



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS**  
**MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**  
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CHARLOTTE LEIS, *PLANNING INTERN*

**Case #:** ZBA 2018-187  
**Date:** February 20, 2019  
**Recommendation:** Conditional approval

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**PLANNING STAFF REPORT**

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**Site:** 21 Houghton Street

**Applicant / Owner Name:** Raquel A. Schott  
**Applicant / Owner Address:** 21 Houghton Street, Somerville, MA 02143  
**City Councilor:** J.T Scott

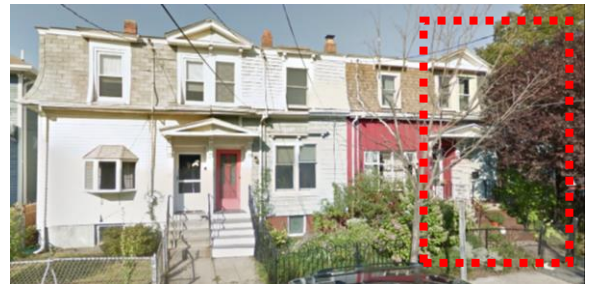
Legal Notice: Applicant / Owner, Raquel A. Schott, seeks a special permit under SZO §4.4.1 to alter a nonconforming structure to construct a rear second-story addition above an existing one-story portion of the building. RB Zone. Ward 2.

Dates of Public Hearing: Zoning Board of Appeals – February 20, 2019

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**I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

1. Subject Property: The subject property consists of one parcel totaling 1,742 square feet that contains a single-family dwelling. The subject property is at the end of a series of four attached two-story row houses.



2. Proposal: The proposal is to construct a rear second-story addition above the existing rear one-story portion of the building. The addition will include a bedroom and a bathroom, which will result in the dwelling becoming a two-bedroom single family dwelling.

3. Green Building Practices: None listed on the application form.

4. Comments:

*City Councilor:* Councilor Scott has been informed of the proposal and has yet to comment as of the publication of this report.

## **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, front yard setback, and left side yard setback.

The proposal will impact the nonconforming dimension of the left side yard setback. The structure is currently on the left property line and the proposal is to construct a second-story addition above the existing one-story portion of the building along the left property line. 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 will allow for the expansion of a small single family dwelling above an existing nonconforming foot print. The proposal has been designed with setbacks that minimally impact the neighbors and the requirements for lot area per dwelling unit, ground coverage, landscaped area, pervious area, floor area ratio (FAR), building height, and right 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 protect health; to secure safety from fire, panic and other dangers; to provide adequate light and air; 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 north side of Houghton Street on the block between Oak Street and Bolton Street. It is located at the end of a series of four two-story row houses. The second property in from the left was added upon to its existing footprint at some point in a much less aesthetically pleasing fashion compared to the proposed.

*Impacts of Proposal (Design and Compatibility)*: The proposed second story will blend with the existing two-story mansard structure in form and materiality to be compatible with rest of the structure and neighborhood.

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.

**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
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1	Approval is for the construction of a rear second-story addition. 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>December 20, 2018</td> <td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office</td> </tr> <tr> <td>December 20, 2018</td> <td>Plans submitted to OSPCD (ZBA 1-7)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	December 20, 2018	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office	December 20, 2018	Plans submitted to OSPCD (ZBA 1-7)
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Any changes to the approved site plan or elevations that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval.										
<b>Construction Impacts</b>										
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	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							
4	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>										
5	Material for siding, trim, windows, and doors must match those of the existing structure.	BP	Plng.							
<b>Site</b>										
6	Landscaping shall be installed and maintained in compliance with the American Nurserymen's Association Standards.	Perpetual	Plng. / ISD							
<b>Miscellaneous</b>										
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							
<b>Public Safety</b>										
9	The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau's requirements.	CO	FP							
10	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.							
<b>Final Sign-Off</b>										

11	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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