



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Case #: ZBA 2017-85
Date: October 18, 2017
Recommendation: Conditional approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: 11 George Street

Applicant / Owner Name: Elio LoRusso
Applicant / Owner Address: 11 George Street
Alderman: Matthew McLaughlin

Legal Notice: Applicant and Owner, Elio LoRusso, seek a Special Permit under SZO §4.4.1 to alter a nonconforming structure within the required front and left side yard setbacks by converting the roof type from a hip style to a gable roof with shed dormers on either side of the ridge. RB Zone. Ward 1.

Dates of Public Hearing: Zoning Board of Appeals – October 4, 2017

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The subject property is a two-family house on a 5,227 square foot lot. There is also an Ornamental Iron Work Railing Shop in a separate building on the lot.

The subject property has received prior zoning approval in December of 2015 (ZBA 2015-77) to construct an addition on the second floor of the house over the side driveway. The addition would add 230 square feet of living space and a 120 square foot open deck. The proposal also includes enclosing the second floor rear porch that is 184 square feet. The purpose of the proposal is to add living space for the second floor unit. The work approved under Case # ZBA 2015-77 was never constructed.



2. Proposal: The proposal is to reconstruct the roof to change it from a hip style roof to a gable style roof that is designed with trim to give the appearance of dormers on either side of the ridge.
3. Green Building Practices: The Application does not list any green building practices.
4. Comments:

Ward Alderman: Alderman McLaughlin has been contacted and has expressed his support for the proposal.

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."*

The structure is currently nonconforming with respect to the following dimensional requirements: lot area, landscaped area, pervious area, front yard setback, rear yard setback, left side yard setback, and the number of parking spaces.

The proposal will impact the following nonconforming dimensions: front and left side yard setbacks. The current dimensions are 0 feet in the front and 4 feet on the left. The proposal will not change either dimension as the existing exterior walls will not encroach further into the required setbacks. The respective requirement in the district is for the front and left setbacks are 15 feet and 8 feet respectively. 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 one-and two-family dwellings which are only used as residences, which are nonconforming with respect to dimensional requirements, may be enlarged, extended, renovated or altered by special permit granted by the SPGA in accordance with the procedures of Article 5.”

In considering a special permit under §4.4 of the SZO, Staff finds that the alterations proposed would not be substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing structure. The proposal has been designed with setbacks that minimally impact the neighbors and the requirements for lot area per dwelling units, ground coverage, floor area ratio (FAR), and left side yard setback will continue to be conforming to the requirements of the SZO.

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 protect health; to secure safety from fire, panic and other dangers; to provide adequate light and air; to conserve the value of land and buildings; to adequately protect the natural environment; 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 type of buildings on George Street include a two-story and a three-story mansard roof, a few 2.5 story gable roofs, a two story mixed use building at the corner of Broadway, and two three-story flat roofed structures on the corner with Lincoln Avenue.

Impacts of Proposal (Design and Compatibility): The proposed gable has higher knee walls than a typical gable roof and is practically a flat roof. The proposal includes trim work that will visually break up the massing to give the effect that it is a gable roof with a dormer on either side of the ridge. A similar technique is used on Dutch colonial style houses. Staff is recommending a materials review condition to ensure that high quality materials are used.



proposed gable without trim



proposed gable with trim

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

6. **SomerVision Plan:** The proposal will allow for upgrades to the property that are in keeping with the character of the neighborhood.

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 the reconstruction of the roof. 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>August 2, 2017</td> <td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office</td> </tr> <tr> <td>September 7, 2017</td> <td>Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (pages 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>May 29, 2011</td> <td>Plot plan</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | | | | Date (Stamp Date) | Submission | August 2, 2017 | Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office | September 7, 2017 | Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (pages 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6) | May 29, 2011 | Plot plan |
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| May 29, 2011 | Plot plan | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Any changes to the approved (site plan or elevations/use) that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA 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 | 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 | | | | | | | | | |
| 4 | 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 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5 | 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. | | | | | | | | | |
| Site | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6 | Landscaping shall be installed and maintained in compliance with the American Nurserymen's Association Standards; | Perpetual | Plng. / ISD | | | | | | | | | |
| Miscellaneous | | | | | | | | | | | | |

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|-----------------------|--|----------------|-------------|--|
| 7 | 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. | |
| 8 | 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 | | | | |
| 9 | The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau's requirements. | CO | FP | |
| 10 | Per Somerville fire safety regulations, grills, barbecues, chimineas and the like are NOT permitted on decks or porches. | Perpetual | FP/ISD | |
| 11 | 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. | |
| Final Sign-Off | | | | |
| 12 | 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. | |

