



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS**  
**MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**  
**JOSEPH A. CURTATONE**  
**MAYOR**

GEORGE J. PROAKIS  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**PLANNING DIVISION STAFF**

SARAH LEWIS, *DIRECTOR OF PLANNING*  
SARAH WHITE, *PLANNER/PRESERVATION PLANNER*  
ALEX MELLO, *PLANNER*  
MONIQUE BALDWIN, *ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT*  
CHARLOTTE LEIS, *PLANNING INTERN*

Case #: ZBA 2018-151  
Date: ~~November 28, 2018~~ January 23, 2019  
Recommendation: Conditional Approval

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**UPDATED PLANNING STAFF REPORT**

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**Site:** 68 Dimick Street

**Applicant / Owner Name:** David Shepherd  
**Applicant / Owner Address:** P.O. Box 410250, Cambridge, MA 02141  
**City Councilor:** J.T. Scott

Legal Notice: Applicant/Owner, David Shepherd, seeks a special permit per SZO §4.4.1 to alter a nonconforming structure to reconstruct an existing rear deck to include egress stairs. RB Zone. Ward 2.

Applicant/Owner, David Shepherd, seeks a special permit per SZO §4.4.1 to alter a nonconforming three-family structure by reconfiguring the layout of the three units. RB Zone. Ward 2.

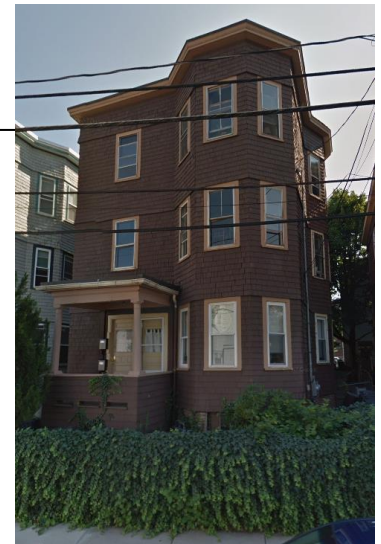
Dates of Public Hearing: Zoning Board of Appeal – ~~November 28, 2018~~ January 23, 2019

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

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**I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

- Subject Property:** The subject property consists of one parcel of land totaling 2,791 square feet of land area. The site contains one three-unit triple-decker with a rear three-story deck.
- Proposal:** ~~The proposal is to reconstruct the existing rear deck to include egress stairs within the existing footprint.~~ The proposal is to reconfigure the layout of the three existing dwelling units by removing an internal stair and adding one bedroom to the first and second floor units.



3. Green Building Practices: The proposal will meet or exceed the stretch energy code.
4. Comments:

~~Ward Alderman: Aldermen Scott has been informed of the proposal and has indicated to Planning Staff that he has no objections.~~ Alderman Scott has been informed of the proposed changes and has yet to officially 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, lot area per dwelling unit, landscaped area, pervious area, floor area ratio (FAR), front yard setback, left and right side yard setbacks, and street frontage.

~~The proposal will impact the following nonconforming dimension of the side yard setback. The current dimension is 3.6 feet and the proposal to reconstruct and alter the deck will maintain the same dimension where 10 feet is required for a triple-decker in the RB district.~~ The proposal will impact the nonconforming dimension of the FAR. The current dimension is 1.13 and the proposal to alter the layout of the units will increase the FAR to 1.18 where 1.0 is required in the RB district. 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 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.”

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 renovations to the layout of the units of the rear decks to include egress stairs without enlarging the footprint of the structure rear decks. The proposal has been designed with setbacks that minimally impact the neighbors and the requirements for ground coverage, building height, and rear 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 conserve the value of land and buildings; 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 southwest side of Dimick Street on the block between Calvin Street and Waldo Avenue. Triple-deckers are the most common building type in the neighborhood.

*Impacts of Proposal (Design and Compatibility):* The proposed alterations **to the floor plans will not an impact on the design of the structure.** ~~will be to the rear deck and will not be visible from the public way.~~

7. Housing Impact: 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, 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 alteration of the <b>floor plans rear decks</b> . 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>October 25, 2018</td> <td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office</td> </tr> <tr> <td><del>October 25, 2018</del> <b>January 16, 2019</b></td> <td>Plans submitted to OSPCD</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	October 25, 2018	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office	<del>October 25, 2018</del> <b>January 16, 2019</b>	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>Design</b>										
4	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>Miscellaneous</b>										
5	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							
6	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.							
7	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>										
8	The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau's requirements.	CO	FP							
9	Per Somerville fire safety regulations, grills, barbecues, chimineas and the like are NOT permitted on decks or porches.	Perpetual	FP/ISD							
<b>Final Sign-Off</b>										

10	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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