



City of Somerville

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

City Hall 3rd Floor, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville MA 02143

TO: Zoning Board of Appeals
FROM: Planning, Preservation, & Zoning (PPZ) Staff
SUBJECT: 14 Sycamore Street, P&Z 21-176
POSTED: July 20, 2022

RECOMMENDATION: No change

This memo is supplemental to the PPZ Staff Memo dated June 29, 2022.

The application for a Hardship Variance at 14 Sycamore Street was scheduled for a public hearing on July 13, 2022. In order to prepare documents to have a complete application for a Hardship Variance request, the Applicant asked for a continuance from the July 13 hearing to the August 3, 2022 hearing. This memo serves to provide further Staff analysis from the new materials submitted by the Applicant.

ANALYSIS

The Applicant for 14 Sycamore Street seeks zoning relief from SZO Article 3.1.8.b.c, regarding the sum of side setbacks requirement for lots with front driveway access, to execute their desired project, which requires a Hardship Variance.

In the Staff memo dated June 29, 2022, Staff noted that the narrative submitted by the Applicant did not include arguments for how the proposal satisfies the Hardship Variance Criteria. On July 8, 2022, the Applicant submitted a supplemental narrative addressing the Hardship Variance criteria.

In their argument, the Applicant notes that the shape of the property is such that the existing driveway is too small for the property owners to park their cars, which requires them to park their cars on the street. The narrative notes Applicant has easement rights for a portion of property located on 8 Sycamore Street, which directly abuts the Applicant's property. The Applicant proposes to expand the driveway into the easement area by 2.15 feet to execute their desired project. In their argument the Applicant states the 2.15 feet on the abutting property would satisfy the sum of side setbacks requirement of 12 feet.

Staff notes that the lot is a similar size and shape of other lots in the direct neighborhood, and no unique circumstances exist in that regard. Staff would also like to clarify that area on an adjacent property cannot be used to accommodate dimensional standards and create a zoning-compliant project. The 2.15-foot easement located on the neighboring property does not rectify the Hardship Variance request, as that portion of land is not located on the Applicant's property and cannot be used to correct the sum of side setback requirement.