



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS**  
**MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**  
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DAWN PEREIRA, *ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT*

**Case #:** ZBA 2015-88

**Date:** 11/04/2015

**Recommendation:** Conditional Approval

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**PLANNING STAFF REPORT**

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**Site:** 11 Morton Street

**Applicant Name:** Kevin Gorham

**Applicant Address:** 48 Hollis Street, Milton, MA 02186

**Owner Name:** 11 Morton LLC

**Owner Address:** 48 Hollis Street, Milton, MA 02186

**Agent Name:** NA

**Agent Address:** NA

**Alderman:** Matthew McLaughlin

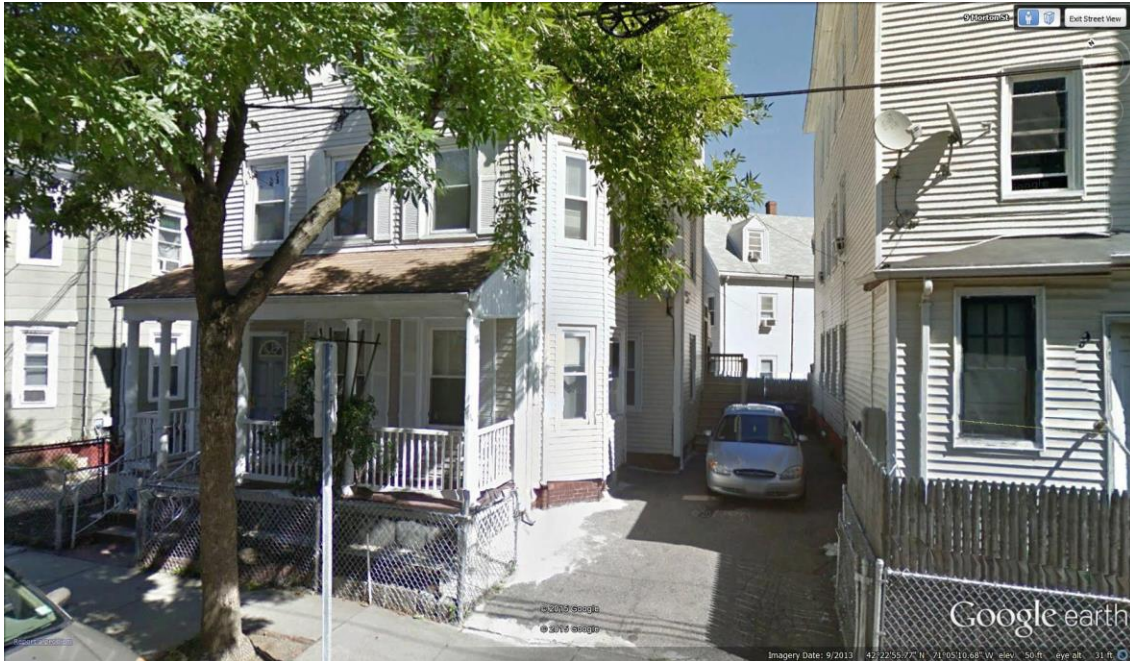
**Legal Notice:** Applicant Kevin Gorham and Owner 11 Morton LLC, seek a special permit to modify a nonconforming structure by rebuilding the rear egress stair and mudroom. RB Zone, Ward 1.

**Dates of Public Hearing:** Zoning Board of Appeals November 4, 2015

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**I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

1. **Subject Property:** The subject property is a 2 ½ story, two-family structure, with a two-bedroom unit on the first floor, and a three-bedroom unit on the second and third floors. A front entry vestibule provides separate points of egress for the two units. The first floor unit has a second means of egress off of the kitchen in the rear of the property, which currently exits through a makeshift plywood enclosure to the driveway. The second floor unit also has a second means of egress, by way of a stair and landing/deck that passes over the roof of the makeshift plywood structure. The stair wraps around the corner of the house, passing over a window, and discharges into the existing asphalt driveway.



View from Morton Street to rear stair.

2. Proposal: The proposal demolishes the existing makeshift structure, landing/deck and stairway. A deck is constructed at the second level, accessed by the existing door off of the second floor kitchen. The deck extends the length of the rear façade, at which point new stair provides vertical egress to the driveway below. The length of the deck and location of the stair are required due to the location of the existing exit steps and bulkhead at grade, as well as the extremely tight lot configuration. The proposal also adds a new door off of the third floor bedroom at the rear of the property, which exits onto a small deck on the roof of the second floor kitchen.

3. Green Building Practices: None mentioned in application.

4. Comments:

*Building Inspection:* Has been contacted and has no comments at this time.

*Ward Alderman:* Alderman McLaughlin has been contacted and has no comments at this time.

## **II. FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMIT (SZO §4.4):**

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."*

The structure is currently nonconforming with respect to the following dimensional requirements: Side yard setback and rear yard setback, per §8.5 of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance.

The proposal will impact the following nonconforming dimensions: side yard & rear yard setback. The current rear yard setback is 1.9' along the rear façade of the structure and will not change. There is another portion of the rear yard which is asphalt and currently used to store recycling bins; it is approximately 9'x10'. The proposal locates the new egress stair in this portion of the lot with a 3' minimum side yard setback and 1' minimum (5' maximum) rear yard setback. The current side yard setback is 4.9' along a length of approximately 10' where the current stair exits into the driveway. This alteration to a nonconforming structure requires the Applicant to obtain special permits under §4.4.1 of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance (SZO).

Section 4.4.1 states that "Lawfully 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 or §4.5 of the SZO, Staff find that the alterations proposed would not be substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing structure. The proposed addition will provide safer egress for the occupants, and in the absence of usable lot area for a yard, provides a modestly sized deck which is integrated into the egress stairway. In short the proposed work will be a substantial improvement over the existing conditions.

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; to adequately protect the natural environment; to encourage the most appropriate use of land throughout the City; to encourage housing for persons of all income levels; and to preserve and increase the amenities of the municipality."

The proposal is 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 with and convenient to the residents of such districts.

4. Site and Area Compatibility: *The Applicant has to ensure that the project "is designed in a manner that is compatible with the characteristics of the built and unbuilt surrounding area, including land uses."*

The surrounding neighborhood contains a variety of residential structures with various decks, stairs and configurations of side yards. The project is designed in a manner that is compatible with the characteristics of the built surrounding area, and will not negatively impact the surroundings.

5. Adverse environmental impacts: *The proposed use, structure or activity will not constitute an adverse impact on the surrounding area resulting from: 1) excessive noise, level of illumination, glare, dust, smoke, or vibration which are higher than levels now experienced from uses permitted in the surrounding area; 2) emission of noxious or hazardous materials or substances; 3) pollution of water ways or ground water; or 4) transmission of signals that interfere with radio or television reception.*

No negative environmental impacts are anticipated with respect to noise, illumination, glare dust, smoke or vibration, or from emissions of materials or substances, or water pollution, or transmission of signals.

6. Vehicular and pedestrian circulation: *The circulation patterns for motor vehicles and pedestrians which would result from the use or structure will not result in conditions that create traffic congestion or the potential for traffic accidents on the site or in the surrounding area.*

No impacts to circulation patterns for vehicles or pedestrians are anticipated.

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

8. 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.*

### **III. RECOMMENDATION**

#### **Special Permit under §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 the alteration to a nonconforming structure. 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>9/29/15</td><td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office</td></tr><tr><td>10/29/15</td><td>Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (1-3)</td></tr></table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	9/29/15	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office	10/29/15	Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (1-3)
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Any changes to the approved (site plan or elevations/use) that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval.										
Construction Impacts										
2	The applicant shall post the name and phone number of the general contractor at the site entrance where it is visible to people passing by.	During Construction	Plng.							
3	The Applicant shall at their 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							
4	All construction materials and equipment must be stored onsite. If occupancy of the street layout is required, such occupancy must be in conformance with the requirements of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices and the prior approval of the Traffic and Parking Department must be obtained.	During Construction	T&P							
Design										
5	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										
6	The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau's requirements.	CO	FP							
Final Sign-Off										
7	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.							

