



City of Somerville

# ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

City Hall 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville MA 02143

**DECISION** 2026 FEB 27 A 10:43

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**PROPERTY ADDRESS:** 148 Morrison Avenue  
**CASE NUMBER:** ZP25-000089  
**OWNER:** Leighton and Catherine Collis  
**OWNER ADDRESS:** 5 Galen Avenue Nantucket, MA 02554  
**APPLICANT:** MBA Builders, Andrea Morelli  
**APPLICANT ADDRESS:** 500 Edgewater Drive, Suite 575, Wakefield, MA 01880  
**DECISION:** Approved with Conditions  
**DATE OF VOTE:** February 18, 2026  
**DECISION ISSUED:** February 27, 2026

CITY CLERK'S OFFICE  
SOMERVILLE, MA

This decision summarizes the findings made by the Zoning Board of Appeals (the "Board") regarding the Special Permit application submitted for 148 Morrison Avenue.

## LEGAL NOTICE

MBA Builders, Andrea Morelli proposes modifications to an existing nonconforming building in the Neighborhood Residence (NR) zoning district, which requires a Special Permit.

## RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

On February 18, 2026, the Zoning Board of Appeals held a public hearing advertised in accordance with M.G.L. 40A and the Somerville Zoning Ordinance. Present and presiding at the hearing were Acting Chair Anne Brockelman, Acting Clerk Ann Fullerton, and Board Members Brian Cook and Olivia Mobayed.

The applicants, Leighton and Cathy Collis, provided an overview of the proposal. Mr. Collis explained that the project involves removing an existing garage and raised deck at the rear of the property. These structures will be replaced with an addition to the main building featuring a below-grade basement unit, a backyard cottage, and enhanced landscaping.

Charles Rose, the project architect, gave a brief presentation detailing the proposed changes.

Vice-Chair Brockelman opened the floor for public testimony. Three residents provided statements:

First Resident (Direct Abutter): Expressed concern that the project would reduce the amount of light reaching the rear of their building. Mr. Collis and Architect Rose responded that the rear of the buildings are south-facing, meaning there would be no significant

impact on sunlight. They further noted that the design limits the number of windows to respect neighbor privacy and that the new structures would match existing heights.

Second Resident (Rowhouse Neighbor): Acknowledged the project was well-designed but expressed concern regarding the impact on direct abutters. They also expressed surprise at the Historical Commission's approval, given the strict regulations for historic buildings.

Third Resident (Neighbor): Spoke in support of the project, stating it would be a positive addition to the area. They noted possibilities for long-range planning initiatives near this project.

The direct abutter restated their concerns regarding light availability. Architect Rose reiterated that, due to the south-facing orientation of the locus, the change would not be dramatic. Following these comments, Vice-Chair Brockelman closed the public hearing.

Acting Clerk Fullerton advised the applicant to conduct a shadow study to mitigate the abutter's concerns, noting that the Board prefers neighbor consensus in cases involving substantial changes. Mr. Collis agreed to obtain the study.

Board Member Cook expressed support for the project and suggested making the shadow study a condition of approval, though he noted it might not be strictly necessary. Vice-Chair Brockelman voiced her support, specifically praising the new landscaping and the removal of impervious surfaces. She clarified that the project, which totals three units, requires only a special permit and no variances, as it meets all Somerville zoning requirements.

Acting Clerk Fullerton reiterated that the shadow study would effectively address the abutters' concerns. Upon concluding the discussion, Acting Clerk Fullerton initiated a motion.

**PLANS & DOCUMENTS**

Application plans, documents, and supporting materials submitted and incorporated are identified below.

Document	Pages	Prepared By	Date	Revision Date
Development Narrative	3	Charles Rose ARCHITECTS INC 115 Willow Avenue, Somerville, MA 02144	September 22, 2025	October 21, 2025
Development Narrative Supplement – Basement ADU	5	Charles Rose ARCHITECTS INC 115 Willow Avenue, Somerville, MA 02144	November 20, 2025	N/A
Site Plan	1	Robert E. Marinin NARIVetec 31 Munroe St, Lynn, MA 01901	July 29, 2025	N/A
Landscape Plan	1	Robert E. Marinin NARIVetec	July 29, 2025	N/A

		31 Munroe St, Lynn, MA 01901		
Floor Plans	4	Charles Rose ARCHITECTS INC 115 Willow Avenue, Somerville, MA 02144	August 4, 2025	N/A
Elevations	1	Charles Rose ARCHITECTS INC 115 Willow Avenue, Somerville, MA 02144	September 22, 2025	N/A
East Elevations	1	Charles Rose ARCHITECTS INC 115 Willow Avenue, Somerville, MA 02144	October 21, 2025	N/A
Neighborhood Meeting Report	18	Andrea Morell MBA Builders 500 Edgewater Drive, Suite 575, Wakefield MA, 01880	September 22, 2025	October 21, 2025

**SPECIAL PERMIT FINDINGS**

In accordance with the Somerville Zoning Ordinance, the Board may approve or deny a special permit upon making findings considering, at least, each of the following:

1. *The comprehensive plan and existing policy plans and standards established by the City.*
  - a. The Board finds that this project supports the goals laid out in SomerVision 2040, the City’s Comprehensive Master Plan, including the following:
    - i. *“Celebrate the unique character of our neighborhoods and the strength of our community as expressed in our history, cultures and vibrant civic engagement.”*
    - ii. *“Promote a dynamic urban streetscape that embraces public transportation, reduces car dependence, and is accessible, inviting and safe for all pedestrians, bicyclists and transit riders.”*
2. *The intent of the zoning district where the property is located.*
  - a. *The Board finds that this project conserves the already established areas of detached and semi-detached residential buildings.*
3. *The extent and nature of the proposed alteration.*
  - a. *The Board finds that the extent of the proposed alterations is consistent with the existing footprint and lot size, and that the additions follow the architectural characteristics of the building and surrounding neighborhood.*
4. *The ability of conforming alterations to meet the demonstrated need of the Applicant.*
  - a. *The Board has no comment on this item.*
5. *Consistency of the proposed alterations with the evolution of neighboring structures.*

- a. *The Board finds that the proposed expansion and backyard cottage are architecturally consistent with the main rowhouse structure and align with the overall pattern of historic renovation and maintenance within the neighborhood.*
6. Establishment of permeable lot surface, to the maximum extent possible.
- a. *The Board finds that the proposed plans show an increase in landscaping along the Clifton Street side of the property, removal of existing paved parking areas, and reconfiguration of surfaces between the backyard cottage and main structure to incorporate permeable materials. These changes appear to maximize permeable lot surfaces.*
7. Conformance to design guidelines applicable to the district where the property is located.
- a. *The Board finds that the criteria discussed in Item 5 demonstrate that the proposed project conforms to the design guidelines of the district.*

## DECISION

Acting Clerk Fullerton made a motion to approve the special permit based on the staff memo dated February 10, 2026, findings and discussion by the board, also added a condition that a shadow study is submitted to the Planning Department and Applicant neighbors. Board Member Cook second this motion. The Board voted **4-0** to approve the special permit, subject to the following conditions:

### General

1. This Decision must be recorded with the Middlesex South Registry of Deeds.

### Prior to Building Permit

2. A digital copy of the recorded Decision stamped by the Middlesex South Registry of Deeds must be submitted to the Planning, Preservation, & Zoning Division for the public record.
3. A shadow study must be submitted to the Planning, Preservation, & Zoning Division and Neighbors.

Attest, by the Zoning Board of Appeals:

Anne Brockelman, *Vice-Chair*  
Ann Fullerton, Acting Clerk  
Brian Cook  
Olivia Mobayed

**CLERK'S CERTIFICATE**

Any appeal of this decision must be filed within twenty days after the date this notice is filed in the Office of the City Clerk, and must be filed in accordance with M.G.L. c. 40A, sec. 17 and SZO sec. 15.5.3.

In accordance with M.G.L. c. 40 A, sec. 11, no variance shall take effect until a copy of the decision bearing the certification of the City Clerk that twenty days have elapsed after the decision has been filed in the Office of the City Clerk and no appeal has been filed, or that if such appeal has been filed, that it has been dismissed or denied, is recorded in the Middlesex County Registry of Deeds and indexed in the grantor index under the name of the owner of record or is recorded and noted on the owner's certificate of title.

Also in accordance with M.G.L. c. 40 A, sec. 11, a special permit shall not take effect until a copy of the decision bearing the certification of the City Clerk that twenty days have elapsed after the decision has been filed in the Office of the City Clerk and either that no appeal has been filed or the appeal has been filed within such time, is recorded in the Middlesex County Registry of Deeds and indexed in the grantor index under the name of the owner of record or is recorded and noted on the owner's certificate of title. The person exercising rights under a duly appealed Special Permit does so at risk that a court will reverse the permit and that any construction performed under the permit may be ordered undone.

The owner or applicant shall pay the fee for recording or registering. Furthermore, a permit from the Division of Inspectional Services shall be required in order to proceed with any project favorably decided upon by this decision, and upon request, the Applicant shall present evidence to the Building Official that this decision is properly recorded.

This is a true and correct copy of the decision filed on \_\_\_\_\_ in the Office of the City Clerk, and twenty days have elapsed, and

**FOR VARIANCE(S) WITHIN**

\_\_\_\_\_ there have been no appeals filed in the Office of the City Clerk, or  
\_\_\_\_\_ any appeals that were filed have been finally dismissed or denied.

**FOR SPECIAL PERMIT(S) WITHIN**

\_\_\_\_\_ there have been no appeals filed in the Office of the City Clerk, or  
\_\_\_\_\_ there has been an appeal filed.

**FOR SITE PLAN APPROVAL(S) WITHIN**

\_\_\_\_\_ there have been no appeals filed in the Office of the City Clerk, or  
\_\_\_\_\_ there has been an appeal filed.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ City Clerk Date \_\_\_\_\_