



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

MICHAEL F. GLAVIN  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**PLANNING DIVISION STAFF**

GEORGE PROAKIS, *DIRECTOR OF PLANNING*  
LORI MASSA, *SENIOR PLANNER*  
DAN BARTMAN, *SENIOR PLANNER*  
AMIE HAYES, *PLANNER*  
MELISSA WOODS, *PLANNER*  
DAWN PEREIRA, *ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT*

**Case #:** ZBA 2013-50  
**Date:** August 1, 2013  
**Recommendation:** Conditional Approval

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**PLANNING STAFF REPORT**

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**Site: 11-13 North Street**

**Applicant Name:** Nunsin Bosse  
**Applicant Address:** 9 High Lander Terrace, Winchester, MA 01890  
**Property Owner Name:** Somerville Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses, Inc.  
**Property Owner Address:** 11 North Street, Somerville, MA 02144  
**Agent Name:** Alan C. Nelson PLS  
**Agent Address:** P.O.Box 139, Burlington, MA 01803  
**Alderman:** Robert Trane

Legal Notice: Applicant, Nunsin Bosse, and Owner, Somerville Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses, Inc., seek a Special Permit under SZO §4.4.1 to alter windows and doors of the front and rear façades, and to modify the roof of a nonconforming structure. RB zone. Ward 7.

Zoning District/Ward: RB / Ward 7

Zoning Approval Sought: Special Permit under SZO §4.4.1

Date of Application: July 9, 2013

Dates of Public Hearing: Zoning Board of Appeals – **Wednesday, August 7, 2013**

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**I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

1. Subject Property: The subject property is a 10,800 square foot parcel in a Residence B district, just north of Broadway, near Alewife Brook Parkway. The residential neighborhood that surrounds this parcel is predominantly two-family dwellings; however, multi-family housing is located across the street and abutting to the south. In addition, North Street Playground is also located directly across the street. The parcel is composed of a single-story institutional structure that serves as the place of worship for



Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses. The structure has a net floor area of 5,890 square feet with a 0.55 floor area ratio and nine parking stalls are located to the right of the structure.

There has been no prior zoning relief.

2. Proposal: Applicant, Nunsin Bosse, and Owner, Somerville Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses, Inc., propose to alter windows and doors on the front and rear façades, and to modify the roof.

The primary façade currently has five narrow windows on the first floor and four sets of paired windows on the raised basement. The left side has an entry porch with paired doors. The proposal would enlarge the five first floor windows, add shutters, and remove one basement window from the far left side. The entry porch would be reconstructed to be slightly larger with columns on both corners and a pitched roof overhang.

The rear façade currently has five narrow windows on the first floor and a ramp with access to a door near the south end of the structure. Four windows would be enlarged to be consistent with those on the front façade. A new ADA ramp would be relocated toward the north end of the structure and a new door would be installed on the south end of the structure, where the existing fifth window would be removed. The existing ramp would be removed and the door would become accessible by stairs.

The roof will also be reconfigured as part of this project. Currently, the building height is 21.6 feet with a flat roof and overhanging eaves. The proposal requests to modify the roof to create a hip roof that is 24.4 feet in height. The new roof will be sheathed in CertainTeed shingles in a color called Slate Blende. The rear façade of the roof will have a center balcony for mechanical equipment, which will not be accessible from the interior. The structure will become sheathed in CertainTeed fiber cement clapboards in a natural clay color.



*11-13 North Street: Front and left side façades*



*11-13 North Street: Rear and right side façades*

3. Nature of Application: The structure is currently nonconforming with regard to landscape and pervious areas as well as the front yard setback. In accordance with the Somerville Zoning Ordinance (SZO) §4.4.1, a nonconforming structure may be altered through Special Permit approval. Therefore, the proposal to alter windows and doors on the front and rear façades, and to modify the roof requires Special Permit approval.

4. Surrounding Neighborhood: The subject property is located in a Residence B district just north of Broadway, near Alewife Brook Parkway. The residential neighborhood that surrounds this parcel is predominantly two-family dwellings; however, multi-family housing is located across the street and abutting to the south. In addition, North Street Playground is also located directly across the street.

5. Impacts of Proposal: The proposal to alter windows, doors and the roof will not be detrimental to the structure.

The new ADA accessible entrance and ramp will be compliant with current building codes regarding handicap accessibility. Modifications to windows, doors and the roof will provide more energy efficiency as well as natural light and ventilation. The proposal will likely be a positive impact on the surrounding neighborhood as the proposed modifications will enhance the structure as well as the overall streetscape.

6. Green Building Practices: There are no green building practices indicated on the application.

7. Comments:

*Fire Prevention:* Has been contacted but has not yet provided comments.

*Wiring Inspection:* An email to Staff dated 7/22/2013 explains that as long as the proposal concerns only the windows and roof, there are no electrical concerns.

*Ward Alderman:* Alderman Trane contacted Staff via email 7/18/2013 to inquire about the height of the proposed roof. Staff explained that the new roof would be an additional 3 feet in height.

## 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."

In considering a special permit under §4.4 or of the SZO, Staff find that the alterations proposed would not be substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing structure. The new ADA accessible entrance and ramp will be compliant with current building codes regarding handicap accessibility. Modifications to windows, doors and the roof will provide more energy efficiency as well as natural light and ventilation and, overall, will enhance the structure.

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 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 Residence B district, §6.1.2, 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."

The proposal to alter windows, doors, the roof, and to install an ADA compliant ramp is compatible with the site and the surrounding neighborhood. Overall, the proposed modifications will enhance the building and streetscape. In a further attempt to enhance this portion of the streetscape, Staff has conditioned that the portion of chain link fence located directly in front of the building be removed.

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.

The circulation patterns for motor vehicles and pedestrians would not change as a result of this proposal.

**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	Approval is for a Special Permit to alter windows and doors of the front and rear façades, and to modify the roof of a nonconforming structure. This approval is based upon the following application materials and the plans submitted by the Applicant:	BP/CO	ISD/PIng.											
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Date (Stamp Date)</th> <th>Submission</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>(July 9, 2013)</td> <td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office</td> </tr> <tr> <td>July 5, 2013 (July 30, 2013)</td> <td>Plot/site plan submitted to OSPCD</td> </tr> <tr> <td>July 15, 2013 (July 30, 2013)</td> <td>Elevations &amp; floor plans submitted to OSPCD (West, East, North &amp; South elevations; Main Level &amp; Basement plans; RCP Main Level &amp; Basement plans; Fire Alarm Main Level &amp; Basement plans; Details 1 &amp; 2; and Roof Trusses)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(July 30, 2013)</td> <td>Renderings submitted to OSPCD (Front &amp; Rear)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	(July 9, 2013)	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office	July 5, 2013 (July 30, 2013)	Plot/site plan submitted to OSPCD	July 15, 2013 (July 30, 2013)	Elevations & floor plans submitted to OSPCD (West, East, North & South elevations; Main Level & Basement plans; RCP Main Level & Basement plans; Fire Alarm Main Level & Basement plans; Details 1 & 2; and Roof Trusses)	(July 30, 2013)	Renderings submitted to OSPCD (Front & Rear)
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Any changes to the approved elevations that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval.														
<b>Public Safety</b>														

2	The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau's requirements.	CO	FP	
3	To the extent possible, all exterior lighting must be confined to the subject property, cast light downward and must not intrude, interfere or spill onto neighboring properties.	CO	Plng.	
<b>Design</b>				
4	The portion of chain link fence directly in front of the building shall be removed.	CO	Plng.	
<b>Final Sign-Off</b>				
5	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.	

11-13 North Street

