

Date: 17 November 2015

To: Acton Zoning Board of Appeals

Re: Notice of Public Hearing for Special Permit

Subject: Application for Special Permit to allow two non-resident employees for Victoria Mohar at 112 Nonset Path

Hearing: December 7, 2015 at 8:00 pm in Room 126 at Town Hall

Dear Members of the Zoning Board,

At the December 7, Town Hall Meeting, my application for a special permit to allow two non-resident employees at my home office at 112 Nonset Path shall be reviewed at 8:00 pm. In order to give you some background information previous to the hearing, I have summarized a description of my business and outlined some specific details.

My business, currently named MoharDesign, is my own interior design consulting firm that I started in our former house in Somerville in 1999. My design background and expertise is in selecting furniture and interior finishes for educational institutions. I had worked for years as a designer with architecture firms; then with the birth of my son, I started freelancing and shifted those skills into consultant services. Thanks to computer technology I could work at a highly professional level – right from my house. In time, my project load and income increased, so I leased a small office in Somerville where I employed several employees.

The recession (2008-10) took a toll on the design industry and after struggling to hang on, I eventually ran out of work. After depleting my financial resources and laying off my staff, I had to give up the Somerville office. It was a crushing and pivotal moment for me, because I couldn't afford to 'go out of business'. That's when my husband and I got the idea for me to work out of our Acton house. That was October 2011 - I applied for the Business Certificate with the Town of Acton. It was just me working, no staff and so it was quick and easy to get the certificate.

I started to finally get busier and asked a designer friend, Susan if she wanted to help me with work so that she could gain more experience. I didn't yet have enough cash flow to pay her, but she willingly came in a few times a week to help me out. And then I got very busy and really needed her help and started paying her. That was about the end of 2012, early 2013. At the end of last year, I also took on Samantha, an interior design student as a paid intern.

I was not specifically aware of Acton by-laws about employees, and really had not thought about it until I got the renewal letter for my Business Certificate where the question was asked about employees. That's when I contacted Town Hall and was instructed to apply for the special permit.

That is a synopsis of how my business got going at the house in Acton. Following is a bulleted outline that gives further details:

1. What is Nature of the business:

- I am a consultant to several Boston architecture firms that design education buildings for mostly higher education, and some K-12. Our interior design work is different than residential interior design or decoration – it's very technical, with emphasis on durability, ergonomics, safety and sustainability. A large amount of our work is done on computers.
- Clients don't come to our office – we always present at either their facility or the architects' office.

- Our consultant focus is on selecting appropriate contract furniture and interior finishes for these buildings.
2. Where is the business conducted and where are the employees located when at work?
 - The office is located in the garage space - I work in this space along with Susan and Samantha. From the exterior of the house, the garage looks exactly like a garage with no signage or type of indication that there is an office inside.
 3. What are the employees' jobs and what do they bring to the business?
 - Susan has become an expert at producing the furniture specifications on a special software program. I rely on her entirely to do this work. She was an accountant in her former career and applies those skills to creating furniture budgets for me as well. Additionally she researches furniture and finishes to use in our projects. She also assembles presentations on PowerPoint and joins me at most of our presentations to the client.
 - Samantha, is still very new to the profession, but went to a vocational high school (similar to Minuteman Tech) and learned AutoCAD – which she is very adept at and has skills that are far better than mine. She spends the majority of her time doing computer drawings, but also helps to assemble presentation boards for our clients.
 4. Where do the employees park their vehicles?
 - Employees park their cars in our driveway. We have a large driveway with enough space for 6 vehicles. I have made the rule for them not to park on the street – especially in the winter.
 5. For how long have you had employees working at your home?
 - Susan has been employed for about 3 years and Samantha for 1 year.
 6. What is the frequency and what are the weekly hours of employees' presence at the house?
 - Susan is a mom with special needs children and Samantha is a student – so we keep schedules flexible. Typical schedule is 4 days a week for each, about 30 to 32 hours each. They come in between 9 and 9:30 and leave between 5 and 5:30.
 - Sometimes, workload goes down and everyone takes some time off.

Last thoughts about why I am requesting this special permit:

- I've considered leasing an office space again, but the volatility of the business and sustaining cash flow keeps me from doing that. By working at home I can always work, be near my kids, and if work decreases I don't have to get out of a lease situation or 'go out of business'. With the special permit I can maintain help like Susan and Samantha who provide special skills and extra hands.
- I am very friendly with my neighbors and they know about my business and have always been supportive. With the upcoming hearing on my mind, I asked them if they have any concerns about me having employees here. They said absolutely not, so long as my people don't park on the street when there is snow. In fact, some said they rather like me working out of the house and having people around during the day because it keeps the neighborhood populated and safer in general.