

MBTA COMMUNITIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

TOWN OF BELMONT MA

MEETING MINUTES

APRIL 3, 2024

**RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA**

DATE: April 16, 2024

TIME: 1:56 PM

Present: Thayer Donham, Roy Epstein, Rachel Heller, , Drew Nealon, Julie Wu

Absent: Paul Joy, Patrick Murphy

Town Staff: Christopher Ryan

Meeting was held in person and in a remote format via Zoom.

The meeting began at 7:30 pm.

The March 20, 2024 Meeting Minutes were approved.

Discussion of the Report

Roy Epstein reported that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the draft report that Chris Ryan had prepared and to discuss whether the committee wanted to have a final public forum.

Chris Ryan stated that he views the report as a resource for the Planning Board. He reviewed the Table of Contents to show all the topics and information included in the report.

Roy Epstein suggested that all information be provided and the report should be clear that based on all the work to date we have a good proposal and it may be the only proposal.

Rachel Heller responded that was right. We have a good proposal. She noted that Utile is currently running their own version of the compliance model to ensure that the numbers shown are correct and meet the State requirements.

Chris Ryan noted that they are using the underlying assumptions currently included in the MAPC model. Chris Ryan continued to review the outline and organization of the report.

Julie Wu asked if Chris Rayn had added the information about how this zoning will allow the Belmont Housing Authority to be more competitive for grant funding? Rachel Heller said she would make sure that it is in the text.

Roy Epstein noted that the whole plan is based on trying to allow development opportunities to occur. He noted that there is a minor change on the map that had been suggested by Chris Ryan which was to change 7 Claflin from Subdistrict 2 to MMU. This modification was not made to the final map and he was hopeful that the committee would be ok with it.

Chris Ryan said he hoped the Planning Board would use the report plus the knowledge of the committee as resources going forward.

Rachel Heller noted that the Planning Board will need the committee to do some public outreach for them in order to meet the schedule. Roy Epstein indicated that there was no need to dissolve the committee and that the committee can do presentations.

Chris Ryan brought up the schedule and said that the MMU portion of the map needs to be sent to the state once Utile has reviewed it. He thinks that neighborhood meetings could be helpful and when he worked in Harvard MA, he prepared one page information sheets on specific topics which might be helpful here. The website is up-to-date, and he will look at ways to connect it to the Planning Board webpage. He also noted that Utile's scope is limited, and he will need to use their time wisely. Roy Epstein requested that Utile plan to attend a Selectboard meeting in August/September to present their work.

Chris Ryan said that he hopes when the Planning Board opens the Public Hearing on the 3A zoning that the new zoning language will be completed. It can be in draft form but it has to have all the components.

Rachel Heller noted that when the application is submitted to the state for the 90-day review the Planning Board does not have work to do on it other than getting public comments.

Roy Epstein indicated that it is not clear what needs to be done after the 90-day review. If it comes back from the state with comments, then the Planning Board will need to meet about it. Chris Ryan said that if the comments are substantive then there will need to be a hearing process. Roy Epstein noted that it is likely there will be comments which would move the schedule past the September date tentatively reserved for a Special Town Meeting. Could November work? We will need to be prepared and pushing it off seems necessary.

Rachel Heller observed that it would be better for everyone to push the Special Town Meeting until November because it allows more time for comments and to do public outreach on the 3A zoning.

Roy Epstein agreed to ask the Town Clerk if November 18 or 20th could work for the Special Town Meeting date. Chris Ryan noted there were other zoning items for that meeting. Thayer Donham responded that based on her experience with Town Meeting it would be too difficult for Town Meeting to add any zoning changes other than the 3A zoning and noted that just 3A zoning will likely take a full meeting.

Chris Ryan reported that he had attended a Webinar on 3A given by some land use lawyers who recommended no other changes to the bylaw other than 3A. He noted that he should get Town Counsel to review the bylaw now to check whether there are items that conflict with 3A.

Rachel Heller said that the site plan review cannot be overly burdensome per the state guidance.

Roy Epstein noted that the Town Counsel will need time to review 3A before it gets sent to the state so we should revise the timeline. Chris Ryan agreed to revise the timeline and redistribute.

Roy Epstein moved that the committee co-chairs work with the town planner to finalize the report and update the schedule. The committee members in attendance voted yes unanimously.

Public Forum

Rachel Heller emphasized that it is important to share the committee's work with the public possibly after Utile has done their analysis. Chris Ryan asked whether there will be public attendance if the map and report have already been handed over to the Planning Board. Thayer Donham noted that the Planning Board did not want to have a joint meeting with the committee.

The committee agreed that a Public Forum on April 11, 2024 from 7 to 8:30 to share the map and the findings of the committee would be an important part of the public communication process. Chris Ryan will reserve a location.

Roy Epstein reiterated that the committee will not be disbanded, and Chris Ryan agreed to update the website to reflect that the committee had passed the torch to the Planning Board.

Next Meeting: **PUBLIC FORUM**, Wednesday April 11th from 7:00 to 8:30 pm.
Location TBD.

Public Comment

Doug Koplow, Precinct 6, thanked Chris Ryan for jumping into the 3A process as a new Town Planning Director. He noted that he is looking forward to seeing both the economic analysis and the sensitivity analysis that are underway. He was interested in the fact that the new 3A zoning cannot be more restrictive than the underlying zoning.

John Beatty, Precinct 2, recommended that the committee and the town work on selling the plan. He wondered why the Planning Board was not in attendance and Roy Epstein noted that with open meeting law if they all attended it would need to be noticed. John Beatty recommended that the committee think in sales terms and sell to the community. He noticed that the Planning Board was dismissive of the committee's work but felt that the committee had worked hard to balance all aspects of this complicated law and do the best for Belmont. Rachel Heller replied that his concern was heard and validated.

Lisa Pargoli asked when the environmental impact studies were going to be done. Chris Ryan responded that the fiscal impact study had kicked off and would be complete in August. Each project will be reviewed for its environmental impact when it comes forward to the town.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:00 pm.

Minutes recorded by Thayer Donham.