



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS**  
**MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**  
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ALEX MELLO, *PLANNER*

Case #: ZBA 2019-81  
Date: ~~October 16, 2019~~ November 6, 2019  
Recommendation: Conditional approval

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**UPDATED PLANNING STAFF REPORT**

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**Site:** 14 Farragut Avenue

**Applicant / Owner Name:** 14 Farragut Avenue, LLC  
**Applicant / Owner Address:** 22 True Road, Salisbury, MA 01952  
**Agent Name:** Adam Dash, Esq.  
**Agent Address:** 48 Grove Street, Suite 304, Somerville, MA 02144  
**City Councilor:** Katjana Ballantyne

*This staff report has been updated. Items which no longer apply have been ~~struck~~ and updated information has been **highlighted in yellow**.*

**Legal Notice:** Applicant and Owner, 14 Farragut Avenue, LLC, seeks a special permit under SZO §4.4.1 to alter a nonconforming structure by constructing a two-story addition within the left side yard setback and greater than 25% of the existing gross floor area to add a third unit to the structure. A special permit for parking relief under SZO 9.13 is also being requested. RB Zone. Ward 7.

**Dates of Public Hearing:** Zoning Board of Appeals – ~~October 16, 2019~~ November 6, 2019

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**I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

- Subject Property:** The subject property consists of one parcel totaling 5,000 square feet that contains a two-family dwelling. It was recently converted as-of-right from a single family and altered with a shed dormer.
- Proposal:** The proposal is to construct a two-story rear addition to make the structure a three-family dwelling. Various site improvements are also proposed.
- Green Building Practices:** The application states that the project will meet the stretch energy code and will include energy star appliances and efficient HVAC systems.



4. Comments:

*City Councilor:* Councilor Ballantyne has held two neighborhood meetings on the proposal. As a result of the neighborhood meetings the proposal includes the following modifications:

- removed the finished space in the basement of the addition
- added an extension space for the furthest-in car to use to access their parking space
- created a snow storage area on site in the back
- created a shadow study, which shows little change from the existing shading and shows that the triple decker to the left shades 14 Farragut quite a bit. Also added shadow studies specific to the triple decker to the left's rear porches, which show little shading impact.
- show the abutting houses on the site plan
- provide more detail on the landscaping plan

**II. FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMIT (SZO §4.4.1 and §9.13):**

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."*

*Article 4: Nonconforming Uses and Structures*

The structure is currently nonconforming with respect to the following dimensional requirements: lot area, front yard setback, and left side yard setback.

~~The proposal will impact the nonconforming dimension of the left side yard. The current dimension is 6'-2" and the proposal to construct an addition that will extend the nonconforming wall within the left side yard backward will maintain the same distance. The requirement is 8 feet for a 2.5-story structure in the RB district.~~

~~The total increase in gross floor area (GFA) will be greater than 25%. The existing GFA is 3,307 s.f and the proposal is to add 1,324 s.f that will increase the GFA to 4,631 s.f, or 40% of the existing structure.~~

The total increase in gross floor area (GFA) will be greater than 25%. The existing GFA is 3,307 s.f and the proposal is to add 1,238 s.f that will increase the GFA to 4,545 s.f, or 37% of the existing structure.

~~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."~~

Section 4.4.1 ~~also~~ states that “alteration, reconstruction, extension or structural change to a nonconforming one- or two-family structure not affecting the nonconforming aspect of the one- or two-family structure and where the alteration, reconstruction, extension, or structural change will comply with all current dimensional requirements of the zoning ordinance, and provided any such alteration, reconstruction, extension or structural change does not increase the Gross Floor Area of the dwelling by more than twenty-five percent (25%).”

This ~~alteration~~ **addition** to a nonconforming structure requires the Applicant to obtain special permits under §4.4.1 of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance (SZO).

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 allows a modest addition to the structure to create an additional dwelling unit. The proposal has been designed with setbacks that minimally impact the neighbors and the requirements for number of dwelling units, lot area per dwelling unit, ground coverage, landscaped area, pervious area, floor area ratio (FAR), building height, rear yard setback, and right side yard setback will continue to be conforming to the requirements of the SZO.

*Article 9: Off-street Parking and Loading*

	<i>Existing</i>		<i>Proposed</i>	
Unit #1	2 BR	1.5 spaces	2 BR	1.5 spaces
Unit #2	2 BR	1.5 spaces	2 BR	1.5 spaces
Unit #3	-	-	2 BR	1.5 spaces
<b>Total</b>	<b>3 spaces</b>		<b>5 spaces (rounded up from 4.5)</b>	

The site currently provides only two parking spaces for the two-family dwelling. Therefore, the site is nonconforming with respect to the number of required off-street parking spaces as three are currently required. For sites with a nonconforming number of parking spaces, SZO 9.4.2 only requires a proposal to provide the number of required spaces for what is being added to the site. The proposal is to add a third dwelling unit, which will increase the number of required parking spaces to five. The proposal is to provide one additional spaces on the site by rearranging the parking spaces in a parallel layout. SZO §9.13 allows for sites with nonconforming parking to apply for a Special Permit to modify parking requirements if the total number of spaces is six or fewer. Relief is being requested from providing the additional one required parking spaces.

The proposed dimensions of the parallel spaces include two spaces that are 8’x18’ and one that is 8’x23’ with an aisle width of 10 feet. The requirements for parallel spaces are 8’x22’ with a 12’ wide aisle. Section 9.13 of the SZO requires the Applicant to seek a Special Permit to the parking design standards.

In considering a special permit under §9.13 of the SZO “the SPGA may grant such a special permit only when consistent with the purposes set forth in Section 9.1, and upon reaching the findings and determinations set forth in Section 5.1.4”. Staff finds that granting the requested Special Permit is consistent with the purposes of SZO §9.1 and will not cause detriment to increased traffic volumes, traffic congestion of queuing of vehicles, changes in the type of traffic, change in traffic patterns and access to the site, reduction in on-street parking, or unsafe conflicts of motor vehicles and pedestrian traffic.

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 protect health; to secure safety from fire, panic and other dangers; to prevent the overcrowding of land; to avoid undue concentration of population; to conserve the value of land and buildings; to encourage the most appropriate use of land throughout the City; 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 subject property is located on the east side of Farragut Avenue close to the intersection with Broadway. Farragut Avenue is a residential street that includes 2.5 and three-story structures. Nearby land uses include single, two-, and three-family dwellings.

*Impacts of Proposal (Design and Compatibility)*: The proposed two-story addition will have a smaller mass than the existing structure. The width of the proposed addition is slightly wider than the existing structure so as to provide differentiation. The increased pervious paver area and landscaping will enhance the aesthetics of the site.

After the first public hearing, the following revisions to the plans were made:

- Pulled the rear addition away from the left property line, making the addition conform to all setback requirements.
- The former rear patio and snow deposit area was replaced with green landscape
- A small snow deposit area next to the trash enclosure remains with a small pervious conextor path to the driveway.

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

6. SomerVision Plan: Complies with the applicable goals, policies and actions of the SomerVision plan, including the following, as appropriate: Preserve and enhance the character of Somerville’s neighborhoods.

<i>SomerVision Summary</i>	<i>Existing</i>	<i>Proposed</i>
<i>Dwelling Units:</i>	2	3

### 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 construction of a rear addition and third unit. 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>July 18, 2019</td> <td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office</td> </tr> <tr> <td>September 26, 2019 (October 8, 2019)</td> <td>Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (<del>T1.1</del>, Z1.1-Z1.4, A0.1, A1.1-A1.3, A2.1-A2.4, and A4.1)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>October 23, 2019</td> <td>Landscape plan</td> </tr> <tr> <td>October 22, 2019</td> <td>A0.1, A1.1-A1.3, A2.1-A2.4, and A4.1</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	July 18, 2019	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office	September 26, 2019 (October 8, 2019)	Modified plans submitted to OSPCD ( <del>T1.1</del> , Z1.1-Z1.4, A0.1, A1.1-A1.3, A2.1-A2.4, and A4.1)	October 23, 2019	Landscape plan	October 22, 2019	A0.1, A1.1-A1.3, A2.1-A2.4, and A4.1
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Any changes to the approved (site plan or elevations/use) that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval.														
<b>Pre-Construction</b>														
2	The Applicant must contact the Engineering Department to obtain a street address prior to a building permit being issued.	BP	Eng.											
3	The proposed basement finished floor elevation shall not be less than is 1 foot above the Seasonal High Ground Water elevation. The seasonal high ground water elevation shall be determined by a Massachusetts certified soil evaluator and stated on a signed soil test pit log.	BP	Eng.											
4	The Applicant shall complete the Site Plan Review Checklist and supply the information to the Engineering Office. The plans must comply with the City's Stormwater Management Policy.	BP	Eng.											
5	The Applicant shall submit a proposed drainage report, stamped by a registered PE in Massachusetts that demonstrates compliance with the City's stormwater policy.	BP	Eng.											
<b>Construction Impacts</b>														
6	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.											
7	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											

8	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	
9	For the convenience of and respect for the neighborhood, during the construction phase, construction work shall not begin prior to 7:30am and shall finish no later than 5pm Monday through Friday. There shall be no construction or construction-related work performed on weekends or holidays.	During Construction	ISD	
<b>Design</b>				
10	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.	
<b>Site</b>				
11	Landscaping shall be installed and maintained in compliance with the American Nurserymen's Association Standards;	Perpetual	Plng. / ISD	
12	There shall be a minimum of one tree for each 1,000 sf of required landscaped area under SZO §10.3.			
<b>Miscellaneous</b>				
13	Gas and electric meters shall not be on the front of the structure. Gas and electric meters may be located on the side of the structure but shall be screened from the street by a hardy, staff approved evergreen planting. Utilities shall not be located adjacent to windows and shall not impact any parking, landscaping, or egress. The provisions of this condition may be waived by staff if the applicant submits a letter from the utility, signed by a utility representative, on utility letterhead, indicating that there is no feasible alternative to placing meters in violation of this condition.	CO	ISD	
14	Electrical conduits on the exterior facades of buildings shall be painted to match the wall material to which they are attached. Conduits are not allowed on the front of any structure.	CO	Plng.	
15	Garbage and recycling locations shall be clearly indicated on site plans. Storage areas shall be inside of the structure or shall be fully screened from view from both the public way and abutters by an appropriate material reviewed and approved by staff. The location shall not impact any parking, landscaping, or egress.	BP	Plng.	
16	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.	
17	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	
<b>Public Safety</b>				



18	The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau's requirements.	CO	FP	
19	Per Somerville fire safety regulations, grills, barbecues, chimineas and the like are NOT permitted on decks or porches.	Perpetual	FP/ISD	
20	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.	
21	The Applicant shall provide notice of intent to strictly comply with applicable State and Federal regulations regarding air quality including without limitation continuous dust control during demolition and construction.	CO	Plng/OS E	
<b>Final Sign-Off</b>				
22	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.	
<b>Miscellaneous cont.</b>				
23	Snow plowed from the development shall be limited to the on-site storage area as shown in plan or removed from the site. Under no circumstance may snow be removed from the property and located on the public sidewalk/street or other private property with permission.	Cont.	ISD.	

