



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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PLANNING DIVISION

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Case #: ZBA 2014-109
Site: 50 Harrison Street
Date of Decision: December 10, 2014
Decision: Petition Approved with Conditions
Date Filed with City Clerk: December 18, 2014

ZBA DECISION

Applicant Name:	Alex Van Praagh
Applicant Address:	95 Antrim Street, Cambridge, MA 02139
Property Owner Name:	Alex Van Praagh
Property Owner Address:	95 Antrim Street, Cambridge, MA 02139
Agent Name:	N/A

Legal Notice: Applicant and Owner, Alex Van Praagh, seeks a Special Permit per SZO §4.4.1 to alter a nonconforming structure by enlarging basement windows.

<u>Zoning District/Ward:</u>	RB zone/Ward 2
<u>Zoning Approval Sought:</u>	§4.4.1
<u>Date of Application:</u>	November 6, 2014
<u>Date(s) of Public Hearing:</u>	December 10, 2014
<u>Date of Decision:</u>	December 10, 2014
<u>Vote:</u>	5-0

Appeal #ZBA 2014-109 was opened before the Zoning Board of Appeals at Somerville City Hall on December 10, 2014. Notice of the Public Hearing was given to persons affected and was published and posted, all as required by M.G.L. c. 40A, sec. 11 and the Somerville Zoning Ordinance. After one hearing of deliberation, the Zoning Board of Appeals took a vote.



DESCRIPTION:

The proposal is to alter the windows on the nonconforming side and front yard on the basement level to accommodate living area in the basement and to add a dormer on the nonconforming side yard.

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 Board 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 subject property is nonconforming on the front and side yards. Per SZO §4.4.1 lawfully existing one- and two-family dwellings which are nonconforming with respect to dimensional requirements may be enlarged, expanded, renovated, or altered by Special Permit. The dormer is 7'-2" from the property line and 8'-0" is required. The main body of the house is 2'-3" from the property line. The front setback is 7.1' from the property line and 15' is required.

There are other by-right alterations being done to the property including a rear egress, side porch, and window changes on the driveway side of the home. The finished basement will increase the FAR to .9 when 1.0 is allowed in the district.

In considering a special permit under §4.4 of the SZO, the Board finds that the alterations proposed would not be substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing 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 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 district, 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 surrounding neighborhood is a mix of one-, two-, and three-family homes near Beacon Street on the Cambridge/Somerville line. The area has close proximity to the services at Washington and Beacon Streets and the neighborhoods beyond by walking, biking, and public transit.

There are little to no impacts of the proposal. The front window will be landscaped to give privacy from the street. The dormer is modest and held significantly back from the side lot line.



5. Housing Impact: *Will not create adverse impacts on the stock of existing affordable housing.*

It can be assumed that the condition of this property made the existing units affordable. However, the renovation will increase the bedroom count and make the units more desirable for families which will expand affordable housing options for families.

6. SomerVision Plan: *Complies with the applicable goals, policies and actions of the SomerVision plan, including the following, as appropriate: Preserve and enhance the character of Somerville’s neighborhoods, transform key opportunity areas, preserve and expand an integrated, balanced mix of safe, affordable and environmentally sound rental and homeownership units for households of all sizes and types from diverse social and economic groups; and, make Somerville a regional employment center with a mix of diverse and high-quality jobs. The areas in the SomerVision map that are designated as enhance and transform should most significantly contribute towards the SomerVision goals that are outlined in the table below. The areas marked as conserve are not expected to greatly increase the figures in the table since these areas are not intended for large scale change.*

<u>SomerVision Summary</u>	<i>Existing</i>	<i>Proposed</i>
<i>Dwelling Units:</i>	2	2
<i>Affordable Units:</i>	0	0

The proposal will not significantly affect the SomerVision tracking numbers but will allow for modest changes in an area to be conserved.



DECISION:

Present and sitting were Members Orsola Susan Fontano, Richard Rossetti, Danielle Evans, Elaine Severino and Josh Safdie with Herbert Foster absent. Upon making the above findings, Susan Fontano made a motion to approve the request for a Special Permit. Richard Rossetti seconded the motion. Wherefore the Zoning Board of Appeals voted **5-0** to **APPROVE** the request. In addition the following conditions were attached:

#	Condition	Timeframe for Compliance	Verified (initial)	Notes						
1	Approval is for the new and enlarged basement windows and a dormer. 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>November 6, 2014</td> <td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office</td> </tr> <tr> <td>December 4, 2014</td> <td>Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (Plot Plan, A1.0 – Basement Plan, A1.3 – Third Floor Plan, A1.4 – Roof Plan, A3.3 – Side Elev, A3.4 – Rear Elev)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	November 6, 2014	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office	December 4, 2014	Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (Plot Plan, A1.0 – Basement Plan, A1.3 – Third Floor Plan, A1.4 – Roof Plan, A3.3 – Side Elev, A3.4 – Rear Elev)
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Any changes to the approved site plan or elevations that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval.										
Construction Impacts										
2	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							
3	All construction materials and equipment must be stored onsite. If occupancy of the street layout is required, such occupancy must be in conformance with the requirements of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices and the prior approval of the Traffic and Parking Department must be obtained.	During Construction	T&P							
Site										
4	Landscaping should be installed and maintained in compliance with the American Nurserymen's Association Standards;	Perpetual	Plng. / ISD							
5	Applicant will supply landscape screening to provide privacy for the front basement window.	CO	Plng							
Miscellaneous										



6	The Applicant, its successors and/or assigns, shall be responsible for maintenance of both the building and all on-site amenities, including landscaping, fencing, lighting, parking areas and storm water systems, ensuring they are clean, well kept and in good and safe working order.	Cont.	ISD	
Public Safety				
7	The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau's requirements.	CO	FP	
Final Sign-Off				
8	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.	



Attest, by the Zoning Board of Appeals:

Orsola Susan Fontano
Richard Rossetti
Danielle Evans
Elaine Severino
Josh Safdie (Alt.)

Attest, by the Administrative Assistant:

Dawn M. Pereira

Copies of this decision are filed in the Somerville City Clerk's office.
Copies of all plans referred to in this decision and a detailed record of the
SPGA proceedings are filed in the Somerville Planning Dept.

CLERK'S CERTIFICATE

Any appeal of this decision must be filed within twenty days after the date this notice is filed in the Office of the City Clerk, and must be filed in accordance with M.G.L. c. 40A, sec. 17 and SZO sec. 3.2.10.

In accordance with M.G.L. c. 40 A, sec. 11, no variance shall take effect until a copy of the decision bearing the certification of the City Clerk that twenty days have elapsed after the decision has been filed in the Office of the City Clerk and no appeal has been filed, or that if such appeal has been filed, that it has been dismissed or denied, is recorded in the Middlesex County Registry of Deeds and indexed in the grantor index under the name of the owner of record or is recorded and noted on the owner's certificate of title.

Also in accordance with M.G.L. c. 40 A, sec. 11, a special permit shall not take effect until a copy of the decision bearing the certification of the City Clerk that twenty days have elapsed after the decision has been filed in the Office of the City Clerk and either that no appeal has been filed or the appeal has been filed within such time, is recorded in the Middlesex County Registry of Deeds and indexed in the grantor index under the name of the owner of record or is recorded and noted on the owner's certificate of title. The person exercising rights under a duly appealed Special Permit does so at risk that a court will reverse the permit and that any construction performed under the permit may be ordered undone.

The owner or applicant shall pay the fee for recording or registering. Furthermore, a permit from the Division of Inspectional Services shall be required in order to proceed with any project favorably decided upon by this decision, and upon request, the Applicant shall present evidence to the Building Official that this decision is properly recorded.

This is a true and correct copy of the decision filed on _____ in the Office of the City Clerk, and twenty days have elapsed, and

FOR VARIANCE(S) WITHIN

_____ there have been no appeals filed in the Office of the City Clerk, or
_____ any appeals that were filed have been finally dismissed or denied.

FOR SPECIAL PERMIT(S) WITHIN

_____ there have been no appeals filed in the Office of the City Clerk, or
_____ there has been an appeal filed.

Signed _____ City Clerk Date _____

