



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS**  
**MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**  
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MONIQUE BALDWIN, *ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT*

**Case #:** ZBA 2018-163

**Date:** February 6, 2019

**Recommendation:** Conditional Approval

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**PLANNING STAFF REPORT - ZBA**

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**Site:** 527 Mystic Valley  
Parkway

**Applicant Name:** He Zheng  
**Applicant Address:** 14 Cheriton  
Road, Quincy, MA  
**Owner Name:** Jim Lin  
**Owner Address:** 56 School  
Street, Lexington, MA

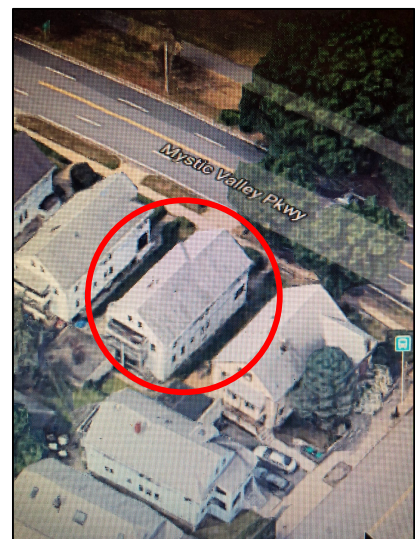
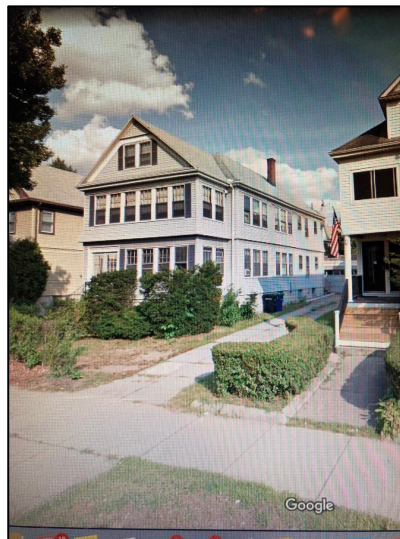
**Alderman:** Katjana Ballantyne

**Legal Notice:** Applicant, He  
Zheng, and Owner, Jim Lin,  
seek a Variance under §5.5\*

of the SZO to create a new non-conformity by increasing the FAR from .69 to .94 by finishing the basement and adding a dormer. Parking relief under Article 9 of the SZO. RA zone. Ward 7.

**Dates of Public Hearing(s):** February 6, 2019 – ZBA

Since this legal ad was published, Staff has worked with the applicant to reduce the scope of their proposal such that the FAR remains under the .75 allowed in this zone. There is no zoning relief needed for an FAR increase.



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**I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

**1. Subject Property:** The locus presents a 4,356 square foot, RA-zoned lot with an existing two-family structure. The parcel fronts on Mystic Valley Parkway near the corner of Boston Avenue.

**2. Proposal:** The Applicant proposes adding a dormer on the left roof plane of the building and creating a bathroom in the basement. The trigger for the special permit is the location of the dormer within the left side yard setback.

**3. Green Building Practices:**

None listed on application

## **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 the information provided by the Applicant 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."*

### **Section 4.4.1 of the 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."*

### **Left side yard setback**

The RA zone requires a left side yard setback of 8 feet. The existing setback in the proposed dormer location is 4.8 feet. The Applicant proposes retaining this 4.8' setback to construct the dormer.

There are six residential properties in this area of Mystic Valley Parkway located between the former Waterworks building and the major cross-thoroughfare of Boston Avenue. None of these six 2 ½-story residential structures presents a shed dormer along major roof planes. That said, in general, the addition of a dormer does not necessarily create a negative impact on the surrounding properties or neighborhood in general.

The dormer will be visible from the left-abutting property, portions of Boston Avenue and Mystic Valley Parkway. Given the placement, style, and size of the dormer (50% or less of the length of the left roof plane to which it is being attached), it is not anticipated that the proposal will add significant, if any, shadowing to the land of the left-abutting property.

There is not expected to be an impact in on-street parking as the bedroom count will not be increasing. Abutters can expect typical noises and odors associated with the construction phase of a project, but the existence of the dormer itself should not contribute to noise and odor in the neighborhood.

Some might argue that the inclusion of another bathroom could put an additional burden on the city sewer system or water supply. Because this project will need to be reviewed by the Engineering Department prior to the granting of a building permit, they will determine if any measures need to be taken by the Applicant to address any impacts. Lastly, as the property is remaining a two-family, staff does not anticipate any change in traffic volume or congestion as a result of this project.

**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 RA zone which are "[t]o 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."

The proposal does not change the nature of the two-family allowed use of the property.

**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."*

Staff has addressed the question of site and area compatibility in a previous section. As a point of note, staff has not conditioned this report to require a full re-landscaping of the property nor the removal of the cement driveway to be replaced with pavers. Though these are typical conditions that are added to other, larger projects, Staff does not find that they are merited here. Conditions placed on a project should meet the test of "rough proportionality." Staff finds that other requirements that we have grown accustomed to adding on other, larger projects, would be out-of-proportion with the relief request put forward in the case of 527-529 Mystic Valley Parkway.

**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 project is the addition of a dormer; there is little-to-no-impact on SomerVision goals.

### **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 is **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 dormer within the left side yard setback.	BP/CO	ISD/PIng.							
	<table><tr><th>Date (Stamp Date)</th><th>Submission</th></tr><tr><td>October 29, 2019</td><td>Application submitted to City Clerk’s office.</td></tr><tr><td>January 21, 2019</td><td>Updated plans (dated December 22, 2018) submitted to OSPCD</td></tr></table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	October 29, 2019	Application submitted to City Clerk’s office.	January 21, 2019	Updated plans (dated December 22, 2018) submitted to OSPCD
	Date (Stamp Date)				Submission					
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January 21, 2019	Updated plans (dated December 22, 2018) submitted to OSPCD									
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.										
Engineering										
2	The Applicant/Owner must obtain a street address for the new unit from the Engineering department prior to the issuance of a building permit.	BP	ISD/Engineering							
3	Prior to the issuance of a building permit, the Applicant shall meet all Engineering Department requirements.	BP	ISD/Eng.							
4	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.”	BP	Engineering/ISD							
	The Applicant shall work with Engineering to meet this condition and provide the required fees/mitigation.									
Design										
5	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/PIng							
Construction Impacts										

6	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	
7	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/ISD	
8	<b><u>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 read.</u></b>	During Construction	ISD	
9	<b><u>Construction shall be limited to <span style="color: red;">M-F 7:30am – 5:00pm.</span> No weekend construction or construction-related work shall occur.</u></b>	During Construction	ISD	
<b>Public Safety</b>				
10	The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau's requirements.	CO	FP	
11	All exterior lighting on the site shall be downcast and shall not cast light onto surrounding properties in any fashion.			
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	
<b>Site</b>				
13	The area of land between the front façade of the house and the sidewalk shall be re-landscaped. A complete landscaping plan that includes plant types, number, and their locations shall be submitted to Planning Staff for their review and approval prior to the issuance of a Building Permit.	BP	ISD/Plng	
<b>Miscellaneous</b>				
14	As-submitted for ZBA approval, the proposed dormer is one (1) inch longer than the limit of 50% of the roof plane. In order to ensure compliance with this criteria, the length of the dormer shall be reduced by six (6) inches in order to ensure that it is less than 50% of the length of the left roof plane to which it is attached. This reduction in inches shall ensure that there is no unintentional overage resulting from the dimensions of building materials used for the dormer. Construction plans submitted to ISD for building permits shall show the dormer 6 inches shorter than presented on the ZBA plan set.	BP	ISD/Plng	
<b>Final Sign-Off</b>				

15	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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