



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

*PLANNING DIVISION*

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GEORGE PROAKIS, *PLANNING DIRECTOR*

LORI MASSA, *SENIOR PLANNER*

ADAM DUCHESNEAU, *PLANNER*

DAWN PEREIRA, *ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT*

**Case #:** ZBA 2011-67

**Date:** September 15, 2011

**Recommendation:** Conditional Approval

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**PLANNING STAFF REPORT**

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**Site:** 48 Newbury St

**Applicant Name:** Gerald Britton & Grace Kessenich

**Applicant Address:** 48 Newbury St, Somerville, MA 02144

**Property Owner Name:** Gerald Britton & Grace Kessenich

**Property Owner Address:** 48 Newbury St, Somerville, MA 02144

**Agent Name:** None

**Alderman:** Robert Trane

Legal Notice: Applicant and Owner Gerald Britton & Grace Kessenich seek a special permit to alter a nonconforming structure under SZO §4.4.1 to construct a covered porch and stairs for a new front entryway and add an approx 100 ft addition to the 3<sup>rd</sup> story with a hipped roof and rear balcony on an existing single-family residence.

Zoning District/Ward: RB / 7

Zoning Approval Sought: Special Permit SZO §4.4.1

Date of Application: August 23, 2011

Dates of Public Hearing: Zoning Board of Appeals September 21, 2011

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**I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

1. Subject Property: The subject property is a 4063 sf lot with a 2 ½ story single-family house situated on it. There is a masonry garage in the rear yard. As noted in the attached memo from the Historic Preservation Staff the house is the oldest house on the street, constructed sometime between 1874 and 1884. It has been altered many times over the years including enclosing the front porch, altering windows and adding vinyl siding. The building retains its original form but the original details were removed.



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*48 Newbury St – front and rear*



2. Proposal: The proposal includes renovating several aspects of the existing house. The front door will be relocated from the side of the enclosed porch to the front of the house. There will be a new covered porch and stairs. A balcony will be added on top of the enclosed porch and one of the windows on the second story will become a door to access the balcony. The window in the half story will be made slightly smaller. An approximately 100 sf addition will be constructed in the top story of the house by building out over an existing two-story portion of the house. The addition will have a hipped roof. The addition will provide headroom for stairs and a hallway that will provide access to a bedroom, bathroom and a new balcony on the rear of the house. There will be a total of three bedrooms in the house. Renovations to the back of the house include adding windows and doors, a balcony on the existing single-story portion of the house, and a deck where an existing patio is located. The house will be clad with light colored hardieplank. The decks and balconies will be made of composite materials.

Part of the existing concrete driveway will be replaced with grass and a portion of a concrete patio will be replaced with a deck.

3. Nature of Application: The structure is currently nonconforming with respect to the following dimensional requirements: minimum lot size, front yard setback, left side yard setback and street frontage.

The proposal will alter the structure along the nonconforming 2.5 feet side yard by raising its height from approximately 20 feet to 27 feet. The front entry porch will increase the nonconforming front yard from 6.8 feet to 4 feet and the minimum in the district is 10 feet. The addition of a railing for a balcony in the front yard is also a change to this nonconforming aspect of the building. These nonconformities require the Applicant to obtain a special permit under §4.4.1 of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance (SZO).

The remaining dimensions of the proposed alterations are conforming to the dimensional requirements of the zoning ordinance.

4. Surrounding Neighborhood: The surrounding area is comprised of mostly 2 ½ story one- and two-family homes.
5. Impacts of Proposal: The renovations to the structure will improve its overall appearance and preserve the form of the house. The house will remain a single-family home. There are no anticipated negative impacts from the proposal.
6. Green Building Practices: The following are green building measures that will be taken at the site:
  - Deep energy retrofit with 4 additional inches of insulation on the walls and roof to reduce the energy use of the home
  - Well sealed home with heat recovery ventilation
  - Light colored siding (hardieplank)
  - New high efficiency windows
  - New mechanical systems that correspond with the new reduced heating and cooling requirements
  - Decks/balconies will be made from composite materials
  - Using existing wood flooring – may install sustainable cork flooring
  - New windows on the south side of the house to take advantage of day lighting
  - Removing some hardscaping, improving drainage
  - Plan to use plants and potentially espalier fruit trees in side beds to reduce cooling needs from summer sun and to eat the fruit
  - Continue to use programmable thermostats
  - Continue to use CFLS
  - Outdoor lighting to face down to reduce light pollution
  - Organic gardening to continue
  - Tie rain barrel(s) to gutter system
  - Recycling of construction materials were possible
7. Comments:

*Fire Prevention*: A code compliant fire alarm system will be required.

*Ward Alderman*: Has been contacted but has not yet provided comments.

*Historic Preservation*: Comments are attached. Overall the proposed alterations will be an improvement on this much changed older building and will be in harmony with the prevailing character of the neighborhood.

*Lights and Lines*: The Applicant shall install a new exterior light fixture and a new exterior electrical receptacle for the deck space in compliance with the National Electrical Code 2011.

## **II. FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMIT (SZO §4.4.1 and 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 find that the alterations proposed would not be substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing structure. The new front entryway will be an improvement to the current entryway, which is on the side of the enclosed porch and not as visible and inviting as the new entryway will be. The windows on the house will have a more traditional pattern. The addition on the side of the house with the hipped roof keeps the basic form of the house intact and the hipped rooflines integrates into the gable roof in a positive way. No windows are proposed for the northeast side of the house because the house is too close to the lot line to install windows. The adjacent house is close enough to the subject house that the wall without windows will not be very visible.

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 conserving the value of land and buildings and the purpose of the Residence A district in renovating this house that will remain a single-family home.

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."

As discussed in finding 2 above, the alterations to the structure will improve the appearance of the existing house. Also, the renovations include several green building practices that will reduce the overall energy consumption and rainwater runoff from the site.

### **III. RECOMMENDATION**

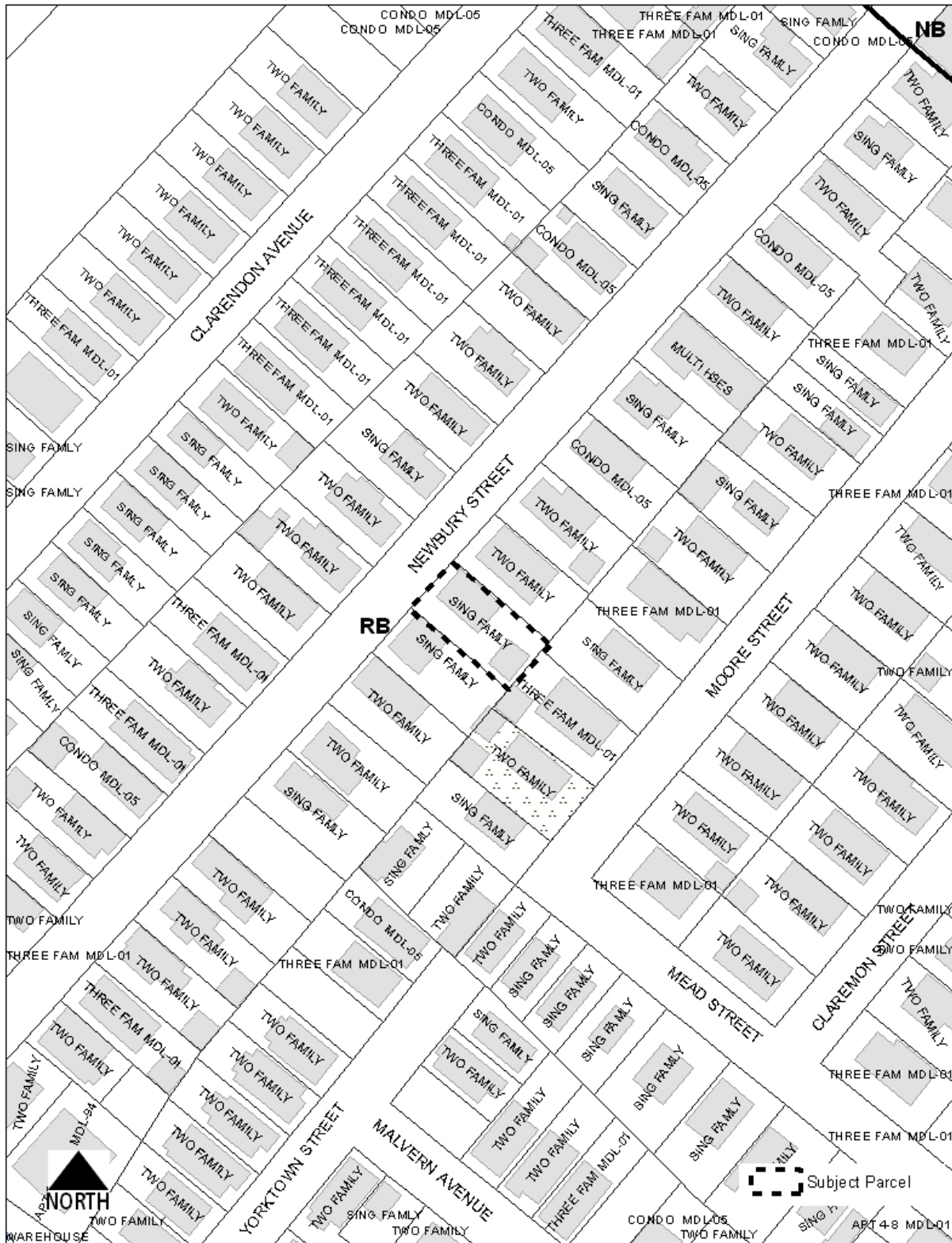
#### **Special Permit under §4.4.1 and 5.1**

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 renovate the nonconforming single-family house including constructing a covered porch and stairs for a new front entryway, adding a balcony to the front of the house and adding an approx 100 ft addition to the 3<sup>rd</sup> story with a hipped roof and a rear balcony. This approval is based upon the following application materials and the plans submitted by the Applicant:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Date (Stamp Date)</th> <th>Submission</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>8/23/11</td> <td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office</td> </tr> <tr> <td>6/22/11</td> <td>Plans submitted to OSPCD (Plot Plan)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>8/19/11</td> <td>Revised plans submitted to OSPCD (0 Site Plan, 1: 1st fl plan; 2: 2<sup>nd</sup> fl plan; 3: 3<sup>rd</sup> fl plan; 4: NW Elevation, 5: SW Elevation, 6: SE Elevation, 7: NE Elevation)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Any changes to the approved elevations that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval.</p>	Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	8/23/11	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office	6/22/11	Plans submitted to OSPCD (Plot Plan)	8/19/11	Revised plans submitted to OSPCD (0 Site Plan, 1: 1st fl plan; 2: 2 <sup>nd</sup> fl plan; 3: 3 <sup>rd</sup> fl plan; 4: NW Elevation, 5: SW Elevation, 6: SE Elevation, 7: NE Elevation)	BP/CO	ISD/PIng.	
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2	The Applicant shall install a code compliant fire alarm system.	CO	FP									
3	The Applicant shall install one new exterior light fixture and one new exterior electrical receptacle for the each of the new outdoor deck spaces.	Final Sign Off	Wiring Inspector									
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.									





To: Planning Division  
From: Kristi Chase, Preservation Planner, and  
Brandon Wilson, Executive Director  
Date: September 14, 2011  
RE: Staff Comments and Recommendations

**HPC 11.94 – 48 Newbury Street**

Applicant: Grace Kessenich

Historic and Architectural Significance

Located on a residential street near Teele Square, this is one of the oldest houses on the street, constructed sometime between 1874 and 1884. It has been altered many times over the years. The only Building Permits found were recorded for work performed in 1955 and 1966, but their exact nature was not described in the database. Inspection shows an enclosed porch, altered windows and vinyl siding. The building retains its original form but not much else.



Comments and Recommendations

Relocated front steps will lead to the side hall entry plan doorway and new mudroom which will have its own architectural character rather than being subsumed in the enclosed porch. A proposed new second floor door replacing a window will be centered on a new second floor porch. The proposed new fenestration will be more regular overall.

The proposed hip roofed dormer will be located on the north side of the building. The important fundamental massing will be retained and emphasized. The dormer style integrates the wing of the building making the addition part of the whole. The design of the proposed dormer is in keeping with the original structure. Alterations to the openings on the façade and the enclosed front porch will bring the building back to a more traditional appearance with a different range of modern interpretations.

Overall the proposed alterations will be an improvement on this much changed older building and will be in harmony with the prevailing character of the neighborhood.