



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS**  
**MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**  
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**Case #:** ZBA 2013-01  
**Date:** February 14, 2013  
**Recommendation:** Conditional Approval

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**PLANNING STAFF REPORT**

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**Site:** 5-7 Wilson Avenue

**Applicant Name:** Christopher Antonelli  
**Applicant Address:** 7 Wilson Avenue, Somerville, MA 02145  
**Property Owner Name:** Christopher Antonelli, Somerville, MA 02145  
**Property Owner Address:** 7 Wilson Avenue, Somerville, MA 02145  
**Agent Name:** Scott Evans  
**Agent Address:** 15 Edmands Street, Somerville, MA 02145  
**Alderman:** Sean O'Donovan / 5

Legal Notice: Applicant and Owner, Christopher Antonelli, seeks a Special Permit to alter a nonconforming structure under SZO §4.4.1 to modify an existing rear addition which includes heightening the rear gable and constructing a shed dormer on the left side of an existing two-family residence. RB Zone. Ward 5.

Zoning District/Ward: RB / 5

Zoning Approval Sought: Special Permit §4.4.1

Date of Application: January 8, 2013

Dates of Public Hearing: Zoning Board of Appeals – **Wednesday, February 20, 2013**

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**I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

1. Subject Property: The subject property is a two-family dwelling on a 2,825 square foot lot located in the Ball Square neighborhood. The dwelling has 3,210 square feet of living space with a 1.14 floor area ratio. The structure is 2½ stories in height with a gable roof and various additions located on the left side and at the rear of the building. Located in a Residence B district, this property abuts a two- and



three-family residential property on either side and a commercial concrete building is located immediately behind the subject property.

The subject structure has received no prior zoning relief.



*5-7 Wilson Avenue: (left) front and left side elevations; (right) rear and left side elevations*

2. Proposal: Applicant and Owner, Christopher Antonelli, seeks a Special Permit to alter a nonconforming structure to modify an existing rear addition which includes heightening the rear gable and constructing a shed dormer on the left side of an existing two-family residence.

The subject building has several additions located on the left side and at the rear of the structure as well as first and second story rear decks. A 2½ story gable addition is located directly behind the main massing, and has a two story enclosure on the left side. There is also a two story projecting bay addition located on the left side elevation.

The Applicant proposes to raise the rear gable to be consistent in height with the main gable roof and to construct a shed dormer on the left side rear roof place. The dormer would be 13'-6" in length and would be located almost two feet from the gable edge with two small 2' wide windows. Heightening the gable and creating a dormer will enlarge the net floor area of the half-story by approximately 100 feet. The additional interior space will create room for a bathroom and enlarge the rear bedroom. Staff has requested for the Applicant to move the dormer toward the center of the roof to create three feet between the rear gable edge and the dormer, which maintains a bedroom width of 7'; however, the Applicant prefers the proposed dormer location in order to make best use of the additional habitable space.

Modifications to the rear addition also include demolishing the existing first and second story rear decks which would be replaced by an exterior staircase with access to the first and second stories. The existing first story deck extends 6" beyond the rear property line; however, the proposed exterior stair would be less detrimental to the adjoining property as there would be 1'-10.5" between the property line and the

proposed staircase. Additionally, a door, centrally located on the rear façade, will be relocated to the left corner, where the proposed exterior stair will have access to the first floor.

3. Nature of Application: The structure is currently nonconforming with respect to several dimensional requirements including minimum lot size, right side yard setback and rear yard setback. In accordance with the Somerville Zoning Ordinance §4.4.1, the alteration of a nonconformity requires Special Permit approval. Currently, the right side yard setback varies from 1.8' to 4.4' at the rear of the lot. There is currently no rear yard setback as the existing first story deck extends 6" beyond the property line, abutting the adjacent commercial building. Therefore, the proposal to modify the existing rear addition requires Special Permit approval.

4. Surrounding Neighborhood: The subject property is located in an RB district within the larger Ball Square neighborhood. The property is close in proximity to Trum Field and the City of Medford. This parcel is surrounded by single, two- and three-family residential properties and a commercial concrete building is located immediately behind the subject property.

5. Impacts of Proposal: The proposed modifications and expansion of the rear half-story will not be detrimental to the structure.

The design to modify the rear gable addition would result in a more cohesive and visually appealing structure since the expansion of the rear half-story will integrate some of additions under one continuous roofline. Additionally, demolishing the existing rear decks and constructing an exterior egress will be less detrimental to the adjacent structure since there will be 1'-10.5" between the staircase and the property line.

Additionally, the proposed modifications to the rear gable addition are part of a larger renovation. The Applicant will be altering the interior floor plan as well as updating the heating system. New siding and a new roof will also be installed, simultaneous to the proposed project.

6. Green Building Practices: The Applicant has not identified any green building practices.

7. Comments:

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

*Ward Alderman:* Alderman O'Donovan was contacted and recommended to Staff via email on 2/5/13 to suggest to the Applicant that he share the building plans with neighbors prior to the hearing. Staff then suggested to the Applicant that he share the building plans with neighbors prior to the hearing.

## **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 of the SZO, Staff find that the alterations proposed would not be substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing structure. The design to modify the rear gable addition would result in a more cohesive and visually appealing structure since the expansion of the rear half-story will integrate some of additions under one continuous roofline. There are no character defining features located at the rear of the building; however, moving the dormer to create three feet between the gable edge and the dormer will more appropriately retain the original gable. Additionally, demolishing the existing rear decks and constructing an exterior stair will be less detrimental to the adjacent structure since there will be 1'-10.5" between the staircase and the property line, and the existing first story deck extends six inches beyond the property line.

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 preserve the historical and architectural resources of the City; and to encourage housing for persons of all income levels..

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 modify an existing rear addition which includes heightening the rear gable and constructing a shed dormer on the left side has been designed to be compatible with the built and unbuilt surrounding area. While moving the dormer slightly will better retain the rear gable edge of the roof, the design to modify the rear gable addition would result in a more cohesive and visually appealing structure since the expansion of the rear half-story will integrate some of additions under one continuous roofline.

Additionally, the proposed modifications to the rear gable addition are part of a larger renovation. The Applicant will be altering the interior floor plan as well as updating the heating system. New siding and a new roof will also be installed, simultaneous to the proposed project. The combined visual impact of the combined alterations will enhance the Wilson Avenue streetscape and help revitalize the neighborhood.

### **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 a nonconforming structure under SZO §4.4.1 to modify an existing rear addition which includes heightening the rear gable and constructing a shed dormer on the left side of an existing two-family residence. This approval is based upon the following application materials and the plans submitted by the Applicant:	BP/CO	ISD/Plng.		
	<b>Date (Stamp Date)</b>				<b>Submission</b>
	January 8, 2013				Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office
	March 28, 2012 (February 13, 2013)				Plot plan submitted to OSPCD
	November 20, 2012 (February 13, 2013)	Plans submitted to OSPCD (A-1.0, D-1.1, A-1.1, A-1.2 & A-1.3)			
	Any changes to the approved elevations that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval.				
2	An exterior light and electrical receptacle is required for the first (or all) level of the porch and an electrical receptacle is required for the second level (if there is no access to the ground);	Final sign off	Wiring Inspector		
3	The proposed dormer shall be moved to create three feet between the gable edge and the dormer;	BP	Plng.		
4	New siding type and color, roofing, trim, and materials of the addition shall match or be complimentary to the rest of the existing structure;	Final sign off	Plng		
5	The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau's requirements.	CO	FP		
6	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.		

5-7 Wilson Avenue

