

## BELMONT HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

January 5, 2006  
Meeting Minutes  
Town Hall

*Commission Members attending:* Co-chair Richard Cheek, Co-chair Lydia Ogilby, Paul Bell, Peter Gunness, Lisa Harrington, Linn Hobbs, Michael Smith. *Absent:* Arleyn Levee, Richard Pichette, Nancy Richards.

*Also in attendance:* Arthur Wolfson for items 3 and 6a; Virginia Jordan, of the Oakley Neighborhood Association, for Item 4.

### 1. UPDATE ON PLANS FOR SALE AND PRESERVATION OF CENTRAL FIRE STATION

Michael Smith reported that no progress had been made on the request for proposal (RFP). He undertook to contact the appropriate town office again.

### 2. FINALIZE DESIGN GUIDELINES

Arleyn Levee has undertaken to pull together all the entries for the Design Guidelines, identifying remaining holes.

Portions of the following sections still need writing:

- Introduction

- What is preservation, and why

- Architectural elements

- Landscape elements

- Why there are historic districts

- Why Belmont has an historic district

- History

- Brief history of Belmont

- History of the Historic District Commission

- Legal considerations.

- Richard Pichette has agreed to write this final entry, incorporating the requisite legal language.

### 3. PLEASANT STREET WALLS

No response has been received to date to Linn Hobbs' letter to the Selectmen regarding the non-conformity of the new stone wall being built on Pleasant Street as part of the Pleasant Street reconstruction and concern about the rebuilding of old stone walls along Pleasant Street. Richard Pichette outlined possible avenues for legal recourse if no response from the Town was forthcoming, given that design of stone walls comprises a specific item in the BHDC's memorandum of agreement with the

Town. Richard Cheek undertook to see Town administrator Tom Younger about the matter and suggested that one approach would be put the issue on the agenda for the Selectmen's meeting on Monday, 9 January 2006.

#### 4. OUR LADY OF MERCY CHURCH BUILDING PRESEVATION

Richard Cheek reported that he had approached several parishioners about whether they were interested in having the church building preserved, even if not as a church. While the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) does not want to play an advocacy role, Jim Igo of PreservationMassachusetts, was interested in raising money in order to hire a specialist who would work with various communities to help them save their church buildings.

The Our Lady of Mercy church building was designed by Maginnis and Walsh, one of the top ecclesiastical architects in the US and the leading architect for the Catholic church. The property comprises five parcels (church, rectory, parish hall, a second house, and parking lot) totaling about 1.56 acres and worth \$5.5M. The Town's present lease on the Parish Hall as Senior Center is to run for another year. The Catholic church has indicated it is interested in realizing as much as possible for the sale of the properties. There are many prior examples of conversion of churches to domestic housing use. In particular, the Housing Trust could be interested in providing affordable housing units on the property. There are potential landscape issues, since it would seem undesirable to have new buildings built right up to the Church building. The rectory is a large, pre-existing house (part Tudor, part Arts & Crafts, ca. 1890-1900) on Lawndale Road that the church bought. The church building itself was first built as a temporary facility and then expanded. Lisa Harrington noted that St. Jerome's Catholic Church on Lake Street in Arlington is now gone, and the rectory there is for sale.

#### 5. OLD BUSINESS

Michael Smith updated the Commission on the Verizon telecommunications antenna installation on the roof of 20 Church Street. Verizon has requested two chimneys (in finer glass panels, simulating brick) and one screened antenna. The Commission **approved** the installation, with eight members in favor and one abstention.

#### 6. NEW BUSINESS

- a) *Wall and tree issues on Pleasant Street.* Mr. Wolfson reported that a rectangular lot in the woods, between the Tanner house and his property at the corner of Snake Hill Road and just outside the historic district, had been partially clear cut by developer Thomas Blake, who had bought the upper end of the Anderson property and was building a new house facing Hay Road. Mr. Wolfson also reported that a stone wall that runs down to Pleasant Street had been broken through by Mr. Blake to provide a utilities easement and a manhole for sanitary sewage drainage and that a utility pole had been erected. Mr. Blake had also applied to subdivide the

property and build a second house facing Pleasant Street, which application the Zoning Board of Appeals had denied.

- b) *Belmont Uplands.* The Zoning Board of Appeals has received a Chapter-40B application from the O'Neill Properties group for construction of 299 apartments in the Belmont Uplands. A public hearing will be held on Wednesday, January 11, 2006 in the Homer Building Art Gallery, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor. The Historic District Commission had been asked to comment, because the O'Neill property abuts the Alewife Reservation, which is an historic river reservation. The principal issue is environmental impact on the wetlands. Arleyn Levee agreed to contact the Department of Conservation & Recreation.
  
- c) *Waverley Fire Station.* Lisa Harrington reported that the developer wanted to replace the existing wood fire doors with aluminum ones to incorporate larger panes. It was **moved** by Levee, seconded by Pichette, to insist open keeping the wood doors and to find a way to reinforce the doors from the inside if required. The motion **passed** unanimously.

*Minutes recorded by Linn Hobbs*

