



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS**  
**MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**  
**JOSEPH A. CURTATONE**  
**MAYOR**

**MICHAEL F. GLAVIN**  
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

**PLANNING DIVISION STAFF**

GEORGE PROAKIS, *DIRECTOR OF PLANNING*  
SARAH LEWIS, *SENIOR PLANNER*  
SARAH WHITE, *PLANNER & PRESERVATION PLANNER*  
ALEX MELLO, *PLANNER*  
DAWN PEREIRA, *ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT*

**Case #:** ZBA 2017-108

**Date:** December 13, 2017

**Recommendation:** Conditional Approval

---

**PLANNING STAFF REPORT**

---

**Site:** 69 Concord Avenue

**Applicant Name:** George Meeker

**Applicant Address:** 69 Concord Avenue, Somerville MA, 02143

**Owner Name:** Rebecca Kusko

**Owner Address:** 69 Concord Avenue, Somerville MA, 02143

**Alderman:** Maryann Heuston

**Legal Notice:** Applicant and Owner, George Meeker, seeks Special Permits under §4.4.1 of the SZO to make alterations to a non-conforming structure. RB zone. Ward 2.

**Dates of Public Hearing:** December 13, 2017



---

**I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

**1. Subject Property:** The subject parcel is a 3,188sf lot with a 3-story, three-unit, Mansard-roofed dwelling house. Each story contains one dwelling unit. The structure is approximately 2,200sf. The first floor unit is the unit applying for zoning relief.

**2. Proposal:** The proposal is to enclose roughly half of the existing open porch at the left rear elevation of the house. This proposal would add roughly 75 square feet of additional interior living space. The FAR would increase from .69 to .72, which is under the 1.0 maximum in the RB district. At 7 feet from the property line, this portion of the enclosed porch encroaches into the setback, which is the trigger for the special permit.

**3. Green Building Practices:** None listed.

**II. FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMIT (SZO §4.4):**

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:**

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."***

*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 or 4.5 of the SZO, Staff find that the alterations proposed would not be substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing structure. The proposal to enclose a portion of the first floor left elevation rear porch will be executed within the existing setbacks.

**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 The purposes of the Ordinance are 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 facilitate the adequate provision of transportation, water, sewerage, schools, parks and other public requirements; 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; to protect and promote a housing stock that can accommodate the diverse household sizes and life stages of Somerville residents at all income levels, paying particular attention to providing housing affordable to individuals and families with low and moderate incomes; and to preserve and increase the amenities of the municipality.

The proposal is consistent with the purpose of the 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 surrounding neighborhood contains a mix of residential structures of various architectural styles.

***Impacts of Proposal (Design and Compatibility):*** The impacts of the proposal will be minimal to the neighborhood, and are compatible with the existing structure and use. Though the enclosure of a portion of this currently-open porch will increase the overall massing at the left rear elevation of the building, Staff finds that the decision to leave roughly half of the existing porch area open will offset the increase in building bulk in this area.

5. **Adverse environmental impacts:** *The proposed use, structure or activity will not constitute an adverse impact on the surrounding area resulting from: 1) excessive noise, level of illumination, glare, dust, smoke, or vibration which are higher than levels now experienced from uses permitted in the surrounding area; 2) emission of noxious or hazardous materials or substances; 3) pollution of water ways or ground water; or 4) transmission of signals that interfere with radio or television reception.*

***Impacts of Proposal (Environmental):*** No adverse impacts on the surrounding area anticipated as a result of excessive noise, illumination, glare, dust smoke or vibration, or from emissions of noxious materials, or pollution of water ways or ground water, or interference with radio or television signals.

6. **Vehicular and pedestrian circulation:** *The circulation patterns for motor vehicles and pedestrians which would result from the use or structure will not result in conditions that create traffic congestion or the potential for traffic accidents on the site or in the surrounding area.*

***Impacts of Proposal (Circulation):*** With the proposal being to enclose a portion of an open porch in order to gain roughly 78 square feet of interior living space, Staff finds that such action will not have any impact on traffic congestion or create the potential for traffic accidents on the site or in the surrounding area.

7. **Housing Impact:**

The proposal will not add any additional dwelling units to Somerville's housing stock.

8. **Impact on Affordable Housing:** *In conjunction with its decision to grant or deny a special permit for a structure of four or more units of housing, the SPGA shall make a finding and determination as to how implementation of the project would increase, decrease, or leave unchanged the number of units of rental and home ownership housing that are affordable to households with low or moderate incomes, as defined by HUD, for different sized households and units.*

The proposal to enclose part of a rear porch will not have any impact on the availability of affordable housing in Somerville.

**III. RECOMMENDATION****Special Permit under §4.4**

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 Special Permit to modify a nonconforming structure by enclosing apportion of the left rear porch that rests within the setback.	BP/CO	ISD/Plng.		
	Date (Stamp Date)				Submission
	September 25, 2017				Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office
	December 7, 2017				Updated plan set submitted to OSPCD
	Any changes to the approved site plan or elevations/use must be reviewed by Planning Staff PRIOR TO their implementation on the site. Planning Staff will determine whether such changes are <i>de minimis</i> in nature or if they will need to go back to the ZBA for approval. <u>ANY</u> changes to the conditions set forth by the ZBA in their decision, must be remanded to the ZBA for their review and 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	Approval is subject to the Applicant's and/or successor's right, title and interest in the property.	Cont.	Plng.	Deed submitted & application formed signed	

4	The Applicant shall, at their expense, replace any existing equipment (including, but not limited to street sign poles, signs, traffic signal poles, traffic signal equipment, wheel chair ramps, granite curbing, etc) and the entire sidewalk immediately abutting the subject property if damaged as a result of construction activity. All new sidewalks and driveways must be constructed to DPW standard.	CO	DPW/IS D/Plng	
5	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	ISD/T& P	
<b>Design</b>				
6	Applicant shall provide final material samples to Planning Staff for review and approval prior to construction.	BP	Plng.	
7	Any exterior lighting installed in this area must be downcast and not spill onto the public way or shine into/onto abutting properties at any time.	Final sign off	Wiring Inspector	
8	Should the ZBA approve the applicant's proposal, the Applicant shall be required to submit an updated elevation of the left elevation to show the <u>exact</u> style, location and dimensions of all windows existing and proposed on this portion of the structure.	Less than 14 calendar days from the date of ZBA decision	Plng/IS D	
<b>Public Safety</b>				
9	The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau's requirements.	CO	FP	
<b>Final Sign-Off</b>				
10	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.	

