



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS**  
**MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**  
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**Case #:** ZBA 2014-07

**Date:** March 13, 2014

**Recommendation:** Conditional Approval

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**PLANNING STAFF REPORT**

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**Site:** 86 Powder House Boulevard

**Applicant Name:** Jose & Maria Barros

**Applicant Address:** 252 High Street, Medford, MA 02155

**Property Owner Name:** Jose & Maria Barros

**Property Owner Address:** 252 High Street, Medford, MA 02155

**Alderman:** Katjana Ballantyne

Legal Notice: Applicants & Owner Jose & Maria Barros seek a Special Permit under SZO §4.4.1 to alter a nonconforming structure by enclosing the second floor of a rear porch. RA zone. Ward 7.

Dates of Public Hearing: March 19, 2014

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**I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

1. Subject Property: The subject property is a 3,741 square foot parcel on which sits a three-family dwelling that is undergoing renovations. The structure has a two-story open rear porch that is in close proximity to the rear property line.

2. Proposal: The proposal is to enclose the second story of the rear porch. The third floor unit uses the second story porch as a second means of egress and access to the basement where the laundry is located. Enclosing the second floor of the porch would allow the path from the third floor to the basement to be fully enclosed. The siding of the enclosed porch will be vinyl clapboards to match the rest of the house.



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

4. Comments:

*Fire Prevention:* Has not yet provided comments.

*Wiring Inspection:* Has not yet provided comments.

*Ward Alderman:* 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."

Lawfully existing three-family dwellings, which are nonconforming with respect to dimensional requirements, may be enlarged, expanded, renovated, or altered by special permit granted by the SPGA in accordance with the procedures of Article 5. The structure is nonconforming in terms of lot size (3,741 square exists and 10,000 square feet is required), frontage (46 feet exists and 50 is required), lot area per dwelling unit (1247 square feet exists and 2250 is required), floor area ratio (0.87 exists and 0.75 is the maximum) and rear yard setback (approximately 2 feet and 16.5 feet are required).

Enclosing the second story porch will change the appearance of the structure in the nonconforming rear yard setback and increase the nonconforming floor area ratio by 0.02.

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



86 Powderhouse Blvd: (t) existing porch, (b) view from the sidewalk



than the existing structure. Enclosing porches is generally not encouraged as porches provide private outdoor space and a transition from living space in the structure and the public realm, however, in this case the usability of the third unit will be improved by this change and the porch as conditioned will be designed to continue to appear to be a porch and not an inappropriate addition.

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 and conserving the value of land and buildings.

The proposal is consistent with the purpose of the RA district as it is being done as part of a renovation to a residential property.

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 redesigned porch will have sufficient windows so that it continues to appear as a porch and not an expansion of the interior living space. A condition of approval is that a trim board is placed on the western façade so that there is a visual break between the house and porch. This will also help if the house is not fully resided to provide a separation between materials. The color of vinyl siding may not match the color of the new vinyl. If an exact match of the color is not found, the owner should choose a compatible color with planning staff approval.

**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 the enclosure of a second floor rear porch. This approval is based upon the following application materials and the plans submitted by the Applicant:	BP/CO	ISD/ Plng.		
	<b>Date (Stamp Date)</b>				<b>Submission</b>
	Feb 5, 2014				Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office
	Oct 28, 2013				Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (plot plan)
	Jan 28, 2014 (Mar 14, 2014)				Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (elevation, section)
Jan 31, 2014 (Mar 14, 2014)	Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (floor plans)				
	Any changes to the approved plans that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval.				
2	The rear porch shall not extend farther into the rear yard than the existing porch	BP/CO	ISD/ Plng.		
3	Trim board shall be installed on the western façade to visually separate the house from the porch enclosure.	CO	Plng.		
4	The color of the porch enclosure shall match or be complementary to the main structure. The Applicant/Owner shall bring the color of the siding to Planning Staff for review and approval prior to ordering the material.	Prior to purchasing siding	Plng.		
<b>Final Sign-Off</b>					
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	Plng.		

