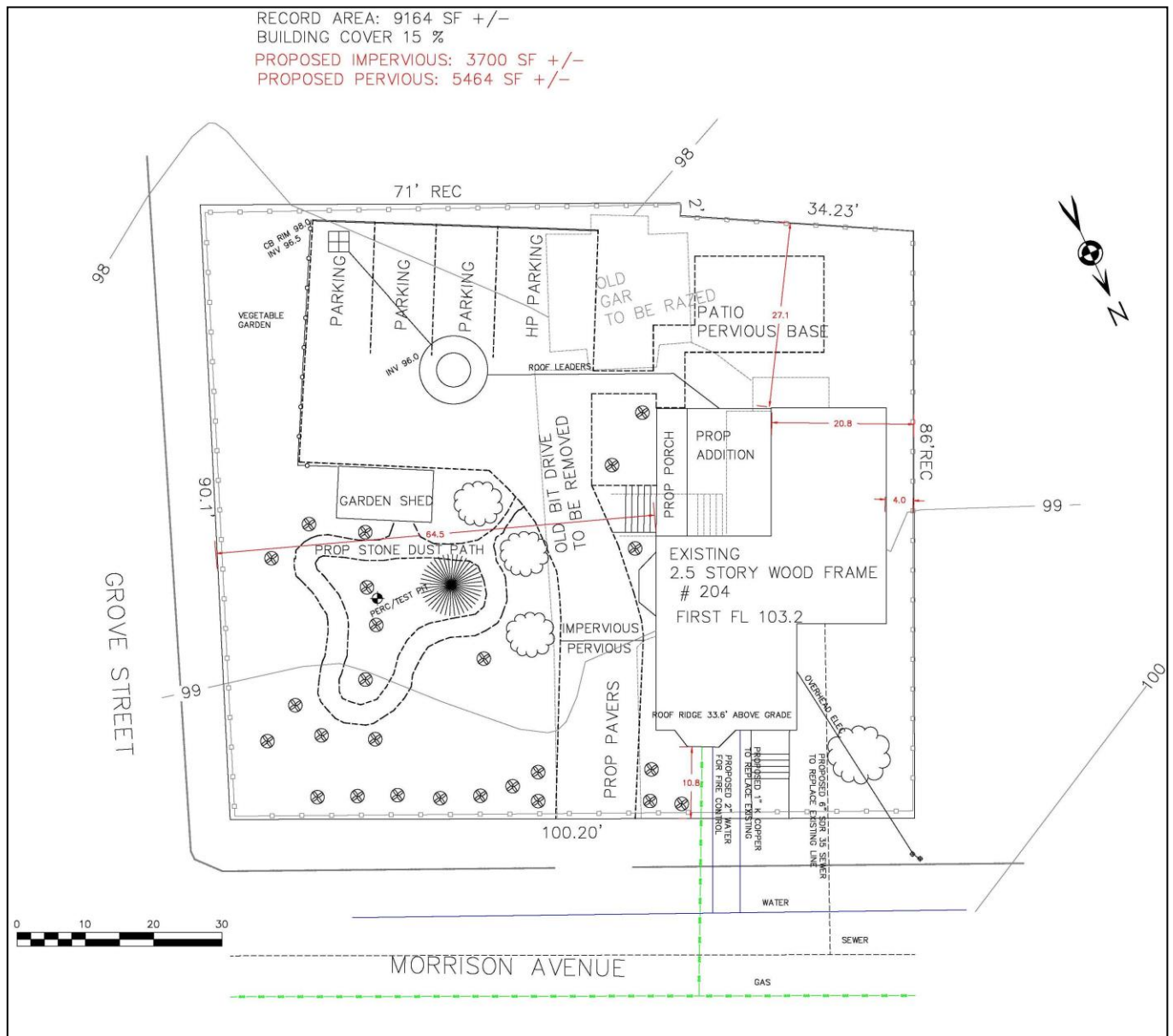
The Applicant is now seeking to have the 2014 ZBA decision amended as it pertains to the amount of pervious and impervious area covering the property.

Fig. 1 - 2014 Approved site plans



Proposal: The Applicants propose to amend their site plans such that the pervious area for parking and a portion of the driveway through to the front line of the side stairs be changed to impervious area. A drywell would be installed in the parking area. (The Applicants initially proposed that pavers be used on a smaller area of the driveway. See **Fig 2** below. After consultation with the HPC, the Applicants came up with their current proposal (see *Historic Preservation Commission* and corresponding **Fig. 3** below).

Fig. 2 – 2015 proposed alterations to site plan to Historic Preservation Commission.



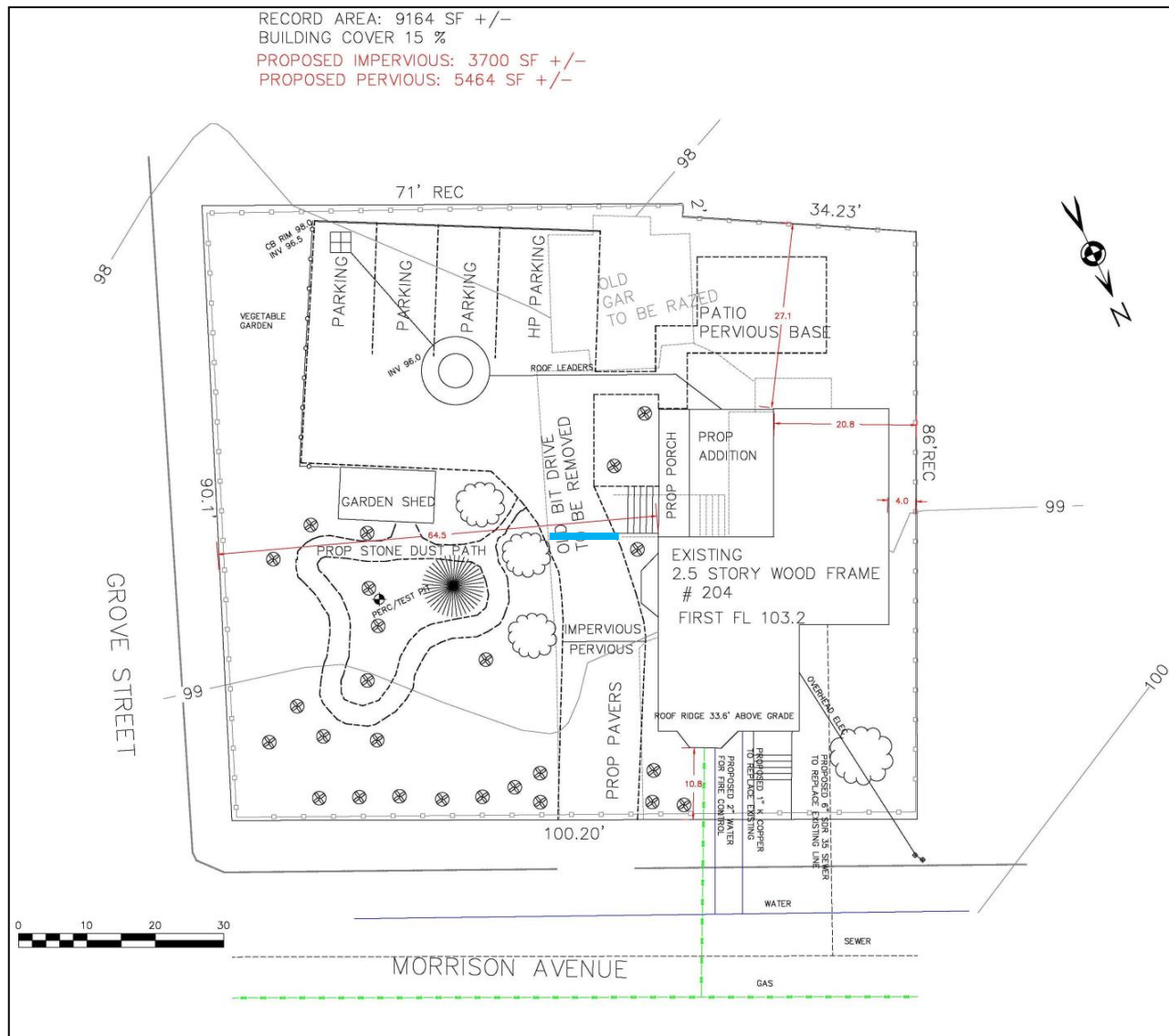
Historic Preservation Commission:

The Applicants appeared before the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) at their regular meeting on September 15, 2015, to petition the Commission to amend their 2014 approved plans to reverse the pervious and impervious sections of the driveway and parking areas and install a dry well. Staff was unable to recommend such a change to the site plan for the following reason(s):

1 – The HPC had already provided significant accommodations to the original site layout – specifically the siting and design of driveway and parking – in order to accommodate the proposed new use as a Historic B&B. In addition, the HPC had already permitted some use of non-historically sensitive impervious material (asphalt) on the initial portion of the driveway (pursuant to Somerville's *Historic District Ordinance* as amended by the Board of Aldermen (Ordinance #1993-2), February 25, 1993 and its corresponding *Somerville Historic Preservation Commission Design Guidelines*, Section II: *Specific Guidelines* Sub-section H *Landscape Features and Paving*, Item 4)

Some members of the HPC questioned the large amount of area to be converted to impervious material and discussed other possibilities during the hearing. After some discussion, the HPC accommodated a change that would include the use of pavers on the driveway from the line of the front stairwell to where the driveway meets the city sidewalk. (See **Fig. 3** below.)

Fig. 3 – Blue line indicates location at which pavers will end their run up from the city sidewalk.



204 Morrison Avenue

II. FINDINGS FOR REVISION TO A SPECIAL PERMIT with SITE PLAN REVIEW (SZO 7.11.13.g & §4.4.1) UNDER SZO 5.3.8:

In order to grant a special permit with site plan review, the SPGA must make certain findings and determinations as outlined in §5.3.8 of the SZO. This section of the report goes through §5.3.8 in detail.

1. Information Supplied: The information supplied is sufficient to evaluate the proposal.
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."

A revision to a special permit is allowed if the final signoff and certificates of occupancy have not yet been issued which is the case for this project. Changes that are not *de minimis* must go back to the special permit granting authority for approval. Staff deems this revision to be greater than the *de minimis* requirements under §5.3.8 and the request is before the ZBA for a public hearing. The driveway and parking area changes are substantial in nature and the site improvement work contributed to the overall support for the redevelopment of this property into an historic B&B.

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 revision is not consistent with the City's comprehensive plan, SomerVision. One of the plan's policies is to protect neighbors from the adverse environmental impacts of decisions made by individual property owners. An action step is to reduce impervious surfaces and meet the pervious requirement. The request is counter to this goal.

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 asphalt driveway will continue to allow storm water to runoff of the site into a proposed drywell and the City's combined sewer system instead of allowing for the preferable natural percolation of storm water into the ground. Other negative impacts of asphalt are the contribution to the heat island effect and the aesthetic of pavement, particularly on the site of an historic property used for an historic B&B.

III. RECOMMENDATION

Revision of Special Permit under SZO §5.3.8

Based on the materials submitted by the Applicants, the Planning Staff **RECOMMENDS DENIAL** of the requested amendment to the 2014 SPECIAL PERMIT with SITE PLAN REVIEW and SPECIAL PERMIT. Planning Staff determines that the 2014 approvals and conditions approved by the ZBA under SZO 7.11.13.g & §4.4.1 should stand. (See attached 2014 ZBA decision.)

