



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*
MONIQUE BALDWIN, *ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT*

Case #: ZBA 2018-61
Date: November 7, 2018

Recommendation: Conditional Approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: 17 Fremont Street

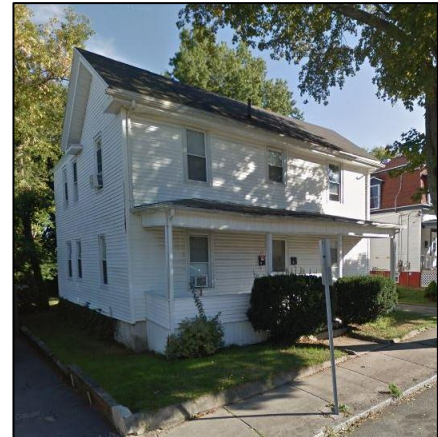
Applicant Name: Yinhai Yang & Mei Bai
Applicant Address: 15 Stevens Street, Winchester, MA 01890
Owner Name: Yinhai Yang & Mei Bai
Owner Address: 15 Stevens Street, Winchester, MA 01890
Alderman: Jesse Clingan

Legal Notice: Applicants & Owners, Yinhai Yang & Mei Bai, seek Special Permits under §4.4.1 of the SZO to alter a non-conforming structure by increasing the GFA by more than 25%, constructing an addition within the left side yard setback. Parking relief under Article 9.*

Dates of Public Hearing(s): November 7, 2018 – ZBA

Top: 17 Fremont Street

Bottom: Aerial view of 17 Fremont Street parcel with rough boundary lines



*Since the publication of this legal ad, it has been determined that parking relief is not needed for this project. The explanation for this determination appears in the staff report below.

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The locus presents a 2 ½-story, two-family residential structure. The structure dates from approximately the 1840s and presents a three bay façade to the street and right and left gable ends. An open farmer's porch extends the length of the front façade. A flat-roofed, two-story addition with two-story, open porches is found on the rear of the main structure. The structure is sited on a 5,949 square-foot lot in the RB zone. Current usable space in the structure is 2,196 square feet.

2. Proposal: The Applicant proposes retaining the original portion of the 1840s residential structure. The existing rear addition and associated rear porches will be removed and a new, larger addition with a flat roof will be constructed. The new addition will be differentiated from the original structure in terms of general style and materials. The number of units will increase from two (2) to three (3). The parcel will be re-landscaped. The triggers for special permitting are as follows:

Left side yard setback

The left façade of the existing structure rests 4.0 feet from the left side yard setback in a zone where a minimum setback of eight (8) feet is required for a 2 ½-story building. The proposed new addition will improve the non-conforming setback by 2.3 feet, increasing the left side yard setback to 6.3 feet. Though improved, this side yard setback is still non-conforming and, therefore, a special permit is needed.

Gross Floor Area (GFA)

Due to the size of the proposed rear addition, the GFA of the structure is increasing by more than 25% from 1,322 square feet to 1,866 square feet. Under Section 4.4.1 of the SZO, an increase in GFA of more than 25% requires a special permit.

Parking

As noted at the beginning of this staff report, parking relief is not needed for this project. Each unit in the existing structure presents three bedrooms. This equates to 2.0 required parking spaces per unit for a total of 4 required parking spaces. The proposed structure will contain three units, each of which will present two bedrooms. This equates to 1.5 parking spaces per unit for a total of 4.5 parking spaces required. The formula to determine the number of parking spaces of relief is as follows:

New parking requirement – Old parking requirement = # of spaces required*

In the case of 17 Fremont Street: $4.5 - 4.0 = .5$ spaces required (no parking relief needed)

*when the number of spaces required is less than one or a negative number, no parking relief is needed.

3. Green Building Practices:

The application states that the project will meet or not exceed stretch code.

4. Comments:

Ward Alderman: Alderman Jesse Clingan held a neighborhood meeting on this proposal on Monday, September 24, 2018 at which the Planner for this case was also present. Key concerns raised by the neighbors at this meeting were the following:

- bury the utilities
- construction vehicles parking on the street

- arborist should evaluate trees along the left rear property line. If these trees are to be removed, new ones should be planted in their stead. If the existing trees are to remain, they should be trimmed.

These concerns were discussed with the project team at the meeting. Some items are normally included as routine conditions for projects such as this one at 17 Fremont. Other items were agreed to by the project team and have been added to the condition set at the end of this staff report.

II. FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMIT (SZO §4.4.1 & Article 9):

In order to grant a special permit, the SPGA must make certain findings and determinations as outlined in §4.4.1 of the SZO. This section of the report goes through §4.4.1 in detail.

1. Information Supplied:

Staff finds that, generally, the information provided by the Applicant with regard to the interior arrangement of the structure and exterior elevations conforms to the requirements of §4.4.1 of the SZO.

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."

Regarding §4.4.1

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."

Gross Floor Area (GFA)

Section 4.4.1 of the SZO requires a special permit when the Gross Floor Area (GFA) of a property increases by more than 25%. The current GFA for 17 Fremont is 1,322 square feet. The proposed GFA is 1,866 square feet, a total increase of 544 square feet.

Left side yard setback

As noted earlier in this staff report, the existing, non-conforming left side yard setback is 4.0 feet (at the front left corner of the house), sliding to 3.8 feet (at the rear left corner of the house) in a zone where a minimum of 8.0 feet is required for a 2 ½-story building. The new rear addition will improve this non-conforming left side yard setback by 2.3 feet, with the left façade of the addition coming to rest at 6.3 feet from the property line. An upward extension of the non-conforming left side yard setback will also be created due to the new addition.

Like the existing rear addition, the proposed rear addition will present a flat roof. Staff finds that a flat, rather than pitched, roof mitigates some of the shadowing and massing impact that a large rear addition could have on abutting properties.

Additional determinations

In addition to the considerations discussed above, Staff does not anticipate that this proposal will increase noises or odors in this neighborhood. Regular construction-related noise can be expected on this site as the project is underway. However, this uptick in noises will be temporary in nature. Staff anticipates that any odors associated with this project will be construction-related and, post-construction, will be in keeping with those typically experienced by residents living in close proximity to each other.

Staff finds that the changes proposed to the existing single family house currently extant on the property will significantly improve the visual appearance of this structure by providing it with a symmetrical, unified façade and upgrading the materials used to skin the building.

Lastly, impacts on municipal water supply and sewer capacity will be examined by the Engineering Department prior to the issuance of any building permit for this project. The Applicant is required to submit full engineering plans to the Engineering Department for their assessment, feedback and approval or denial.

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."*

Staff finds that the proposal is consistent with the purposes of the RB zone which are "[t]o 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." The one-to-three unit proposal is consistent with what is allowed in the RB zone from a site density perspective.

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."*

This property has been in need of revitalization for some time. It is one of the earliest houses remaining in this vicinity. Its current style, scale, and massing are consistent with that of surrounding properties. The proximity of the structure to the public way is in keeping with that of surrounding residential structures, helping to create a consistent visual line down the street.

The Applicant's proposal will refurbish the original portion of the existing structure while allowing for new construction at the rear of the building. The proposed addition will step in from the right and left facades of the existing, original building. The roofline of the addition will be subservient to that of the main building. This staff report includes the condition that Planning Staff must review and approve the materials to be used on the project, including the new addition, prior to the issuance of a building permit.

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

The proposal will not add to the existing stock of affordable housing.

6. SomerVision:

The proposal will improve the visual appearance of an existing property and will add one more dwelling unit to the City's housing stock.

III. RECOMMENDATION

Special Permit under §4.4.1 and Article 9

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 PERMITS** with the conditions that follow.

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 increase the GFA by more than 25% through the construction of a large, rear addition; construction of a rear addition within the non-conforming left side yard setback.	BP/CO	ISD/Plng.									
	<table><tr><th>Date (Stamp Date)</th><th>Submission</th></tr><tr><td>April 23, 2018</td><td>Application submitted to City Clerk’s office.</td></tr><tr><td>August 14, 2018</td><td>Updated plans submitted to OSPCD</td></tr><tr><td>October 31, 2018</td><td>Updated sheets EX-100 and A-100 submitted to OSPCD</td></tr></table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	April 23, 2018	Application submitted to City Clerk’s office.	August 14, 2018	Updated plans submitted to OSPCD	October 31, 2018	Updated sheets EX-100 and A-100 submitted to OSPCD
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Any changes to the approved site plan or elevations that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval. Whether or not a change is <i>de minimis</i> in nature must be determined by the Planning Office.												
Design												
1	All materials including, but not limited to windows, exterior finishes, siding, and similar shall be submitted to, reviewed and approved by Planning Staff prior to the issuance of a building permit.	BP	ISD/Plng									
Construction Impacts												
2	The Applicant shall, at his 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									

3	All construction materials and equipment must be stored <u>on the project site</u> . 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/ISD	
4	The name(s) and contact information of all entities working on the site shall be posted in an area easily-visible from the public way for the passing public to see.	During Construction	ISD	
5	Construction shall be limited to M-F 7:30am – 5:00pm. No weekend/holiday construction or construction-related work shall occur.	During Construction	ISD	
6	Prior to the issuance of a building permit, the Applicant shall submit full engineering plans to the Engineering Department for their review and approval.	BP	ISD/Plng/Eng.	
7	The applicant must comply with the “Policy for new connections to and modifications to existing connections to the municipal sewer and drainage system stormwater management and infiltration/inflow mitigation.” The Applicant shall work with Engineering to meet this condition and provide the required fees/mitigation.	BP	Engineering/ISD	
Public Safety				
8	The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau’s requirements.	CO	FP	
9	All smoke detectors shall be hard-wired.	CO	Fire Prevention / ISD	
10	The building shall be sprinkled.	CO	Fire Prevention/ ISD	
11	All exterior lighting on the site shall be downcast and shall not cast light onto surrounding properties in any fashion.	CO	ISD/Plng.	
12	In accordance with City of Somerville ordinances, no grills, barbeques, chimineas or the like shall be allowed on decks and porches. These requirements shall be written into any rental agreements or condo documents. Proof of the inclusion of this language shall be shown to Planning Staff prior to the issuance of a CO.	CO/Perpetual	ISD/PlngFP	
Site				
13	All plantings and their locations along with all hardscaping materials, design and location for driveways, walkways, fencing, etc., shall first be reviewed and approved by Planning Staff prior to the issuance of a building permit.	BP	ISD/Plng	
14	No vents shall exit on the front façade of the structure. All venting, pipes, conduits and the like shall be painted or wrapped the same color as the exterior of the structure from which they protrude.	CO	ISD/Plng	
15	Utility meters shall not be installed on the front façade of the building.	CO	ISD/Plng	
16	All bituminous material shall be removed from the site.	CO	ISD/Plng	
17	All materials for hardscaping shall be submitted to Planning Staff for their review and approval prior to the issuance of a building permit	BP	ISD/Plng	

18	Vinyl siding, trim, fencing, or decking material shall not be used on this site	CO	ISD/Plng	
19	All mechanicals shall be screened from view from the public way. All screening materials shall be reviewed and approved by Planning Staff prior to installation.	CO	ISD/Plng	
20	The location of mechanicals (such as AC condensers) shall be first reviewed and approved by the Zoning Review Planner prior to their installation.	BP	ISD	
21	Garbage and recycling shall be stored out-of-view from the public way and shall be screened. Screening material and storage location shall first be reviewed and approved by Planning Staff	CO	ISD	
22	An arborist shall be hired by the Applicant to assess the condition of the trees currently extant along the left property line. The arborist shall determine if the trees should be removed. If the trees are removed, at least one native species tree shall be planted for each tree removed. If the trees are to be retained, the arborist shall determine a trimming plan for them. The trimming plan shall be executed by the Applicant prior to the issuance of a CO.	CO	ISD/Plng	
Utilities				
23	Utilities shall be buried if acceptable by reviewing parties within DPW responsible for coordinating and signing off on this work. This is a specific request of abutters and that was agreed to by the Applicant during the neighborhood meeting of September 24, 2018.	CO	DPW/ISD/	
Final Sign-Off				
24	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.	