



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Case #: ZBA 2012-87
Date: December 6, 2012
Recommendation: Conditional Approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: 32-34 Wallace Street

Applicants and Property Owners Names: Paula and Albert Pellecchia Jr.
Applicants and Property Owners Address: 34 Wallace Street, Somerville, MA 02144
Alderman: Rebekah Gewirtz

Legal Notice: Applicants and Owners Paula and Albert Pellecchia Jr., seek a Special Permit under SZO §4.4.1 to make alterations to an existing nonconforming multi-family structure to construct a one-story addition on the rear left side of the building. RA zone. Ward 6.

Zoning District/Ward: RA zone / Ward 6

Zoning Approval Sought: Special Permit under SZO §4.4.1

Date of Application: October 30, 2012

Date of Public Hearing: Zoning Board of Appeals – **December 12, 2012**

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The subject property is a 4,748 square foot lot located near the intersection of Holland Street and Wallace Street, very close to Davis Square. The existing structure on the lot is a 2½ story, four-family dwelling with a gable roof and 3,775 square feet of living space. There is a one-car wide driveway on the left side of the existing structure that provides parking for one vehicle in terms of zoning compliance.
2. Proposal: The Applicants are proposing to add a 6 foot wide by 14 foot deep (84 square feet) one story, shed roof style addition onto the left rear side of the existing nonconforming four-family dwelling. The existing structure has a three floor dwelling unit on the right side (34 Wallace Street) and three dwelling units on the left side (32 Wallace Street). The first floor of 32 Wallace Street consists of a studio apartment towards the front of the building and a one-bedroom dwelling unit towards the rear. The second and third floors of the 32 Wallace Street side of the building are occupied by a three-bedroom dwelling



unit with a living room, kitchen, and a bathroom, all of which are on the second floor along with one of the bedrooms. On the third floor are the other two bedrooms and also a study which is actually only connected to the dwelling unit on the 34 Wallace Street side of the building. The 6 foot by 14 foot addition on the left rear side of the building would allow for a more formalized separation between the living area, bedroom, and kitchen area. The interior walls of the unit would also be shifted to enlarge the formalized bedroom area, to increase the size of the bathroom at the rear of the unit, and to create a direct connection between the formalized bedroom space and the bathroom. The secondary egress from the unit would be moved from the left side of the structure around to the rear of the building through the bathroom. The addition would be 14 feet at its highest point where it attaches to the existing structure and would have windows on the left side and rear elevations. The Applicants currently live in the multi-floor unit on the 34 Wallace Street side of the building but are looking to downsize into a smaller unit that is all on one floor level. This small addition to the structure would allow them to enhance the quality of the space in this rear first floor unit at 32 Wallace Street and they would then occupy the unit themselves.

3. Nature of Application: The lot itself is nonconforming with regard to lot size at 4,748 square feet, as 10,000 square feet is required in the RA district. The property is also nonconforming with regard to lot area per dwelling unit, as there is only 1,187 square feet per unit while 2,250 square feet per unit is the minimum required for the district. Additionally, the property is also nonconforming with respect to Floor Area Ratio (FAR) at 0.80 (0.75 is the maximum for the district) and the front and right side yard setbacks. Under Somerville Zoning Ordinance (SZO) §4.4.1, any alteration to the exterior of an existing nonconforming multi-family dwelling may only occur via Special Permit approval from the Zoning Board of Appeals. Therefore, since the proposal calls for a 6 foot wide by 14 foot deep addition on the left side of the existing structure, the Applicants may only pursue a Building Permit for this addition once they obtain a discretionary Special Permit from the Zoning Board of Appeals.

4. Surrounding Neighborhood: The subject property is located in a RA district. The surrounding area is comprised predominantly of a mixture of single- and two-family dwellings between 1½ and 2½ stories in height, with some 3 story, multi-family dwellings in the area as well. The property is located near Davis Square, which is only 0.2 miles away.

5. Impacts of Proposal: The proposal to construct a 6 foot wide by 14 foot deep addition onto the rear left side of the existing structure does not appear it would have a detrimental impact on the existing structure or the surrounding area. The addition itself would still maintain compliance with the minimum required setbacks and would still be within the building envelope at the property as it will be 9 feet from the left side property line and 28.1 feet from the rear property line. While one window would be created on the left side of the addition, it would look out at the extreme rear of the abutting property at 30 Wallace Street. The addition would also not impact the Wallace Street streetscape as it would be tucked behind the existing bay on the left side of the structure and be mostly blocked from view from the public way. This is also true of the height of the addition as it will only be 14 feet high and well below the 2½ story height of the existing building. The FAR of the property would increase ever so slightly from 0.80 to 0.81 as 84 square feet is being added to the existing building, but this additional square footage is almost negligible in terms of FAR. Compliance with all other dimensional requirements of the SZO would still be maintained at the property. The design of the addition is also in harmony with the existing structure and Planning Staff is proposing a condition that would ensure the new siding and roofing materials of the addition match that of the existing structure. The existing parking situation at the property would also not be altered or impacted as the proposal is simply adding onto what is already classified as an existing one-bedroom unit. The addition would not impact or reduce the parking area on the left side of the structure as three vehicles would still be able to park in a tandem fashion on the left side of the property if desired. The proposed addition will increase the quality of the living space of the rear first floor unit in the

existing multi-family dwelling. The property will remain a 2½ story, four-family residential use which is consistent with the surrounding neighborhood.

6. Green Building Practices: The Applicants indicated that they “will be exceeding the required R Factor by the Building Code.”

7. Comments:

Fire Prevention: Has been contacted but has not yet provided comments.

Ward Alderman: Alderman Gewirtz indicated in an email to Planning Staff on Wednesday, November 21, 2012 that she is in support of the project.

Wiring Inspector: Has been contacted but has not yet provided comments.



Existing Conditions



Existing Rear Left Side

II. FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMIT (SZO §4.4.1, §5.1)

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 Applicants 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 Permit.

2. Compliance with Standards: The Applicants 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."

In considering a Special Permit under §4.4 of the SZO, Staff finds that the proposed alterations to the nonconforming structure would not be substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing structure. The addition itself would still maintain compliance with the minimum required setbacks and would still be within the building

envelope at the property as it will be 9 feet from the left side property line and 28.1 feet from the rear property line. While one window would be created on the left side of the addition, it would look out at the extreme rear of the property at 30 Wallace Street. The addition would also not impact the Wallace Street streetscape as it would be tucked behind the existing bay on the left side of the structure and be mostly blocked from view from the public way. This is also true of the height of the addition as it will only be 14 feet high and well below the 2½ story height of the existing building. The FAR of the property would increase ever so slightly from 0.80 to 0.81 as 84 square feet is being added to the existing building, but this additional square footage is almost negligible in terms of FAR. The existing parking situation at the property would also not be altered or impacted as the proposal is simply adding onto what is already classified as an existing one-bedroom unit. Compliance with all other dimensional requirements of the SZO would still be maintained at the property.

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; to protect health; to secure safety from fire, panic and other dangers; to prevent the

overcrowding of land; to conserve the value of land and buildings; to encourage the most appropriate use of land throughout the City; and to encourage housing for persons of all income levels.”

The proposal is also fairly consistent with the purpose of the district (6.1.1. RA - Residence Districts), which is, “To establish and preserve quiet neighborhoods of one- and two-family homes, free from other uses except those which are both compatible with and convenient to the residents of such districts.” While the four-family dwelling use is a nonconforming use for this particular zoning district, the use is still residential in nature and is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.

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 proposed project is compatible with the characteristics of the surrounding neighborhood. The addition itself would still maintain compliance with the minimum required setbacks and would still be within the building envelope at the property as it will be 9 feet from the left side property line and 28.1 feet from the rear property line. While one window would be created on the left side of the addition, it would look out at the extreme rear of the property at 30 Wallace Street. The addition would also not impact the Wallace Street streetscape as it would be tucked behind the existing bay on the left side of the structure and be mostly blocked from view from the public way. This is also true of the height of the addition as it will only be 14 feet high and well below the 2½ story height of the existing building. The property will remain a 2½ story, four-family residential use which is consistent with the surrounding neighborhood.

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 adverse environmental impacts are anticipated from this proposal. No new noise, glare, smoke, vibration, nor emissions of noxious materials nor pollution of water ways or ground water nor transmission of signals that interfere with radio or television reception are anticipated as part of the project. The property will remain a 2½ story, four-family residential use which is consistent with the surrounding neighborhood.

III. RECOMMENDATION

Special Permit under §4.4.1, §5.1

Based upon the materials submitted by the Applicants, 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 materials 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	<p>Approval to make alterations to an existing nonconforming multi-family structure under SZO §4.4.1 to construct a one-story addition on the rear left side of the building. This approval is based upon the following application materials and the plans submitted by the Applicants:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="248 512 886 1556"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="248 512 565 548">Date (Stamp Date)</th> <th data-bbox="565 512 886 548">Submission</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="248 548 565 653">(October 30, 2012)</td> <td data-bbox="565 548 886 653">Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="248 653 565 751">October 26, 2012 (November 15, 2012)</td> <td data-bbox="565 653 886 751">Plot Plan</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="248 751 565 850">(November 15, 2012)</td> <td data-bbox="565 751 886 850">Existing First Floor Plan (Partial)</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="248 850 565 949">(November 15, 2012)</td> <td data-bbox="565 850 886 949">Proposed First Floor Plan (Partial)</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="248 949 565 1050">(November 15, 2012)</td> <td data-bbox="565 949 886 1050">Side Elevation</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="248 1050 565 1148">(November 15, 2012)</td> <td data-bbox="565 1050 886 1148">Floor Plan 1st Floor Proposed</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="248 1148 565 1247">(November 15, 2012)</td> <td data-bbox="565 1148 886 1247">Floor Plan 2nd Floor Existing / Proposed</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="248 1247 565 1346">(November 15, 2012)</td> <td data-bbox="565 1247 886 1346">Floor Plan 3rd Floor Existing / Proposed</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="248 1346 565 1444">(November 15, 2012)</td> <td data-bbox="565 1346 886 1444">Construction Detail</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="248 1444 565 1556">(November 15, 2012)</td> <td data-bbox="565 1444 886 1556">Construction Section</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Any changes to the approved site plans or elevations that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval.</p>	Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	(October 30, 2012)	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office	October 26, 2012 (November 15, 2012)	Plot Plan	(November 15, 2012)	Existing First Floor Plan (Partial)	(November 15, 2012)	Proposed First Floor Plan (Partial)	(November 15, 2012)	Side Elevation	(November 15, 2012)	Floor Plan 1 st Floor Proposed	(November 15, 2012)	Floor Plan 2 nd Floor Existing / Proposed	(November 15, 2012)	Floor Plan 3 rd Floor Existing / Proposed	(November 15, 2012)	Construction Detail	(November 15, 2012)	Construction Section	BP/CO	ISD/Plng.	
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2	<p>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.</p>	During Construction	T&P																							

3	The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau's requirements.	CO	FP	
4	New siding type and color, trim, roofing, and materials of the addition shall match that of the existing structure.	CO	Plng.	
5	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	
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.	



32-34 Wallace Street