



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
JOSEPH A. CURTATONE
MAYOR

MICHAEL F. GLAVIN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PLANNING DIVISION STAFF

GEORGE PROAKIS, *DIRECTOR OF PLANNING*
LORI MASSA, *SENIOR PLANNER*
AMIE HAYES, *PLANNER*
MELISSA WOODS, *PLANNER*
DAWN PEREIRA, *ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT*

Case #: ZBA 2014-34

Date: May 15, 2014

Recommendation: Conditional Approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: 80 Properzi Way

Applicant Name: N. John Hallam & Teresa Swartzel

Applicant Address: 80 Properzi Way, Somerville, MA 02143

Property Owner Name: N. John Hallam & Teresa Swartzel

Property Owner Address: 80 Properzi Way, Somerville, MA 02143

Alderman: Maryann Heuston

Legal Notice: Applicant and Owners, N. John Hallam & Teresa Swartzel, seek a Special Permit under SZO §4.4.1 to alter a nonconforming single-family dwelling through the addition of a third floor in the existing rear addition. RB zone. Ward 2.

Dates of Public Hearing: **Wednesday, May 21, 2014**

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The subject parcel is a 7,375 square foot lot in the Duck Village neighborhood between Somerville Avenue and Beacon Street, near Cambridge. The structure is a 1½ story, single-family dwelling, constructed c. 1850. Due to the grade change toward the rear of the lot, the existing rear addition is two stories. There are two parking spaces on-site and the rear yard is fully landscaped. The surrounding Residential B zoning district is composed of single, two-, and three-family dwellings while Beacon Street is composed of a mix of uses, including commercial, office and residential.

Prior zoning relief includes the construction of a rear deck in 2005.



2. Proposal: The Applicant proposes to add a third floor to the existing two-story rear addition for a master suite. The front massing is 1½ stories and due to the grade change toward the rear of the lot, the rear addition is presently considered two stories. The proposal would add 8 feet of height to the present third story to create habitable space. This massing would meet the peak of the existing roof and not exceed the present, 27 foot height. The northwest elevation would have three skylights installed. The southwest elevation proposes two dormers, 8 feet and 4.5 feet in width, with a total of three windows. The rear façade would have two additional windows. The exterior material would be board and batten siding to match the existing basement entry, which is complimentary to the existing wood shingles.



3. Green Building Practices: The application form indicates that deep energy retrofits will be utilized as much as possible as well as insulation.

4. Comments:

Fire Prevention: The Applicant will need a fire alarm permit and to bring system up to code with a hard wired fire alarm system.

Engineering: Has been contacted but has not yet submitted comments. The Applicant did submit a Engineer's letter stating the there would be no increase in the footprint of the structure and therefore there would be no increase in stormwater runoff.

Historic Preservation: This structure was surveyed in 2010 as part of a larger surveying effort on behalf of the City. The Duck Village neighborhood is composed of several intact, mid 19th century dwellings. The proposed addition retains the original side gable massing and is historically compatible with the existing structure and the surrounding neighborhood.

Ward Alderman: Has been contacted but has not yet submitted 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."

Under SZO §4.4.1, an existing single or two-family dwelling may alter a nonconformity through the granting of a Special Permit. Therefore, due to the existing nonconforming left side yard setback, the proposed change, to add eight feet of height to create a habitable third floor, requires a Special Permit. There are two bedrooms currently on the second floor and one would be enlarged to allow for a master bedroom, so while the parking is currently compliant, the proposal does not impact the parking requirement.

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. The changes proposed will add habitable space and not affect the streetscape, or negatively impact the adjacent property. The proposed dormers will look into the side yard and would not exceed the height of the surrounding structures due to the grade change. Other than nonconforming setback dimensions, the proposal would comply with ground coverage (12%), landscape (88%) pervious area (88%), and floor area ratio (0.27).

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 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; and to encourage the most appropriate use of land throughout the City.

The proposal is consistent with the purpose of the RB 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."

The proposal to add habitable space through a third floor rear addition will enable the occupants to expand their living area and have a master suite. The addition is contextual to the existing structure as the addition meets the existing ridge and does not exceed this height. This proposal would not negatively impact the streetscape, nor be detrimental to adjacent properties.

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 parcel is located in a Residence B zoning district near Cambridge, between Somerville Avenue and Beacon Street. The surrounding neighborhood is predominantly composed of single, two-, and three-family dwellings while Beacon Street is composed of a mix of uses, including commercial, office and residential. The nearby dwellings are predominantly similar structures of 1-2½ stories.

The habitable rear third floor will have minimal to no impact on abutters, will not affect the streetscape, and does not enlarge the existing footprint. The enlarged addition overlooks the side yard and does not exceed the height of adjacent buildings. Proposed alterations to the building will enhance the interior plan and is contextual with the building.

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 a Special Permit to alter a nonconforming single-family dwelling through the addition of a third floor in the existing rear addition. This approval is based upon the following application materials and the plans submitted by the Applicant:	BP/CO	ISD/Pln g.									
	<table><tr><th>Date (Stamp Date)</th><th>Submission</th></tr><tr><td>(April 17, 2014)</td><td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office</td></tr><tr><td>March 9, 2005 (May 15, 2014)</td><td>Plot plan submitted to OSPCD</td></tr><tr><td>April 17, 2014 (May 15, 2014)</td><td>Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (T, X-1, X-2, X-3, X4, A-1, A-2, A-3, & A-4)</td></tr></table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	(April 17, 2014)	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office	March 9, 2005 (May 15, 2014)	Plot plan submitted to OSPCD	April 17, 2014 (May 15, 2014)	Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (T, X-1, X-2, X-3, X4, A-1, A-2, A-3, & A-4)
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Any changes to the approved site plan or elevations that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval.												
Pre-Construction												
2	The Applicant will be required to demonstrate that the project plans meet the current City of Somerville stormwater policy. Utility, grading, and drainage plans must be submitted to the Engineering Department for review and approval.	BP	Eng.									
Construction Impacts												
3	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												
4	The new siding, trim, roofing material, and other exterior wall details shall match or be complimentary to the existing in size, color and detail.	CO	Plng.									

Public Safety				
5	The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau's requirements.	CO	FP	
Final Sign-Off				
6	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.	

80 Properzi Way

