



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS**  
**MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**  
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ALEX MELLO, *PLANNER*  
DAWN PEREIRA, *ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT*

**Case #:** ZBA 2018-98  
**Date:** August 22, 2018  
**Recommendation:** Conditional approval

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**PLANNING STAFF REPORT**

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**Site: 46 Laurel Street**

**Applicant Name:** Christopher Burgholzer  
**Applicant Address:** 48 School Street, Somerville, MA 02143  
**Owner Name:** Warren L. Hirst and Catherine A. Hirst, Trustees of the Hirst Realty Trust  
**Owner Address:** 46 Laurel Street, Somerville, MA 02143  
**Agent Name:** Adam Dash, Esq.  
**Agent Address:** 48 Grove Street, Suite 304, Somerville, MA 02144  
**Alderman:** J.T. Scott

Legal Notice: Applicant, Christopher Burgholzer, and Owner, Warren L. Hirst and Catherine A. Hirst, Trustees of the Hirst Realty Trust, seek a Special Permit under SZO §4.4.1 to alter a nonconforming structure by constructing an addition in the rear of the four-unit dwelling and a Special Permit under SZO §9.13 for parking relief. RB Zone. Ward 2.

Dates of Public Hearing: Zoning Board of Appeals – August 22, 2018

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**I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

1. Subject Property: The subject property consists of one parcel totaling 13,508 square feet on land area. The site contains a four-unit three-story dwelling with an accessory three-car garage.
2. Proposal: The proposal is to construct a 1,006 square foot two-story addition with roof decks to the rear of the existing structure. The number of dwelling units on the site will remain at four but the number of bedrooms will



increase to three bedrooms per unit. One new parking space will be added to create a total of four parking spaces.

3. Green Building Practices: The application does not list any green building practices.

4. Comments:

*Ward Alderman*: Alderman Scott held a neighborhood meeting on Tuesday, August 7<sup>th</sup>, 2018. Three neighbors were in attendance and had no objections to the project. Alderman Scott supports the proposal.

## **II. FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMIT (SZO §4.4.1 and §9.13):**

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."*

### *Article 4: Nonconforming Uses and Structures*

The structure is currently legally nonconforming with respect to the use as four-dwelling units.

The proposal will maintain the four dwelling units and construct a two-story addition in the rear with roof decks. 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 is rather modest and will maintain the character of the existing structure while also providing improvements to the property. The existing structure currently conforms to all of the SZO dimensional requirements and the proposed addition has been designed with setbacks that will continue to be conforming to the SZO dimensional requirements.

*Article 9: Off-Street Parking and Loading*

	<i>Existing</i>		<i>Proposed</i>	
Unit #1	1 BR	1.5 spaces	3 BR	2 spaces
Unit #2	1 BR	1.5 spaces	3 BR	2 spaces
Unit #3	2 BR	1.5 spaces	3 BR	2 spaces
Unit #4	2 BR	1.5 spaces	3 BR	2 spaces
<b>Total</b>	<b>6 spaces</b>		<b>8 spaces</b>	

SZO §9.13 allows for sites with nonconforming parking to apply for a Special Permit to modify parking requirements if the total number of spaces is six or fewer. The locus is currently nonconforming with respect to the number of required off-street parking spaces as six spaces are required and three are provided on the site. The proposal increases the parking requirement by two spaces.

Since the locus does not currently have sufficient off-street parking and an addition is being added to the property that increases the parking requirement by two spaces, SZO §9.4.2 requires the Applicant to provide the two required additional spaces. The proposal includes adding one additional parking space next to the garage that will give the site a ratio of one per unit. Relief is being requested from providing the additional one parking space.

In considering a special permit under §9.13 of the SZO “the SPGA may grant such a special permit only when consistent with the purposes set forth in Section 9.1, and upon reaching the findings and determinations set forth in Section 5.1.4”. Staff finds that granting the requested Special Permit is consistent with the purposes of SZO §9.1 and will not cause detriment to increased traffic volumes, traffic congestion of queuing of vehicles, changes in the type of traffic, change in traffic patterns and access to the site, reduction in on-street parking, or unsafe conflicts of motor vehicles and pedestrian traffic.

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 preserve the historical and architectural resources of the City; 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 west side of Laurel Street near the upper end toward Summer Street. Laurel Street is a residential street that is between Summer Street and

Somerville Avenue. There are single, two-, three-, and multi-family residences on this section of Laurel Street.

*Impacts of Proposal (Design and Compatibility):* The proposal has been designed to be compatible with the neighborhood as the proposed addition will be completely behind the existing structure, which will help preserve the character of the existing structure. The size and bulk of the proposed addition will also be compatible with the subject site and the surrounding neighborhood.

- 7. Housing Impact: Will not create adverse impacts on the stock of existing affordable housing.
- 8. 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 and §9.13**

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 for the construction of a two-story rear addition with roof decks. 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>July 11, 2018</td> <td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office</td> </tr> <tr> <td>June 29, 2017</td> <td>Plans submitted to OSPCD (T-1, certified plot plan, Z-1, Z-2, Z-3, A-1, A-2, A-3, A-4, E-1, E-2, and E-3)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	July 11, 2018	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office	June 29, 2017	Plans submitted to OSPCD (T-1, certified plot plan, Z-1, Z-2, Z-3, A-1, A-2, A-3, A-4, E-1, E-2, and E-3)
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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.										
<b>Pre-Construction</b>										
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.							

3	The Applicant shall complete the Site Plan Review Checklist and supply the information to the Engineering Office. The plans must comply with the City's Stormwater Management Policy.	BP	Eng.	
4	The Applicant shall submit a proposed drainage report, stamped by a registered PE in Massachusetts that demonstrates compliance with the City's stormwater policy.	BP	Eng.	
<b>Construction Impacts</b>				
5	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.	
6	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	
<b>Design</b>				
7	Applicant shall provide final material samples for siding, trim, windows, and doors to Planning Staff for review and approval prior to the issuance of a building permit.	BP	Plng.	
<b>Site</b>				
8	Landscaping shall be installed and maintained in compliance with the American Nurserymen's Association Standards;	Perpetual	Plng. / ISD	
9	A permeable paver driveway apron shall be installed for the first twenty feet of the driveway.	CO	Plng. / ISD	
<b>Miscellaneous</b>				
10	Gas and electric meters shall not be on the front of the structure. Gas and electric meters may be located on the side of the structure but shall be screened from the street by a hardy, staff approved evergreen planting. Utilities shall not be located adjacent to windows and shall not impact any parking, landscaping, or egress. The provisions of this condition may be waived by staff if the applicant submits a letter from the utility, signed by a utility representative, on utility letterhead, indicating that there is no feasible alternative to placing meters in violation of this condition.	CO	ISD	
11	Electrical conduits on the exterior facades of buildings shall be painted to match the wall material to which they are attached. Conduits are not allowed on the front of any structure.	CO	Plng.	
12	Garbage and recycling locations shall be clearly indicated on site plans. Storage areas shall be inside of the structure or shall be fully screened from view from both the public way and abutters by an appropriate material reviewed and approved by staff. The location shall not impact any parking, landscaping, or egress.	BP	Plng.	
13	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.	

14	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	
<b>Public Safety</b>				
15	The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau's requirements.	CO	FP	
16	Per Somerville fire safety regulations, grills, barbecues, chimineas and the like are NOT permitted on decks or porches.	Perpetual	FP/ISD	
17	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.	
<b>Final Sign-Off</b>				
18	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.	

