

TOWN OF BELMONT
PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
February 14, 2020

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BELMONT, MA**

DATE: August 6, 2020
TIME: 12:15 PM

Present: Matt Lowrie, Stephen Pinkerton, Ed Starzec, Renee Guo.
Absent: Thayer Donham, Karl Haglund.

- I. Meeting called to order at 8:05am
- II. Feedback from Housing Trust

Mr. Pinkerton provided feedback from Rachel Heller that it is an open question whether housing that does not permit children under 18 can qualify as affordable housing. If not, then either the age restrictions need to be removed for those units in Subdistrict A or instead one could choose to keep the restrictions and not count the Subdivision A townhouses in the affordable housing calculation. The Housing Trust is going to seek an express determination on this issue and discussion was tabled.

- III. Comments to By-law (pages and section numbers below are from the clean version of the draft of February 7, 2020)

p.3 6H.5 1(a) (dimensional): the setbacks in Subdivision B should be greater than 10 feet.

Mr. Lowrie proposed and the Board agreed that the design guidelines in 6H.7 should be incorporated into this 6H.5, which also includes design guidelines, or vice versa.

p.3 6H.5 1(b) (setbacks): The Board agreed this needs some wordsmithing. Northland explained that the idea is so that, if there is a Subdistrict boundary within a lot, there not be a setback from the Subdistrict boundary (which could lead to double setback, for example). This section will be examined further.

p.3 6H.5 1(c) (setback and fences): Northland explained that the ten-foot limit was really intended for retaining walls, not fences. The Board agreed that 10 foot retaining walls may be appropriate but the standard 6 foot limits on fences seemed more appropriate. In the first sentence "shall be" needs to be added.

The board discussed generally the need to divide 6H.5 into separate sections for Subdistricts A and B. Mr. Lowrie will take a pass at this for Mr. Wheeler's review and then, as appropriate, Board review.

p.3 6H.5 1(d) (open space, lot coverage): Ms. Guo felt that limitations should be included and the Board generally agreed. For an initial draft, language for Subdistrict A will be pulled from

Zone 1 and for Subdistrict B from the existing Zone 3 language. Northland will verify that this works for the currently contemplated project and let the Board know if there are any issues.

p.3-4 6H.5 1(e) (landscaping at boundaries): reference to “southern” should be eastern. In addition, the Board discussed and agreed to move the concepts/goals of the landscaping to the design guidelines and deal with the specifics at design site plan review (“DSPR”).

The Board discussed feedback from the Fire Chief concerning access behind the Southern townhouses and the possibility of brush fires rising up from the Southern border. After discussion, further discussion was tabled pending further input from the Fire Chief, with whom Northland was meeting later this morning.

p.4 6H.5 2(c) (Subdistrict A): the Board has a general concern about figuring out whether there will be basements and how much to count as living area. For example, 3600 square feet of living area is too much if the unit is built on a slab. In general, the Board thinks there should be a limit for above basement level area and a limit inclusive of some or all of a basement level. Further work is needed on this Section. Also, there is overlap with p.6 2(e) which in some ways has better language and, in any event, should be combined with this section. There was some general discussion about whether 2400 was an appropriate number for above basement area and whether 3600 could be reduced for a figure inclusive of basement area.

For the last sentence concerning Board modification of setback requirements, the Board wishes to consider moving this to the end of the by-law and making the ability to waive more general than just for setbacks.

p.5 6H.2(1) (Sub A parking): the Board is currently comfortable with 12 visitor spaces, but would change to .3 times the number of dwelling units.

p.5 6H.5 2(2) (Sub B parking): Northland stated that the 1.3 parking spaces is intended to include visitor spaces.

p.5 6H.5 2(3) (bicycle parking): For Sub A, the Board felt that a requirement is not needed, since garage and basement space would be available in each unit. Of course, this would not prevent provision of additional space. For Sub B, after discussion of the number of spaces reasonably needed, the Board tentatively concluded that .5 spaces per dwelling unit would be sufficient, but 80% of those should be covered. Additional wordsmithing is needed to assure, for example, that the 80% figure does not imply that provision of additional uncovered spaces would mandate a corresponding increase in covered spaces.

p.5 6H.5 3 (design standards): There was a discussion of folding in 6H.7 here. The Board needs to confer with Mr. Wheeler on structure, and consistency with Section 6A if desirable. Mr. Lowrie will make a proposal for Mr. Wheeler to consider/modify.

p.6 6H.5 2(d) (energy efficiency): There was a general discussion of whether imposing energy requirements would be consistent with the State building code and whether energy goals should be design preferences for DSPR rather than mandated or otherwise incentivized in the code (e.g., with the number of dwelling units conditioned on meeting certain goals). Northland has some proposed language, which will be forwarded for review.

p.6 6H.5 2(e) (age restricted lay-out): This should be folded into performance standards section.

p.7 6H.5 3 (vehicle and pedestrian features): The Board agreed that this should be moved to DSPR rather than specific mandates required by the zoning by-law.

p.7 6H.5 4 (lighting): the Board agreed that we need to look at the existing lighting code and whether additional lighting provisions or restrictions should be included, particularly given that the construction is located at a high point relative to some surrounding areas.

p. 6H.5 5: landscaping: The Board currently thinks that this section is better left for DSPR.

The Board generally discussed whether the lengthy affordability provisions could instead merely be a reference to state law/regulation. This will be looked into for future drafts.

Northland raised an issue concerning the bonus units on p.2 6H4. 1(a) in Sub A and that the bonus units should alternatively be available in Sub B p.2 6H4. 2(a). The Board is currently agreeable to allowing that flexibility.

There was a brief discussion of whether Section 6H.6 (Affordability) needed to be so extensive when there is a statutory/regulatory framework already in place. Mr. Wheeler's input will be sought in that regard.

The Board took comments from the public. Tracy Marquis expressed that the Historic District Commission would like to provide some additional design consideration guidelines. Mr. Pinkerton noted that the Board welcomed that input, while also noting that time is getting tight and any input is needed quickly.

Mr. Lowrie was tasked with making proposed changes to the current draft in accordance with the comments at this meeting.

IV. Adjournment. The meeting adjourned at 9:40 am.