



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Case #: ZBA 2018-14
Date: April 4, 2018
Recommendation: Conditional approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: 29 Knowlton Street

Applicant Name: Eric Parkes
Applicant Address: 54 Vinal Avenue, Somerville, MA 02143
Owner Name: Chris and May Devers
Owner Address: 29 Knowlton Street, Somerville, MA 02145
Alderman: Matthew McLaughlin

Legal Notice: Applicant, Eric Parkes, and Owners, Chris and May Devers, seek a special permit under SZO §4.4.1 to alter a nonconforming structure by constructing a roof deck above an existing 2nd story portion of the structure. RB Zone. Ward 1.

Dates of Public Hearing: Zoning Board of Appeals – April 4, 2018

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The subject lot is comprised of a 2,884 s.f parcel that contains two condominium units. Unit #1 occupies the ground floor and Unit #2 occupies the second and third level. The main portion of the structure is 2.5 stories with a gable roof. The structure has a rear portion that is two stories with a flat roof.
2. Proposal: The proposal is to construct a roof deck above the rear two-story flat roofed portion of the structure.
3. Green Building Practices: There are none listed on the application.
4. Comments:



Ward Alderman: Alderman McLaughlin has been informed of this proposal and has yet to provide 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 dimensional requirements: lot area, lot area per dwelling unit, landscaped area, pervious area, front yard setback, rear yard setback, left side yard setback, and street frontage.

The proposal will impact the nonconforming dimensions of the rear yard and left side yard setbacks. The current rear yard is 14.4 feet and the requirement in the district is 20 feet. The current left side yard is 1.3 feet and the requirement in the district is 8 feet. The proposal to place a railing on the roof within the required setbacks will not increase the existing nonconformities. However, it is considered to be an alteration to a nonconforming structure that 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 one-and two-family dwellings which are only used as residences, which are nonconforming with respect to dimensional requirements, may be enlarged, extended, renovated or altered by special permit granted by the SPGA in accordance with the procedures of Article 5.”

In considering a special permit under §4.4 of the SZO, Staff finds that the alterations proposed would not be substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing structure. The proposal will allow the occupants of Unit #2 to access a roof deck off of their unit. The proposal has been designed with setbacks that minimally impact the neighbors and the requirements for ground coverage, floor area ratio (FAR), building height, and right 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 provide for and maintain the uniquely integrated structure of uses in the City; to lessen congestion in the streets; to protect health; to secure safety from fire, panic and other dangers; to provide adequate light and air; to prevent the overcrowding of land; to avoid undue concentration of population; to conserve the value of land and buildings; to adequately protect the natural environment; 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 RB district, 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.”

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: The subject site is located on the dead end portion of Knowlton Street and is within close proximity to the Capuano Early Childhood Center. The immediate area is residential in nature.

Impacts of Proposal (Design and Compatibility): The proposal will have minimal visibility form Knowlton Street. The railing system is proposed to be galvanized iron, painted black.

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.

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
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1	Approval is for the construction of a roof deck. 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>February 1, 2018</td> <td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office</td> </tr> <tr> <td>February 1, 2018</td> <td>Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (A-1, A-2, A-3, A-4, and A-5)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	February 1, 2018	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office	February 1, 2018	Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (A-1, A-2, A-3, A-4, and A-5)
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Any changes to the approved elevations that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval.										
Construction Impacts										
2	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.							
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	Applicant shall provide final decking material samples to Planning Staff for review and approval prior to the issuance of a building permit.	BP	Plng.							
Site										
5	Landscaping shall be installed and maintained in compliance with the American Nurserymen's Association Standards;	Perpetual	Plng. / ISD							
Miscellaneous										
6	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.							
7	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										
8	The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau's requirements.	CO	FP							
9	Per Somerville fire safety regulations, grills, barbecues, chimineas and the like are NOT permitted on decks or porches.	Perpetual	FP/ISD							
10	To the extent possible, all exterior lighting must be confined to the subject property, cast light downward and must not intrude, interfere or spill onto neighboring properties.	CO	Plng.							
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.	
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