

**TOWN OF BELMONT**  
**PLANNING BOARD**  
**MEETING MINUTES**  
**May 2, 2023**

**RECEIVED**  
**TOWN CLERK**  
**BELMONT, MA**

DATE: June 8, 2023  
TIME: 8:43 AM

**Present:** Jeff Birenbaum: Chair; Carol Berberian: Vice Chair; Thayer Donham; Karl Haglund, Renee Guo

**Staff:** Ara Yogurtian, Assistant Director, Offices of Community Development

This meeting was held remotely using Zoom video conferencing technology, as permitted by the Massachusetts Act Relative to Extending Certain State of Emergency Accommodations, which became effective July 16, 2022. Update 3/30/23: The State has extended authorization for virtual public meetings through March 31, 2025.

Mr. Birenbaum introduced Planning Board members and reviewed a summary of the items that were on the agenda.

**1. Meeting Called to Order 7:00 PM**

**2. Selection of new Chairperson.**

**MOTION to elect Mr. Birenbaum as new Chair to the Planning Board was made by Ms. Berberian and seconded by Ms. Donham. Motion passed.**

**YES votes-**

**Thayer Donham**

**Karl Haglund**

**Carol Berberian**

**Renee Guo**

**MOTION to elect Ms. Berberian as new Vice Chair to the Planning Board was made by Mr. Birenbaum and seconded by Ms. Donham. Motion passed.**

**YES votes-**

**Thayer Donham**

**Karl Haglund**

**Jeff Birenbaum**

**Renee Guo**

### **3. Continued Cases:**

#### **a) Case No. 23-07 One Special Permit 103 Brookside Ave. (SRC) – Kaleb and Tammy Keithley**

Applicants request One Special Permit under §1.5.4 C (2) of the Zoning By-Law to construct an addition at 103 Brookside Ave. located in a Single Residence C zoning district. Alterations or structural changes that increase the Gross Floor Area of a nonconforming structure by more than thirty percent (30%) are allowed by a Special Permit granted by the Planning Board. The existing Gross Floor Area is 2366SF and the proposed addition is 1045SF or 44.1%.

Mr. Birenbaum read the public notice.

Mr. Keithley, Applicant, came before the Board and explained that the Conservation Commission has approved the pending permit.

There were no public comments.

**MOTION to approve was made by Mr. Birenbaum and seconded by Ms. Berberian.  
Motion passed.**

**YES votes-**

**Thayer Donham**

**Karl Haglund**

**Jeff Birenbaum**

**Renee Guo**

**Carol Berberian**

#### **b) Case No. 23-05 Two Special Permits 221 Concord Ave. and another at 80 Hittinger Street – Town of Belmont Planning Board: May 2, 2023 meeting agenda 2**

Applicant requests two Specials Permit under section 5.2.5-4-(b)-3 to erect two standing signs at 221 Concord Ave. and another at 80 Hittinger Street located in General Residence (GR) zoning district.

Mr. Birenbaum read the public notice. Ms. Guo was recused from this case as a direct abutter.

Mr. Lovallo, Chair of the Belmont Middle and High School Committee, introduced his colleagues: Tom Gatzunis, Owner's Project Manager; Vital Albuquerque, Design Architect from Perkins & Will; Pat Bruschi, Vice Chair of the Belmont Middle and High School Committee,

Mr. Lovallo walked the Board through the components of the proposed monument signs.

Mr. Haglund noted that the “Belmont Middle and High School” was confusing and the sign should be called the “Belmont High School” on the big stone sign and the Belmont Middle School” on the sign located near the doors to the Middle School. There is no entity called the “Belmont Middle and High School”. It is ungrammatical and awkward. Mr. Haglund is requesting that the Building Committee consider calling them individual signs “Belmont High School” and “Belmont Middle School”. They are going to be run as two separate entities with separate Principals and should have separate signs. He said that the words will matter, especially when they are done in stone.

Mr. Lovallo noted that the project is one school and one building, not two schools and two buildings. The School Committee had voted to have the school named “Belmont Middle and High School”. He said the Planning Board probably does not have the authority to challenge the name.

Mr. Albuquerque noted that the entry signs at the doors have the separate names “Belmont High School” and the name “Belmont Middle School”.

Ms. Donham noted that the Planning Board cannot dictate the language on the signs. She noted that the directional signs needed to be reviewed.

Mr. Haglund noted that the Planning Board has the responsibility to review the functionality of the signs as well as the design of the signs.

Mr. Albuquerque presented the proposed way-finding signs and their locations.

Mr. Lovallo noted that the signs were durable and could be changed if the language needed to be changed.

Ms. Berberian noted that they might consider adding directions for the new rink and that people look for these signs for way-finding assistance. Mr. Lovallo said the letters could be changed in the future to add information about the rink.

Ms. Donham felt that the blue color with the brown was different from the feel you get outside. Perhaps it could be aluminum to match the front signs? Mr. Lovallo noted that they could work with the Planning Board to make the signs match better with the main entryway signs. Mr. Albuquerque noted that they could make some changes to the signs to make them a better fit.

There were no public comments.

**MOTION to approve with no more than three colors and to be worked on in collaboration with Ms. Donham was made by Mr. Birenbaum and seconded by Ms. Berberian. Motion did not pass as they would need to have a vote of 4:1, vote was 3:1**

**YES votes-**

**Jeff Birenbaum**

**Carol Berberian**

**Thayer Donham**

**No vote-**

**Mr. Haglund**

**MOTION to undue the previous motion was made by Mr. Birenbaum and seconded by Ms. Berberian. Motion passed.**

**YES votes-**

**Jeff Birenbaum**

**Carol Berberian**

**Thayer Donham**

**Karl Haglund**

**MOTION to approve the way-finding signage only with no more than three colors and to be worked on in collaboration with Ms. Donham was made by Mr. Birenbaum and seconded by Ms. Berberian. Motion passed. Vote 4:1**

**YES votes-**

**Jeff Birenbaum**

**Carol Berberian**

**Thayer Donham**

**Karl Haglund**

**MOTION to continue the portion of the case for the two monument signs until June 6, 2023, was made by Mr. Birenbaum and seconded by Ms. Donham. Motion passed. Vote 4:1.**

**YES votes-**

**Jeff Birenbaum**

**Carol Berberian**

**Thayer Donham**

**Karl Haglund**

**4. Public Hearings:**

**a) Case No. 23-09 For One Special Permit 55 Munroe Street (SRC) - Mohit and Katherine Dilawari**

Mr. Birenbaum read the public notice. Ms. Guo rejoined the meeting at 8:06 PM.

Applicants request One Special Permit under §1.5.4 C (2) of the Zoning By-Law to construct a one story and a two-story addition at 55 Munroe Street located in Single Residence C (SRC) Zoning District. Structural change increases that increase the Gross Floor Area of a non-conforming structure by more than thirty percent (30%) are allowed by a Special Permit granted by the Planning Board. The proposed Gross Floor Area addition exceeds 30% of the existing.

Mohit and Katherine Dilawari, came before the Board to present their project. They would like to increase the size of their home to accommodate their growing family. They have shared their plans with their neighbors and have received letters of support from the neighbors. Mr. Dilawari presented the plans for the addition.

Yael Getz, Architect, walked the Board through the existing and proposed plans. Ms. Getz was having difficulties with her internet connection and was not audible. Ms. Dilawari took over the presentation. She noted that the proposed addition falls within the setback requirements. She presented the elevations for the proposed home. Ms. Dilawari noted that the overall ridge height would be raised by 1.5 foot. They are not proposing to finish the attic. Ms. Guo noted that the skylights and dormer make the storage attic space seem like they are something more. Ms. Getz returned to the meeting and noted that they comply with the half-story calculations. Mr. Yogurtian noted that the lot coverage was at 24.97 percent and right at the 25% allowed and he would like to call the surveyor to clarify some matters before the Board makes a motion to approve.

Mr. Haglund noted that this was a drastic redo but if the neighbors were in support and they meet the setback requirements then he was fine with the project, but he is not ready to vote in favor until Mr. Yogurtian has had his questions answered regarding lot coverage.

Mr. Berberian shared the neighborhood analysis. The proposed TLA of 2,964 square feet placed the home as the seventh largest home in the neighborhood. If the portico is less than 24" it is not going to count towards lot coverage. The proposed FAR value was 0.36 and this placed the proposed home at the third largest home in the neighborhood.

Mr. Birenbaum asked for some other options for dormer designs as the one presented could overshadow the neighbors. Ms. Guo and Ms. Donham agreed that they would like to see a less prominent dormer.

Mr. Birenbaum noted that they would wait on the public comments until the next meeting.

Ms. Guo asked how the other Board members were feeling about the size of the proposed addition. Ms. Donham noted that the bulk was exacerbated by the dormer in front. Ms. Berberian noted that she was fine as there was a lot of neighborhood support. Mr. Haglund would like to revisit the neighborhood.

**MOTION to continue to May 16, 2023 was made by Mr. Birenbaum and seconded by Ms. Berberian. Motion passed.**

**YES votes-**

**Jeff Birenbaum**

**Carol Berberian**

**Thayer Donham**

**Karl Haglund**

**Renee Guo**

**b) Case No. 23-10 for One Special Permit 55 Warwick Road (GR) - Alice M. Rushforth**

Mr. Birenbaum read the public notice.

Applicant requests One Special Permit under section 1.5.4A of the Zoning By-Law to construct a two-story addition at 55 Warwick Road located in General Residence (GR) Zoning District. Special Permit: §1.5.4A (2) of the By-Law allows alterations and expansions greater than 300SF in the GR district by Special Permit granted by the Planning Board. The proposed 2 story addition is 346 SF.

Alice Rushforth and her husband, Applicants, came before the Board to present the plans for their addition.

Ms. Berberian shared the neighborhood analysis. The existing TLA was 1,614 square feet and the proposed was 2,101 square feet.

Ms. Donham noted that she thought the addition was modest and it will fit well into the neighborhood.

Ms. Guo noted that the Applicant was well prepared and there was a lot of neighborhood support.

There were no public comments.

**MOTION to approve was made by Mr. Birenbaum and seconded by Ms. Berberian.  
Motion passed.**

**YES votes-**

**Jeff Birenbaum**

**Carol Berberian**

**Thayer Donham**

**Karl Haglund**

**Renee Guo**

**5. Update on Cases, Planning Board Projects and Committee Reports.**

- Mr. Yogurtian noted that there was a letter from Matthew Schwartz (Belmont Hill School abutter) that will be sent to the Chair.
- Ms. Donham would like to resign at the end of June and will provide a resignation letter. She would like to remain on the MBTA Committee.
- Mr. Yogurtian suggested that the Planning Board send a letter sent to the Zoning Board of Appeals for a clear clarification on the interpretation of tandem parking and the decision would be conveyed to the Planning Board. Ms. Donham suggested that maybe it could be a citizen's petition to fix the language in the Zoning Code. Mr. Birenbaum noted that he was comfortable with moving forward on a case-by-case basis until the problem was fixed.
- Mr. Yogurtian noted that the problem over the years has been that the Applicants are not getting the documents to them as one cohesive package at the beginning of the process.
- Ms. Donham noted that Roy Epstein will make a presentation on how the future zoning could look at the MBTA Advisory Committee meeting on Monday at 4 PM.

**6. Review and approve Planning Board meeting minutes: March 21, 2023**

**MOTION to approve Planning Board Meeting Minutes as amended for March 21, 2023 was made by Ms. Donham and seconded by Ms. Berberian. Motion passed.**

**YES votes-**

**Jeff Birenbaum**

**Carol Berberian**

**Thayer Donham**

**Karl Haglund**

**Renee Guo**

**7. Adjourn 9:38 PM**

**The Planning Board's next scheduled meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 16, 2023**