



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Case #: ZBA 2017-102
Date: November 8, 2017
Recommendation: Conditional approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: 24 Hall Avenue

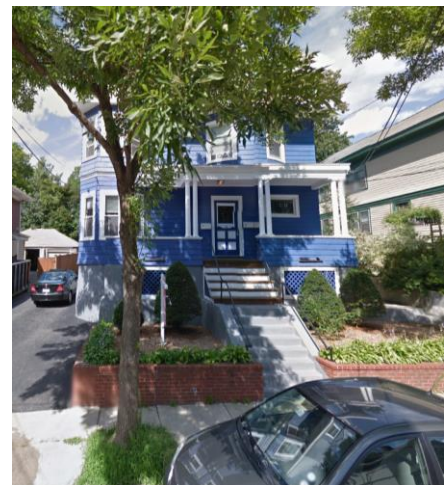
Applicant Name: Justin Levine, as Manager of 24 Hall Ave LLC
Applicant Address: 96 Rachel Road, Newton, MA 02459
Owner Name: 24 Hall Ave LLC
Owner Address: 96 Rachel Road, Newton, MA 02459
Alderman: Lance Davis

Legal Notice: Applicant, Justin Levine, as Manager of 24 Hall Ave LLC, and Owner, 24 Hall Ave LLC, seek a Special Permit under SZO §4.4.1 to increase the nonconforming floor area ratio (FAR) of the structure by finishing a portion of the basement. RA Zone. Ward 6.

Dates of Public Hearing: Zoning Board of Appeals – November 8, 2017

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The subject property consists of a 5,221 square foot parcel with a three-family dwelling. The basement is currently unfinished. The first floor unit currently has four bedrooms.
2. Proposal: The proposal is to finish the basement to become part of the first floor unit. The proposed finished area will include
3. Green Building Practices: None listed in the application.
4. Comments:
Ward Alderman: Alderman Davis has been made aware of this proposal and has yet to comment as of the publication of this report.



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."*

The structure is currently nonconforming with respect to the following use / dimensional requirements: number of dwelling units, lot area, lot area per dwelling unit, landscaped area, pervious area, floor area ratio (FAR), building height, right side yard setback, street frontage, and the number of parking spaces.

The proposal will impact the nonconforming dimension of FAR. The current dimension is 0.86, the proposal to finish a portion of the basement will add 769 square feet of net floor area and will increase the FAR to 1.01 where the requirement in the district is 0.75. This alteration to a nonconforming structure requires the Applicant to obtain special permits under §4.4.1 of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance (SZO).

Section 4.4.1 states that “[l]awfully existing nonconforming structures other than one- and two-family dwellings may be enlarged, extended, renovated or altered only by special permit authorized by the SPGA in accordance with the procedures of Article 5. The SPGA must find that such extension, enlargement, renovation or alteration is not substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing nonconforming building. In making the finding that the enlargement, extension, renovation or alteration will not be substantially more detrimental, the SPGA may consider, without limitation, impacts upon the following: traffic volumes, traffic congestion, adequacy of municipal water supply and sewer capacity, noise, odor, scale, on-street parking, shading, visual effects and neighborhood character.”

In considering a special permit under §4.4 of the SZO, Staff finds that the alterations/use proposed would not be substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing structure/use. The proposal will allow the owners to increase the amount of living area without having any impact on the exterior of the structure. The proposal has been designed with setbacks that minimally impact the neighbors and the requirements for ground coverage, front yard setback, rear yard setback, and left side yard setback will continue to be conforming to the requirements of the SZO.

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 promote the health, safety, and welfare of the inhabitants of the City of Somerville; to lessen congestion in the streets; 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 preserve and increase the amenities of the municipality.

The proposal is consistent with the purpose of the RA district, 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.”

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."*

Surrounding Neighborhood: Hall Avenue is a residential street off of College Avenue just north of Davis Square that includes single, two-, and three-family dwellings.

Impacts of Proposal (Design and Compatibility): The proposal will keep the dwelling a three-family dwelling and will not have an impact on the design of the structure.

5. Housing Impact: *Will not create adverse impacts on the stock of existing affordable housing.*

6. SomerVision Plan: *Complies with the applicable goals, policies and actions of the SomerVision plan, including the following, as appropriate: Preserve and enhance the character of Somerville’s neighborhoods, transform key opportunity areas, preserve and expand an integrated, balanced mix of safe, affordable and environmentally sound rental and homeownership units for households of all sizes and types from diverse social and economic groups; and, make Somerville a regional employment center with a mix of diverse and high-quality jobs. The areas in the SomerVision map that are designated as enhance and transform should most significantly contribute towards the SomerVision goals that are outlined in the table below. The areas marked as conserve are not expected to greatly increase the figures in the table since these areas are not intended for large scale change.*

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 to finish the basement. This approval is based upon the following application materials and the plans submitted by the Applicant:	BP/CO	ISD/Plng.							
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Date (Stamp Date)</th> <th>Submission</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>September 18, 2017</td> <td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(October 19, 2017)</td> <td>Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (plot plan, A1.10, A1.20, existing basement and 1st floor plan, and proposed basement and 1st floor plan)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	September 18, 2017	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office	(October 19, 2017)	Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (plot plan, A1.10, A1.20, existing basement and 1 st floor plan, and proposed basement and 1 st floor plan)
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Any changes to the approved site plan or elevations/use that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval.										
Pre-Construction										
2	The proposed basement finished floor elevation shall not be less than is 1 foot above the Seasonal High Ground Water elevation. The seasonal high ground water elevation shall be determined by a Massachusetts certified soil evaluator and stated on a signed soil test pit log.	BP	Eng.							
Construction Impacts										
3	The applicant shall post the name and phone number of the general contractor at the site entrance where it is visible to people passing by.	During Construction	Plng.							
4	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										
5	Applicant shall provide final material samples for siding, trim, windows, and doors (to the Design Review Committee for review and comment and) to Planning Staff for review and approval prior to the issuance of a building permit.	BP	Plng.							
Site										
6	Landscaping shall be installed and maintained in compliance with the American Nurserymen's Association Standards;	Perpetual	Plng. / ISD							
Miscellaneous										
7	Granting of the applied for use or alteration does not include the provision for short term rental uses, such as AirBnB, VRBO, or the like. Separate approvals are needed for the aforementioned uses.	Ongoing	ISD / Plng.							

8	The Applicant, its successors and/or assigns, shall be responsible for maintenance of both the building and all on-site amenities, including landscaping, fencing, lighting, parking areas and storm water systems, ensuring they are clean, well kept and in good and safe working order.	Cont.	ISD	
Public Safety				
9	The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau's requirements.	CO	FP	
10	Per Somerville fire safety regulations, grills, barbecues, chimineas and the like are NOT permitted on decks or porches.	Perpetual	FP/ISD	
Final Sign-Off				
11	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.	

