

**TOWN OF BELMONT
PLANNING BOARD**

**MEETING MINUTES
January 31, 2014**

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8:05 a.m. Meeting called to order.

Present: Michael Battista, Chair; Elisabeth Allison, Vice Chair; Sami Baghdady; Charles Clark; Joseph DeStefano; Jeffrey Wheeler, Office of Community Development

Work Session to Discuss Potential Solutions to the GR Demolition Moratorium

Mr. Battista provided an overview of the next steps in the process of developing a response to the GR demolition moratorium. The Board reviewed various documents outlining changes proposed by a working group consisting of Mr. Battista, Mr. DeStefano, Mr. Wheeler, and Mr. Clancy.

The Board discussed nonconforming lots and the need to review redevelopment of them.

Mr. Baghdady expressed concern that property rights were being taken away if the proposed changes were adopted by Town Meeting. He suggested that there would be push back from the Town. He felt that the proposed changes were going beyond the intent of the moratorium and that maybe the changes should be adopted incrementally over a period of time. He added that taking property rights away from one district should be a Town-wide discussion.

Mr. DeStefano stated that the Board has a chance to do something and agreed that property rights cannot be taken away; however, there needs to be an opportunity to review the new development. Mr. Battista responded that the Board needs more 'teeth' than just review. Mr. DeStefano added that as soon as the house is torn down that the design of the new building needs to be reviewed. All agreed that design review was necessary since it allows a public process. Mr. DeStefano emphasized that an out of character design negatively impacts a neighborhood. Ms. Allison added that if the design enhances the value of a neighborhood then it should be allowed, if it does not then it should not be allowed.

All agreed that if nonconforming properties are torn down that there needs to be a review process of the new building. Discussion ensued about what to allow on lots less than 5,000 square feet and 50' frontage with a single-family home on it. Examples of teardowns were reviewed. All agreed that the changes should encourage tasteful development in character with the surrounding neighborhood.

Ms. Allison discussed the fiscal impacts of new development. She expressed concern about the increases of replacing a single-family with a two-family. She emphasized that the Board should not be oblivious to the impacts that these changes will create. She did suggest that a Special Permit will discourage developers but all agreed that the developer that wants to do the right thing will go through the process.

Concern was expressed that Town Meeting may want these changes to apply throughout Town since overbuilding exists throughout it. Ms. Allison responded that there was no mandate to go beyond the General Residence Zoning Districts and suggested that if other residents think this is

a problem in the rest of the community then they should come forward with a proposal. The Board discussed sending a letter to Town Meeting inviting members to come forward if they wanted these changes to be Town wide.

The Board agreed that every nonconforming lot requires a Special Permit when a new structure is built on it including additions to buildings on nonconforming lots. The Board also agreed that new buildings on conforming lots would require Design and Site Plan Review.

Comments from the Audience:

Raffi Manjjkian, 12 Pearl Street, emphasized that the Board should focus on the Citizens Petition and to get that right before expanding these changes to the rest of the Town. He suggested looking at Lexington's Design Review process. He also wanted to incentivize developers to construct single-family homes.

Judith Ananian Sarno, 30 Waverley Terrace, suggested that if the Board wanted to go beyond the GR districts that one warrant article be drafted for the GR and a separate one be drafted for the rest of the Town. She also expressed support for the Special Permit process since it has teeth, but expressed concern about the Design Review process since it does not have any.

Shelia Flewelling, 36 Sycamore Street, thought that the Design Review process was great but that it needs to be a good process.

The Board agreed on the following:

1. Talk with Town Counsel about how to have new development on nonconforming lots require a Special Permit and how to get the Planning Board as Special Permit Granting Authority.
2. The Board also unanimously voted (5-0) that a Sunset Provision of 4 years or less should be included.
3. Limit the changes on nonconforming lots to the General Residence District only

Adjourned – 9:15 a.m.