

TOWN OF BELMONT
PLANNING BOARD

MEETING MINUTES
January 13, 2010

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7:15 p.m. Meeting called to order.

Attendance: Jennifer Fallon; Chair, Sami Baghdady; Andres Rojas; Jeffrey Wheeler, Staff

7:15 p.m. Discussion - South Pleasant Street Rezoning

Claire and Lorraine DeMilia, owners of 1000 Pleasant St., discussed the rezoning of their property. According to them, Belmont's zoning is too restrictive and consequently nothing can be done with their property. The DeMilias stated that they want to sell their property and that they would like it used for mixed use. They pleaded with the Town to change the zoning to allow the property to be developed. Jenny Fallon thanked them for coming and told them that the Planning Board would be looking at South Pleasant Street in the near future.

7:30 p.m. **Joint Public Hearing -Cell Tower at the Exit 59 Off-Ramp of Route 2**

The applicant's agent, Daniel Klasnick, provided an overview of the application. He indicated that the site was needed to fill gaps in coverage and that there were very limited sites available that would meet the providers' objectives. Mr. Klasnick stated that MassHighway issued an RFP for the site and that DCAM issued the lease. He stated that the tower would be 100' tall and would provide space for 6 carriers though only 3 were currently proposed - Verizon Wireless with 12 antennae at 96', Metro PCS with 6 antennae at 86' and T Mobile with 6 antennae at 76'. Mr. Klasnick stated that the tower is more than 500' from the historic districts and more than 50' from the closet abutting residential building and designed to collapse within the property lines. A shelter will be constructed at the base of the tower to house the equipment for the carriers. Visits to the site will occur occasionally and will be limited to maintenance personnel. Landscaping, such as arbor vitae, will screen ground equipment and the entire area will be surrounded by a 6' tall fence. Mr. Klasnick provided photo simulations and stated that the site ideally satisfies what it's trying to cover. He also stated that he would be willing to have an engineer review the tower and submit a proposal for the removal bond.

Questions from the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals

Andres Rojas questioned the design of the tower and wanted to know the specifics of its size - diameter at the bottom and at the top of the pole. Mr. Klasnick indicated that the design is not finalized and will submit specifics later. Joe DeStefano questioned the size of the equipment shelter and the developed area.

Mr. Klasnick stated that the height of the tower was determined by Belmont's standards - 100' is allowed. He added that the proposed tower is as low as it can go since the lower the tower the less coverage it will provide.

**TOWN OF BELMONT
PLANNING BOARD**

Sami Baghdady expressed concern that this site was located at the gateway to Belmont. He wanted to know what efforts had been made to camouflage the pole. Mr. Klasnick indicated that the applicant would do whatever the Town wanted. Joe DeStefano requested that the chain link fencing be replaced with something more appropriate. Nick Iannuzzi questioned camouflaging the building. Jenny Fallon asked for arbor vitae and larger plantings to screen the facility. Mr. Klasnick stated that his applicant is open to planting larger trees and to design the shelter accordingly. Andy Rojas questioned the options for the tower. He stated that the building, fence, landscaping are good; the real problem, however, is the height of the tower. He argued that this creates a permanent physical image of Belmont and is greatly concerned about that. Sami Baghdady questioned removing the bottom 3 carriers and corresponding height to the pole and whether this would significantly alter the coverage area.

Audience in Support:

1. Tim McCarthy, 18 Simmons Ave., stated that he was strongly in favor of the cell tower and that he has suffered long enough with lousy coverage.

Audience in Opposition:

1. Claudia Nason, 45 Simmons Ave., questioned the effectiveness of the public hearing since the lease was already signed. She also requested additional photo simulations from Simmons Ave., another balloon test, and specific about the size of the tower and antennae.

Bill Chin, explained that concerns regarding the design and benefits to the Town would be scrutinized and that both Boards will be looking to mitigate the impacts of the tower.

Sami Baghdady questioned the noise from the diesel generator and was assured by Mr. Klasnick that a ground study showed that there should be no noise impact on the abutting residences.

2. Al Ponte, 307 Pleasant St., raised concerns regarding the RF waves emitting from the antennae.

Mr. Klasnick stated that a study submitted by the Applicant regarding RF waves purports to show that radiation will be less than the state standards.

3. Maryanne Scali, 19 Prospect St., expressed concerns about view as one drives east on Route 2. She also wanted to know about lighting at night.
4. Marjorie Miller, Scott Rd. questioned the need for the tower and asked whether people are actually looking for better service.
5. Lisa Harrington, Historic District Commission, expressed concern about the location of the tower in between two significant historic districts. She also raised concerns about the views and the need.

**TOWN OF BELMONT
PLANNING BOARD**

6. Carol Kowalski, Town of Arlington, presented a letter from the Arlington Board of Selectmen asking to deny the application. She requested that the Boards focus on the fundamentals of the application before discussing camouflage. She also requested that the Board vote on the standards individually, as some towns have done and stated that this application did not meet the standards. She also questioned what would happen if the application was denied. Jeffrey Wheeler responded that the lease was contingent on the granting of the Special Permit and therefore it would become null and void if denied.
7. Sam Salibian, 39 Simmons Ave., requested that the tower be lowered to 70' and that other towers be installed at other locations in order to generate the necessary coverage.
8. Iris Ponte, 307 Pleasant St., mentioned that she is carefully preserving her house and questioned the impacts on property values and the long term effects from the RF waves.
9. Carol Driscoll, 34 Vernon Rd, Arlington, stated that the view from her home will be terrible. She mentioned that she lived through the widening of Route 2 and expressed concern about the traffic congestion in the area
10. Bob Butter, 311 Fitzmaurice Cir. and Pastor of Church at 300 Pleasant St., stated that he did not believe this tower was necessary. He emphasized that technology is moving so quickly that he could not believe that a 100' tower was the only solution.
11. Will Brownsberger, State Representative, stated that he was not aware of this proposal and that he will try to do something about it.

At the conclusion of the audience questions, both Boards voted to continue the public hearing to Monday, March 8, 2010 in the Art Gallery, 3rd Floor Homer Municipal Building at 7:00 pm. The Zoning Board of Appeals then adjourned.

9:15 p.m. Discussion – Outdoor Café Seating

Jeffrey Wheeler presented the proposed zoning amendment and discussed how other communities have adopted such by-laws to encourage outdoor seating. Sami Baghdady raised concerns about the possible number of seats that would be allowed and requested that a cap on the number of outdoor seats be added to the amendment. The Board also discussed the need to define outdoor seasonal seating.

9:30 p.m. Comprehensive Plan Development and Status

Jenny Fallon quickly reviewed the status of the Plan and reminded the Board about the upcoming workshops and requested their presence at them.

9:40 p.m. Meeting Adjourned

Next Meeting: Wednesday, January 27, 2010, 7:00 p.m., Board of Selectmen's Meeting Room, Town Hall.

4/14/2010 Minutes Approved