



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Case #: PB 2011-22

Date: January 12, 2012

Recommendation: Conditional Approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: 335 Somerville Ave

Applicant Name: Liam Mannion

Applicant Address: 34 Bow St, Somerville MA

Property Owner Name: Carlo Hansen

Property Owner Address: 7 Poe Rd, Billerica MA 01821

Agent Name: none

Alderman: Thomas Taylor

Legal Notice: Applicant, Liam Mannion & Owner, Carlo Hansen, seeks a Special Permit under SZO §6.1.22.D.5 to install signage/awning for an existing restaurant. CCD 55 zone. Ward 1.

Zoning District/Ward: CCD 55 / 2

Zoning Approval Sought: Special Permit SZO §6.1.22.D.5

Date of Application: Dec 20, 2011

Dates of Public Hearing: Planning Board Jan 19, 2012

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The subject property is a two-story building with multiple tenants on Somerville Ave in Union Square. Sally O'Brien's is an existing restaurant that occupies the right side of the ground floor of the building. The restaurant has a sign that is attached parallel to the façade that is lit with gooseneck lighting. Union Square Family Health is located on the left side of the ground floor and also has a sign that is parallel to the building. There is an awning with a rounded top at the entrance to the building.

2. Proposal: The proposal is to install an awning across the storefront (29 feet 8 inches) that will project a maximum of 8 feet. The municipal code requires that awnings be 7 feet or greater in height above a sidewalk and prevents awnings from projecting beyond the line of the sidewalk.



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The awning will be retractable. It will sit below the existing signage and match the colors of the existing signage. The restaurant name as well as the words “pub” and “grille” will be on the valance section of the awning.

The purpose of the awning is to bring visibility to the restaurant. The awning at the main entrance to the building partially blocks view of the restaurant sign. The awning will also provide cover for the outdoor seating that was recently approved by the Board of Alderman. The business was approved to have 16 seats on the sidewalk.



3. Nature of Application: The property is located in the Corridor Commercial District 55 (CCD 55). Alterations to an existing or approved façade other than a one-for-one replacement require a special permit under SZO §6.1.22.D.5 with findings giving consideration to the Design Guidelines of SZO §6.1.22.H.

4. Surrounding Neighborhood: The surrounding area is comprised of a mix of uses in Union Square. The adjacent health center has a sign affixed parallel to the building and the liquor store to the right has a recessed entrance with a sign affixed parallel to the building above the door.

5. Impacts of Proposal: The awning will keep the appearance of the attractive signage that currently exists for the restaurant, give visibility to the restaurant and provide cover for outdoor seating. The only

negative impact is how the new awning will look next to the existing curved awning at the entrance to the building.

6. Green Building Practices: None listed on the application form.

7. Comments:

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

II. FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMIT (SZO §5.1 & §6.1.22.D.5):

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 sign design complies with the design guideline for signage in the CCD (§6.1.22.H).

1. The proposed awning will add some interest to the street wall along this area.
2. The massing and height of the two story structure will not change.
3. The height of the building is two stories. The project design is not proposing to alter the height of the existing structure and a transition to residential or historically designated properties is not applicable.
4. The Applicant will be maintaining the existing width of the building, which is approximately 30 feet, along with maintaining a separate entrance for the restaurant along the sidewalk. The storefront currently meets the guideline which states that there should be 75% transparent material on the ground floor. The existing windows will not be blocked by interior storage, displays, or signage. The guideline limits windows from being blocked by more than 30%.
5. The material of the awning will be a Sunbrella canvas fabric, which are quality materials as encouraged in the guidelines for the Corridor Commercial District.
6. The side and rear facades of the building are not proposed to change.
7. The proposed signage design respects the building's context by placing the awning just below the existing signage in the signage band that typically holds awnings for similar buildings. The awning will not conceal the architectural details of the building. The sign is legible and does not have excessive wording. The awning will also provide shade and shelter to pedestrians and for the future outdoor seating. The color of the sign is compatible with the existing signage on the building and does not clash or compete with other signage in the area. The curved awning at the main entrance to the building will abut the proposed awning. This is not an ideal situation; however, the tenant expressed a potential for the main entrance awning changing in the future, which would improve the look of the entire building. Since the awnings are not physically incompatible, the proposed awning will

improve the appearance of the building, and there is a potential for the other awning to be replaced to update the appearance of the entire building, Staff are supportive of the change.

8. This awning/signage proposal will improve visibility for a restaurant and attractiveness for outdoor seating; which is an encouraged ground floor use in this district.

9./10. Artist Live/Work Spaces and residential unit size do not relate to this proposal.

11. The Applicant is not proposing to change the width of the sidewalk as part of this proposal as the building location and depth of the façade from the sidewalk is not changing.

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 providing for and maintain the uniquely integrated structure of uses in the City and the purpose of the CCD by promoting an active mix of uses with structures that complement the historic structures in the area.

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 sign would be compatible with the building's design as explained in finding two.

III. RECOMMENDATION

Special Permit under §5.1 & §6.1.22.D.5

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 the installation of new awning/signage on the building. 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>Dec 20, 2011</td> <td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Jul 8, 2010</td> <td>Plans submitted to OSPCD (awning plan)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	Dec 20, 2011	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office	Jul 8, 2010	Plans submitted to OSPCD (awning plan)
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Any changes to the approved elevations that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval.										
2	The awning shall be 7 feet or greater over any sidewalk and shall not extending beyond the line of the sidewalk.	Installation / Perpetual	ISD							
3	The Applicant shall at his expense replace any existing equipment (including, but not limited to street sign poles, signs, traffic signal poles, traffic signal equipment, wheel chair ramps, granite curbing, etc) and the entire sidewalk immediately abutting the subject property if damaged as a result of construction activity. All new sidewalks and driveways must be constructed to DPW standard.	CO	DPW							
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	Plng.							

