



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Case #: ZBA 2014-02
Date: February 27, 2014
Recommendation: Conditional Approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: 24 Beacon Place

Applicant & Owner Name: GFY Inc
Applicant & Owner Address: PO Box 5531 Beverly Farms, MA 01915
Agent Name: n/a
Agent Address: n/a
Alderman: Maryann Heuston

Legal Notice: Applicant and Owner Ethan Beauvais, seeks a special permit under §4.4.1 to reconstruct a nonconforming 3-family home previously damaged in a fire with modifications including sideyard and front setbacks, increase in nonconforming FAR, height, and window and door alterations. RB Zone. Ward 2.

Dates of Public Hearing: March 5, 2014

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The subject property is a 1,889 square foot lot situated on a private way accessible from Beacon Street. There is a 3 ½ story, 3-family home on the property that is 3,136 gross square feet. Originally, the home was modest in size but at an unknown point, there was a 3 story addition added to the home that extended the footprint into the rear yard. There was a seven alarm fire in July of 2013 that destroyed 2 structures and damaged 6 others including this property. Since the fire, the house has been vacant.





Site photo taken from Beacon Place showing the front of 22 (blue) and 24 (yellow) Beacon Place.



Site photo taken from Calvin Street showing the rear damage to 22 (on left) and 24 (on right) Beacon Place.

2. Proposal: The proposal is to essentially rebuild the structure with a more unified design. It will be 3 ½ stories with a gable roof. There will be a front and rear bay. There will be 3, 2 bedroom units each with a storage area in the basement. The site will be pervious pavers and landscaped area.
3. Green Building Practices: None listed on the application.
4. Comments:

Fire Prevention: Fire Prevention reviewed the plans and have no comments at this time.

Engineering: Engineering was available for a brief review of the project but was not able to do a complete review of the plans/calculations submitted. However, there are several items of concern:

- Site plan does not contain existing and proposed conditions:
 - Missing existing and proposed contour elevations;
 - Missing existing and proposed utility connections including all existing and proposed inverts.
- If existing structure is to be demolished all utilities must be cut and capped at the main.
- When an easement is mentioned on a plan it shall contain reference to the Registry book and page recording.
- Invert elevations shall be provided at all critical points in the drainage system including but not limited to: downspout rain leader inverts at all locations along foundation, invert in to drywell. Inverts shall be included on plan as well as detail views.
- O&M of the pervious pavers shall be included. Once aggregate between pavers is choked with silt the pavers are no longer pervious.

Historic Preservation: The HPC determined the structure not significant at the February X hearing. There is no demolition delay.

Ward Alderman: The Alderman has been contacted and has no comments at this time.

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."

In considering a special permit under §4.4 of the SZO, Staff find that the alterations proposed would not be substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing structure.

3. Nature of Application: Per SZO §4.4.2, "a lawful nonconforming building damaged by fire, explosion, catastrophe, or Act of God such building may rebuild or restore by-right..." The ordinance goes on to list exceptions to by-right construction including increasing any non-conformity or structural change. Therefore, the Applicant is seeking relief under SZO §4.4.1 to alter a nonconforming structure by reconstructing the 3 ½ story building with changes to the setbacks and FAR.

The house has nonconforming setbacks (all sides), height, and FAR. The new design resituates the house on the lot which will make the building more conforming in some aspects but it will not comply with the SZO. The front yard setback will remain the same. The right sideyard setback will be maintained at 3'-1" and the left sideyard setback will increase from 2.7' to 3'-4". The rear setback will increase from 3' to 3'-5" at the narrowest point. The existing bulkhead is no longer needed which will create more of a lawn for tenants. The FAR will increase from 1.3 to 1.4 because existing 1 story bays have been extended to all floors. The building will remain 3 ½ stories. Since this is a new structure, the window and door locations have changed.

There is no parking relief associated with the application. There was 1 parking space that was associated with the building prior to the fire; that space is being maintained.

4. 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 promoting the health, safety, and welfare of the inhabitants of the City of Somerville; to secure safety from fire, panic and other dangers; to encourage the most appropriate use of land throughout the City; and to encourage housing for persons of all income levels.

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.

5. 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."

The surrounding neighborhood is densely developed, comprised of two- and three-family homes. The majority of homes in the area are triple-deckers with flat roofs although Beacon Place is primarily 2 ½ story homes. The neighborhood is in an accessible, walkable, and bikeable location to Beacon Avenue, Harvard University, and Union Square.

The proposed building will be compatible with the neighborhood in design and residential use. The design is more consistent with the neighborhood than the existing structure which has odd bays and a large addition.

There are few impacts to this proposal. The fire in the Summer of 2013 destroyed two properties and damaged 6 others. The two parcels that have experienced a total loss are fenced and have approval to rebuild (ZBA 2013-86 & ZBA 2013-64). Some of the other damaged properties are in various stages of renovation. The proposal will help return the neighborhood to its' condition prior to the fire.

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								
1	Approval is for a special permit under §4.4.1 to reconstruct a nonconforming 3-family home previously damaged in a fire with modifications including sideyard and front setbacks, increase in nonconforming FAR, height, and window and door alterations. 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>January 30, 2014</td> <td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office</td> </tr> <tr> <td>August 23, 2008 (February 27, 2014)</td> <td>Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (Plot Plan)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>February 17, 2014</td> <td>Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (A1-0 Basement Plan, A1-1 1st Floor Plan, A1-2 2nd Floor Plan, A1-3 3rd Floor Plan, A2-1, A2-2, & A2-3 Bldg Elevations, A3-1 Bldg Section, L-1 Site Plan)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	January 30, 2014	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office	August 23, 2008 (February 27, 2014)	Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (Plot Plan)	February 17, 2014	Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (A1-0 Basement Plan, A1-1 1 st Floor Plan, A1-2 2 nd Floor Plan, A1-3 3 rd Floor Plan, A2-1, A2-2, & A2-3 Bldg Elevations, A3-1 Bldg Section, L-1 Site Plan)
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Any changes to the approved site plan or elevations that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval.												
Pre-Construction												
2	The Applicant will be required to demonstrate that the project plans meet the current City of Somerville stormwater policy. Utility, grading, and drainage plans must be submitted to the Engineering Department for review and approval.	BP	Eng.									
3	The Applicant shall develop a demolition plan in consultation with the City of Somerville Inspectional Services Division. Full compliance with proper demolition procedures shall be required, including timely advance notification to abutters of demolition date and timing, good rodent control measures (i.e. rodent baiting), minimization of dust, noise, odor, and debris outfall, and sensitivity to existing landscaping on adjacent sites.	Demolition Permitting	ISD									
4	The Applicant must contact the Engineering Department to coordinate the timeline for cutting or opening the street and/or sidewalk for utility connections or other construction. There is a moratorium on opening streets from November 1st to April 1st and there is a list of streets that have additional opening restrictions.	BP	Eng									
Construction Impacts												

5	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	
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	
Design				
7	Applicant shall provide final material samples for siding, trim, windows, and doors to Planning Staff for review and approval prior to construction.	BP	Plng.	
Site				
8	Landscaping should be installed and maintained in compliance with the American Nurserymen's Association Standards;	Perpetual	Plng. / ISD	
9	Applicant shall provide a more developed landscape plan for Planning Staff review and approval.	BP	Plng	
10	One tree must be planted and maintained according to National Nurseryman's Standards, and in accordance with SZO §10.2.2 and §10.6.2;	CO	Plng.	
Miscellaneous				
11	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				
12	The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau's requirements.	CO	FP	
Final Sign-Off				
13	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.	

