



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
JOSEPH A. CURTATONE
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PLANNING DIVISION

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ADAM DUCHESNEAU, *PLANNER*

DAWN PEREIRA, *ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT*

Case #: ZBA 2011-76

Date: October 27, 2011

Recommendation: Conditional Approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: 21 Chetwynd Road

Applicant Name: Chabad of Medford

Applicant Address: 21 Chetwynd Road, Somerville, MA 02144

Property Owner Name: Rabbi Tzvi Backman

Property Owner Address: 21 Chetwynd Road, Somerville, MA 02144

Alderman: Robert Trane

Legal Notice: Applicant the Chabad of Medford and Owner Rabbi Tzvi Backman, seek a special permit to alter a nonconforming structure under SZO §4.4.1 to add a third story rear addition and a dormer on the right side, alter an existing rear porch, and to increase the Floor Area Ratio with the creation of basement office space at an existing rectory/parsonage with two dwellings units. RA zone. Ward 7.

Zoning District/Ward: RA Zone / Ward 7

Zoning Approval Sought: Special Permit under SZO §4.4.1

Date of Application: October 4, 2011

Dates of Public Hearing: Zoning Board of Appeals – **November 2, 2011**

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The subject property is a 4,000 square foot lot with a structure on it that contains a rectory/parsonage for the Chabad of Medford and two dwelling units located near the intersection of Chetwynd Road and Curtis Street. The rectory/parsonage is located on the first floor of the building along with a studio apartment. A four bedroom dwelling unit occupies the second and third floors of the structure where the Rabbi and his family live. The building is 2½ stories tall, not including the basement level, and has 3,554 square feet of habitable space.

2. Proposal: The Applicant is proposing make both exterior and interior modifications to the existing structure that require zoning relief. Most of the exterior renovations will be



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occurring on the rear (east) elevation of the structure. On the first floor of the rear of the building the Applicant will be removing the existing porch and installing a new porch that surrounds the porch stairs that lead into the backyard. This will include fiberglass columns which will cover the existing steel support pieces. There are currently two means of egress on this façade and they will both be relocated. One will be moved to the center of the façade and the second will be relocated around the corner to the right side (southern) façade. On second story of the rear façade, the existing casement windows will be replaced with new, double hung windows, and a third, narrow, double hung window will be installed just to the left. The third floor façade will include a new addition that will expand the living space of the third floor out over the top of the second floor which is directly above the first floor rear porch. This new third floor addition will have two double hung windows and a gambrel roof pitch which will mimic that of the main roof line.

On the first floor of the right side (southern) elevation a new secondary means of egress will be installed and an existing picture window will be removed and replaced with a new double hung window. On the second story, the existing picture window will also be replaced with two double hung windows of different sizes and a third new double hung window will be added just to the right. On the third floor of the right (southern) elevation a small shed dormer with a double hung window will be added to provide the necessary headroom for a new interior stairwell that will provide access between the first, second, and third floors. The alterations on the right (southern) elevation would be as-of-right changes with the exception of the new window furthest to the right on the second floor. No exterior changes are proposed for the front or left side of the existing structure.

Substantial interior renovations would occur along with these exterior changes to the existing structure. The basement level would convert from 1,208 gross square feet of storage space into 966 square feet of office space including the Rabbi's office, an administrative office, a workspace, an open sitting area, and a bathroom. On the first floor, the existing studio apartment, bathroom, and associated kitchen would all be removed and converted into a library which would also allow for the expansion of the existing meeting room space from 337 square feet to 402 square feet. On the second floor, the new interior stairwell would be installed and the kitchen area would be expanded into what is currently the laundry room. On the third floor, the new dormer and addition over the second floor would make room for the new interior stairwell, a new laundry room, the creation of a master bathroom, the addition of a second bathroom, and a reconfigured rear bedroom. When the renovations are completed, the rectory/parsonage use would occupy the basement and first floor and a four bedroom dwelling unit would occupy the second and third floors. The interior changes would increase the habitable space of the structure from 3,554 square feet to 5,054 square feet and increase the building's Floor Area Ratio (FAR) from 0.89 to 1.26.

3. Nature of Application: The structure is currently nonconforming with respect to the lot size, FAR, maximum height, and the minimum front, left, and rear yard setbacks. The existing FAR and rear yard setback nonconformities require the Applicant to obtain a special permit under Somerville Zoning Ordinance (SZO) §4.4.1 to construct the proposed rear addition and make the interior renovations in the basement. The Applicant is seeking a special permit to alter a nonconforming structure to add a third story rear addition and a dormer on the right side, alter an existing rear porch, and to increase the building's FAR with the creation of basement office space at an existing rectory/parsonage with two dwellings units.

4. Surrounding Neighborhood: This is a rectory/parsonage property with two dwellings units located within an RA district. The surrounding area is comprised mostly of two-family dwellings with a few single-, three-, and multi-family dwellings in the area. Most of the buildings in the neighborhood are 2½ stories tall. The campus for Tufts University sits at the end of Chetwynd Road where it intersects Curtis Street.

5. Impacts of Proposal: There shall be minimal impacts to the surrounding neighborhood as the proposed new rear addition, dormer, and office space in the basement would not appear to be detrimental to the immediate abutters or the surrounding area. The existing structure is located 12.5 feet from the rear property line and the proposed project will not change this setback or any of the other existing setbacks at the property. The proposed third floor addition will occur within the existing footprint of the building with other changes to the dwelling replacing window and door openings or occurring on the interior. The character of the house will remain intact, as the Applicant is proposing to match the siding, roofline, and roofing materials of the existing structure. The proposed third floor addition, dormer, new deck, and new windows would not be readily visible from Chetwynd Road as all of the proposed changes are occurring in the rear portion of the structure, and therefore these changes would not greatly impact the streetscape. Additionally, there should only be minimal disruption to the neighborhood or the streetscape during construction, as the construction activities will be confined to the rear and interior of the dwelling. Furthermore, the parking situation at the property will remain the same even though the meeting space on the first floor is being expanded because the studio apartment on the first floor will be removed entirely. These changes will not create the need for any new on-site parking and, in fact, the existing and proposed parking requirements would be the same. The structure will remain a 2½ story rectory/parsonage, with one dwelling unit, instead of two, and will continue to be used for institutional and residential purposes, which is consistent with the surrounding neighborhood. There are therefore no anticipated negative impacts from the proposal.

6. Green Building Practices: The Applicant has indicated that sustainable building products, efficient HVAC systems, wall insulations, and energy efficient windows will all be used in the project.

7. Comments:

Fire Prevention: Have been notified and their comments are reflected in the conditions below.

Ward Alderman: Alderman Trane has been notified but has not yet provided comments.

Historic Preservation: Has been notified but has not yet provided comments.



*Existing Conditions: Picture of structure from the streetscape (top);
Picture of the living space above the first floor rear porch (right).*

II. FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMIT (SZO §4.4.1, 5.1):

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.”



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 third floor addition, dormer, new deck, and new windows will not decrease the existing rear yard setback or any other setbacks at the property for that matter. The character of the house will remain intact, as the Applicant is proposing to match the siding, roofline, and roofing materials of the existing structure. The proposed third floor addition, dormer, new deck, and new windows would not be readily visible from Chetwynd Road as

all of the proposed changes are occurring in the rear portion of the structure, and therefore these changes would not greatly impact the streetscape. Furthermore, the parking situation at the property will remain the same even though the meeting space on the first floor is being expanded because the studio apartment on the first floor will be removed entirely. These changes will not create the need for any new on-site parking and, in fact, the existing and proposed parking requirements would be the same. The structure will remain a 2½ story rectory/parsonage, with one dwelling unit, instead of two, and will continue to be used for institutional and residential purposes, which is consistent with the surrounding neighborhood

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 promoting “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 conserve the value of land and buildings; to preserve the historical and architectural resources of the City; to encourage the most appropriate use of land throughout the City; to encourage housing for persons of all income levels; and to preserve and increase the amenities of the municipality.”

The proposal is also consistent with the purpose of the district (6.1.1. RA - Residence Districts), 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.”

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.”

The project is compatible with the characteristics of the surrounding neighborhood. The existing structure is located 12.5 feet from the rear property line and the proposed project will not change this setback or any of the other existing setbacks at the property. The proposed third floor addition will occur within the existing footprint of the building with other changes to the dwelling replacing window and door openings or occurring on the interior. The character of the house will remain intact as the Applicant is proposing to match the siding, roofline, and roofing materials of the existing structure. Only a portion of the addition, the new dormer, windows, and door on the right side (southern) elevation would be somewhat visible from Chetwynd Road, but these changes would not greatly impact the streetscape. The use of the property will remain the same, with the exception of the removal of the studio apartment, and therefore there will be one less dwelling unit at the property. With the removal of this unit and the expansion of the meeting space on the first floor, the parking situation at the property will remain the same. The structure will remain a 2½ story rectory/parsonage, with one dwelling unit, instead of two, and will continue to be used for institutional and residential purposes, which is consistent with the surrounding neighborhood.

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.

No adverse environmental impacts are anticipated from this project. No new noise, glare, smoke, vibration, nor emissions of noxious materials, nor pollution of water ways or ground water, nor transmission of signals that interfere with radio or television reception are anticipated as part of the

proposal. The structure will remain a 2½ story rectory/parsonage, with one dwelling unit, instead of two, and will continue to be used for institutional and residential purposes.

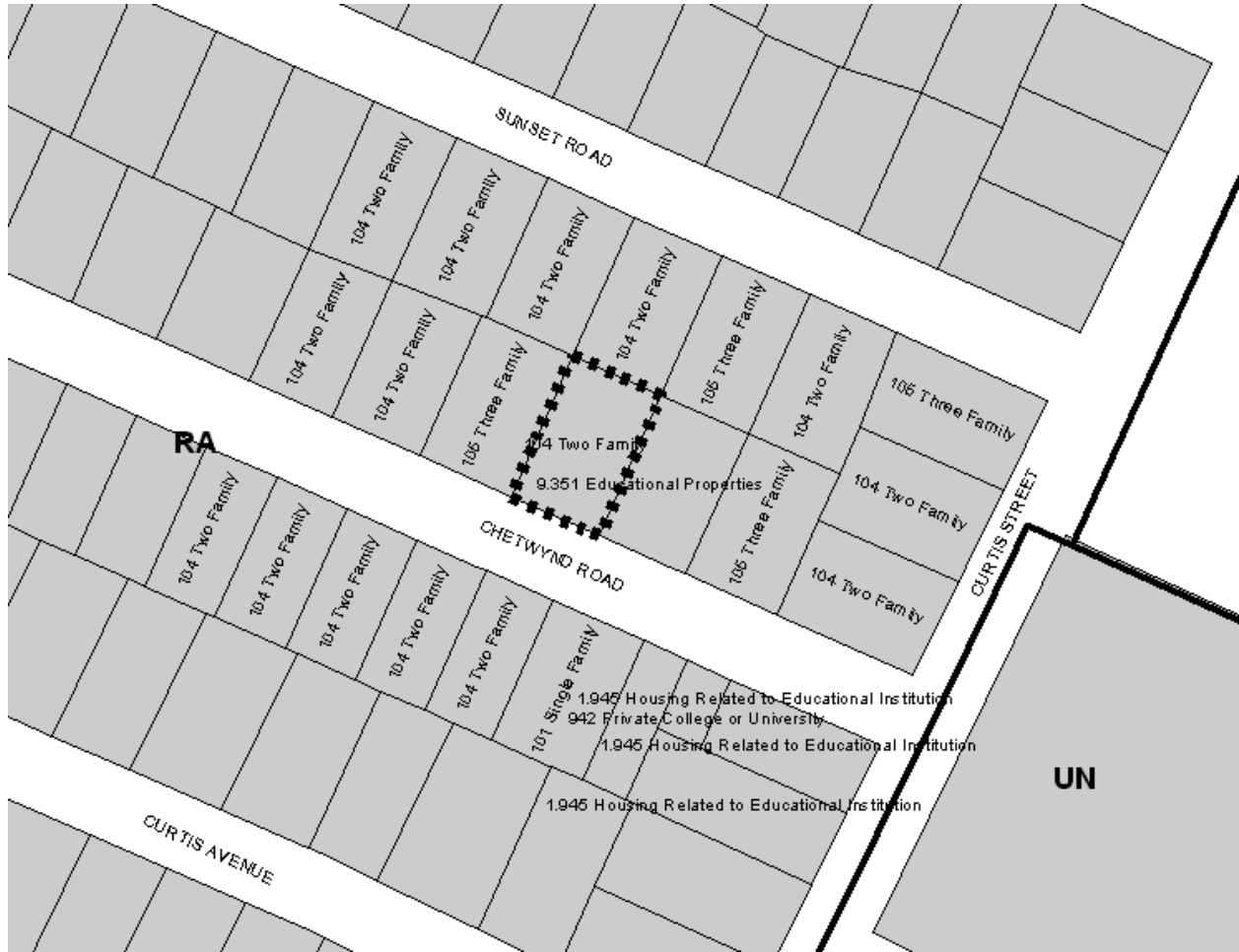
III. RECOMMENDATION

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	<p>Approval is to alter a nonconforming structure under SZO §4.4.1 to add a third story rear addition and a dormer on the right side, alter an existing rear porch, and to increase the Floor Area Ratio with the creation of basement office space at an existing rectory/parsonage. This approval is based upon the following application materials and the plans submitted by the Applicant:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="269 569 907 1045"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="269 569 591 604">Date (Stamp Date)</th> <th data-bbox="591 569 907 604">Submission</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="269 604 591 705">(October 4, 2011)</td> <td data-bbox="591 604 907 705">Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="269 705 591 806">September 21, 2011 (October 14, 2011)</td> <td data-bbox="591 705 907 806">Plot Plan</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="269 806 591 1045">October 14, 2011 (October 26, 2011)</td> <td data-bbox="591 806 907 1045">Existing and Proposed Floor Plans and Elevations (T-1.00, X-1.00 – X-1.03, X-2.01 – X-2.04, A-1.00 – A-1.03, and A-2.01 – A-2.04)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Any changes to the approved site plan or elevations that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval.</p>	Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	(October 4, 2011)	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office	September 21, 2011 (October 14, 2011)	Plot Plan	October 14, 2011 (October 26, 2011)	Existing and Proposed Floor Plans and Elevations (T-1.00, X-1.00 – X-1.03, X-2.01 – X-2.04, A-1.00 – A-1.03, and A-2.01 – A-2.04)	BP/CO	ISD/PIng.	
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2	The Applicant shall update the fire alarm system to be code compliant.	CO	FP									
3	New siding type and color, roofing, trim, and materials of the addition and dormer shall match those of the existing structure.	CO	PIng.									
4	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	PIng.									



21 Chetwynd Road