



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS**  
**MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**  
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**Case #:** PB 2017-10  
**Date:** May 30, 2017  
**Recommendation:** Conditional Approval

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**PLANNING STAFF REPORT**

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**Site:** 335 Somerville Avenue

**Applicant / Owner Name:** MCM, LLC c/o Liam Mannion  
**Applicant / Owner Address:** 34 Bow Street, Somerville, MA 02143  
**Alderman:** Robert McWatters

Legal Notice: Applicant/Owner, Liam Mannion, seeks a special permit under Section 6.1.22.D.5.a of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance (SZO) to make façade alterations to the existing structure. CCD-55 zone and Arts Overlay District. Ward 3.

Dates of Public Hearing: Planning Board – June 8, 2017

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**I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

1. Subject Property: The subject property is a two-story building with multiple tenants on Somerville Ave in Union Square. Sally O'Brien's is an existing restaurant that occupies the right side of the ground floor of the building. The restaurant has a sign that is attached parallel to the façade that is lit with gooseneck lighting and two 26" diameter blade signs. In January 2012, the Planning Board approved the black awning that sits below the existing signage. The business was also approved by the Board of Alderman to have 16 seats on the sidewalk.



2. Proposal: The proposal is to install bi-fold windows along the façade, install a new sign attached parallel to the façade, add one new gooseneck light fixture, and build out the right side of the façade to be in line with the left side of the façade.

3. Green Building Practices: The application states that the glass will consist of ultraviolet (UV) radiation protection that will reduce heat and air conditioning usage.

4. Comments:

*Ward Alderman*: Alderman McWatters has been contacted but has yet to comment as of the publication of this report.

## II. FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMIT (SZO §6.1.22.D.5.a)

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."*

Alterations to an existing or approved façade other than a one-for-one replacement of signage within the same sign footprint and using the same sign technology shall require a new Special Permit, with findings giving consideration to the Design Guidelines of Section 6.1.22.H. Projects located in both the Arts Overlay District and Corridor Commercial District, the Design Guidelines for the Corridor Commercial District under Section 6.1.22.H shall apply.

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 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 CCD-55 district, which is, "...to promote appropriate infill development along heavily traveled transportation corridors, especially where those corridors meet at named Squares. The district recognizes that such corridors present opportunities for an active mix of uses while also addressing development challenges posed by smaller lots and nearby existing residential development and the need to be accessible by multiple modes of transportation. The major objectives of the districts are to:

1. Encourage active mid-rise commercial and residential uses that contribute to a multi-modal-friendly street;
2. Increase commercial investment in high-profile, accessible areas including retail that is largely neighborhood-serving in multi-tenant, mixed use buildings;
3. Preserve and complement historic structures;
4. Discourage inappropriate auto-oriented, significant trip-generating uses along transit corridors; and,
5. Promote pedestrian and bicycle activity.

The use associated with the façade renovations is Sally O'Brien's, which is a restaurant and lounge. The use is a by-right use and contributes to the multi-modal-friendly theme in Union Square.

The proposal is consistent with the purpose of the Arts Overlay District, §6.1.23, which is, "to encourage the preservation and enhancement of Arts-Related Uses, particularly within Union Square. The district is also intended to preserve and enhance the area as a center for a variety of retail, business services, housing, and office uses and to promote a strong pedestrian character and scale throughout the district."

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 locus is located on Somerville Avenue in the heart of Union Square. It is surrounded by one-, two-, and three-story mixed-use structures with mostly ground floor commercial space.

*Impacts of Proposal (Design and Compatibility):*

6.1.22.H. Design Guidelines for the CCDs. These guidelines are not intended to inhibit design creativity or discourage innovative architectural design solutions. Rather, they provide general standards for building massing, siting and articulation. It is understood that Buildings and Structures may not be able to comply with all of the following Guidelines. For projects located in both the Arts Overlay District and the Corridor Commercial Districts, the following CCD Design Guidelines shall apply.

1. Building(s) should complete the streetwall along the primary street edge(s).
2. Massing and height of buildings should be articulated in a manner compatible with the physical character of the surrounding districts, particularly where a building abuts a residential or historically designated property. Whenever possible, historical variety in the scale, rhythm, and relationship of buildings to pedestrian public ways should be preserved.
3. A transition in height should be established between residential or historically designated properties and new development.
4. Thirty-foot-wide commercial bays with independent entrances onto the street are typical in Somerville and should be repeated in new developments to create visual and pedestrian interest. Varied architecture should be created and flat facades avoided by using recessed or projected entryways, bays, canopies, awnings, residential balconies on 2nd floor or above, and other architectural elements. Non-residential ground floor façades should have a minimum seventy-five (75) percent transparent material, and second floor facades should have a minimum of forty (40) percent transparent material. These openings should provide views into the building and should not be blocked by interior storage, nonartistic displays, or greater than thirty (30) percent internally mounted signage.

5. Exterior building materials for all visible portions of the building should be high quality, durable, and aesthetically appropriate. Particular attention should be paid where properties abut residential districts and historically designated property. Predominant exterior building materials should include an appropriate combination of brick, glass, wood, artistically used metal, stone, or stucco. Precast concrete panels, EIFS-type finishes, and large expanses of glass or corrugated sheet metal are generally discouraged. Bare or painted concrete as the only exterior facade material shall not be allowed.
6. Visible rear and side façades should maintain a similar character to the front façade of the building and the intended character of the surrounding district.
7. Signage and awning design should respect buildings' context (e.g., scale, design, style, colors, materials), be oriented to pedestrians, and be subordinate to the overall building composition. Creative shapes must be carefully designed and coordinated with the overall appearance of the building. The design should also maintain an existing "signage line" and respect the character, scale, and locations of adjacent signs and awnings. Large, interior-lit or back-lit signs or awnings, neon "open" signs, vinyl or plastic materials and overly bright colors are generally discouraged. To add interest and character to the retail environment signs or awnings may convey interesting elements or logos without excessive wording. They should be limited to advertising the business name and its main goods or services, with minimal or no national brand names or logos. Type styles should enhance readability of the sign and provide information simply and legibly. Use awnings to create pleasant shaded spaces in front of a building. Signs and awnings should enhance important architectural details and not conceal or obliterate them.
8. Retail, restaurant and other pedestrian-oriented uses are encouraged, particularly on the Ground Floor. As noted in 6.1.22.E, residential uses shall not be permitted on the Ground Floor street frontage along major streets unless they are located in structures that are historically residential on the Ground Floor.
9. Individual Artist Live/Work Spaces should be designed as closely as possible in accordance with the "Design Guidelines for Artist Housing" produced by the Somerville Arts Council.
10. Residential units should be of varying sizes to accommodate a range of family sizes. Generally dwelling units within a structure should not have an average size of less than 1,000 square feet.
11. A sidewalk depth of at least ten (10) feet from the street curb to building is strongly encouraged for developments fronting major streets.

The subject building completes the streetwall and has a two-story massing that is compatible with the surrounding structures. The primary entrance is oriented to the sidewalk and parking is not part of this proposal. The proposed improvements conform to CCD and Arts Overlay district guidelines in size and material.

5. Adverse environmental impacts: The proposed use, structure or activity will not constitute an adverse impact on the surrounding area resulting from: 1) excessive noise, level of illumination, glare, dust, smoke, or vibration which are higher than levels now experienced from uses permitted in the surrounding area; 2) emission of noxious or hazardous materials or substances; 3) pollution of water ways or ground water; or 4) transmission of signals that interfere with radio or television reception.
6. Vehicular and pedestrian circulation: The circulation patterns for motor vehicles and pedestrians which would result from the use or structure will not result in conditions that create traffic congestion or the potential for traffic accidents on the site or in the surrounding area.

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

The proposal will not create adverse impacts on the stock of existing affordable housing.

8. SomerVision Plan: Complies with the applicable goals, policies and actions of the SomerVision plan, including the following, preserve and enhance the character of Somerville’s neighborhoods, protect and promote a diverse and interesting mix of small-scale businesses in Somerville’s neighborhoods, and offers lively destinations and contributes to Somerville’s unique identity.

**III. RECOMMENDATION**

**Special Permit under §6.1.22.D.5.a**

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 façade renovations. 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>April 13, 2017</td> <td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(May 12, 2017)</td> <td>Facade plans submitted to OSPCD</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	April 13, 2017	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office	(May 12, 2017)	Facade plans submitted to OSPCD
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Any changes to the approved 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							
<b>Public Safety</b>										

4	The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau's requirements.	CO	FP	
<b>Signage/Design</b>				
5	Signage will be limited in size and location to that shown in the elevation diagrams. Applicant shall provide final material samples and/or specifications of windows, signage material, lighting, and façade material to Planning Staff for review and approval prior to the issuance of a building permit.	CO/Cont.	Plng.	
<b>Final Sign-Off</b>				
6	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.	

