

BELMONT HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

October 9, 2002 7:00 p.m.

Town Hall, Conference Room 3

Meeting Minutes

Attending:

Commission Members: Lydia Ogilby, Co-chair; Paul Bell; Linn Hobbs; Nancy Richards; Michael Smith; Sharon Vanderslice. Absent: Richard Cheek, Co-chair; Arleyn Levee; Jonathan Treat.

League of Women Voters Observer: Audrey Lenk.

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TOWN HALL COMPLEX UPDATE

Michael Smith, HDC's representative on the Town Hall Complex Building Committee, reviewed current design plans for the complex and areas of concern to the Commission. He questioned the need for a ground level entrance on the Moore Street side of the Annex and said that he plans to request that that door opening remain at the level it is now. He and Linn Hobbs also had questions concerning the proposed heating system for the building. The project's mechanical engineer has proposed hydronic pipes topped with gypcrete in addition to perimeter heating. This is a currently popular method for heating a building, but Smith and Hobbs asked whether it is appropriate for a 100-year-old building and whether it would last for another 100 years.

Several members said that the current landscape plan for the complex had a forested appearance that would hide the buildings and make it difficult for grass to grow. The consensus was that any new trees should be planted along the street and that grassy areas within the complex should be left relatively open. Chip Bell said that a high-canopy tree like an elm would be historically appropriate to the neighborhood. The sycamores indicated on the plan have a low branching structure that would "fence off" the area and obscure the historic buildings. Mike Smith is asking the Building Committee to consider accent lighting on the three restored buildings. In contrast to the rest of the plan, the Moore Street parking area beside the Annex still looks naked. A suggestion was made to eliminate three parallel parking spaces next to the street on that side to allow room for some landscaping. These spaces could be replaced with pull-in spaces near the Town Hall's side entrance.

Commission members agreed that the proposed serpentine drive with granite block in front of the building entrances was a good addition.

PLEASANT STREET RECONSTRUCTION

The Commission briefly reviewed design plans for this project. The Commission's overall objective is to preserve the street's rural ambience as much as possible by reducing the amount of paving, softening the edges, and protecting tree roots and landscaping around stone walls.

Sharon Vanderslice raised the possibility of burying the wiring in the Historic District. She has talked with town officials in North Reading who secured a \$1.3 million PWED grant for this purpose during the reconstruction of Route 62.

A subcommittee will draw up more detailed comments on the plan before the next meeting. Once the Commission has approved them, they will be forwarded to the Board of Selectmen. It was suggested that a meeting be arranged with Charlie Kalouskas of the BSC Group.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

Chip Bell brought a copy of a design manual prepared by the Town of Lexington for residents of its historic districts. Belmont could prepare something similar. He said that the Massachusetts Historical Commission has a chat room (masshistpres@cs.umb.edu) for people, including professionals, who have design questions pertaining to historic houses. He distributed a list of other websites for the Commission members to review.

MINUTES

The minutes from the meeting of September 12 were approved.

OLD BUSINESS

Lydia Ogliby said she would speak to members of the Judy Record Foundation to see if they had any interest in helping to move one of the McLean cottages, scheduled for demolition, into the new cemetery.

The Commission is also looking for a buyer for the circular library rescued from the Cushing Estate before it was torn down. The library is now in storage.

NEW BUSINESS

Reminding the Commission that not all tear-downs are bad, Nancy Richards distributed an article about a new house on Percy Road in Lexington that replaced a 47-year-old ranch. The new construction, which has been praised for its architectural detail, had to be approved by Historic District Commission in Lexington because the property was within the Monroe Tavern Historic District.

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The next meeting of the Commission will be on Thursday, November 7 at 7:00 p.m. in the Town Hall.

Minutes recorded by: Sharon Vanderslice

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