



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

**Case #:** ZBA 2019-35  
**Date:** May 15, 2019  
**Recommendation:** Conditional Approval

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**PLANNING STAFF REPORT**

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**Site:** 90 Morrison Avenue

**Applicant Name:** Cindy Siyuan He  
**Applicant Address:** 32 Saint James Avenue, Somerville, MA 02144  
**Owner Name:** Siyuan He Trustee of 90 Morrison Realty Trust  
**Owner Address:** 32 Saint James Avenue, Somerville, MA 02144  
**City Councilor:** Lance Davis

Legal Notice: Applicant, Cindy Siyuan He, and Owner, Siyuan He Trustee of 90 Morrison Realty Trust, seeks a special permit under SZO §4.4.1 to alter a nonconforming structure to construct a dormer on the left side of the roof. RA Zone. Ward 6.

Dates of Public Hearing: Zoning Board of Appeals – May 15, 2019

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**I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

- Subject Property: The subject property is one parcel totaling 4,739 square feet of land area and consists of a 2.5 story, three-family dwelling. The subject property is currently under as-of-right renovations.
- Proposal: The proposal is to construct a dormer on the left side of the ridge.
- Green Building Practices: The application does not list any green building practices.
- Comments:



*City Councilor:* Councilor Davis has been informed of this 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 left side yard setback. The proposal will construct a dormer within the nonconforming left side yard, which is currently 3.4 feet from the property line. The requirement for the district is 8 feet for a 2.5 story structure. The proposed dormer will not encroach any further into the setback than the existing structure. 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 a stair to be brought into compliance with building code requirements for head height. The proposal has been designed with setbacks that minimally impact the neighbors and the requirements for ground coverage, landscape area, pervious area, floor area ratio (FAR), building height, front yard setback, rear yard setback, and right 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 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 RA district, which is, “to establish and preserve quiet neighborhoods of one- and two-family homes, free from other uses except those which are both compatible with and convenient to the residents of such districts.” The existing use is a three-family dwelling, which has existed as such for quite some time and this proposal will not increase the number of units on the site.

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 southern side of Morrison Avenue on the block between Willow Avenue and Cedar Street. Morrison Avenue is mostly a residential and nearby structures includes single, two-, and three-family dwellings. Surrounding buildings are 2.5 and three-stories tall.

*Impacts of Proposal (Design and Compatibility)*: The proposed dormer will be on the rear half of this particular structure and will have minimal visibility from the public way. The size, scale, and location of the proposed dormer are compatible to the existing structure and the surrounding 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 dormer. 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>March 26, 2019</td> <td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office</td> </tr> <tr> <td>May 8, 2019</td> <td>Dormer plan</td> </tr> <tr> <td>June 25, 2019</td> <td>Plot Plan</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	March 26, 2019	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office	May 8, 2019	Dormer plan	June 25, 2019	Plot Plan
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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>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	The siding material and color of the proposed dormer shall be the same as the rest of the structure.	BP	Plng.									
<b>Miscellaneous</b>												
6	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>												
7	The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau's requirements.	CO	FP									
<b>Final Sign-Off</b>												
8	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.									

