

SPECIAL MEETING
MINUTES
TOWN OF BELMONT
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
SELECTMEN'S MEETING ROOM
Thursday, November 8, 2012
8:00 AM

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CALL TO ORDER

A special meeting of the Board was called to order in open session at 8:22 am by Chair Paolo in the Selectmen's Meeting Room. Selectmen Rojas was present. Selectman Ralph Jones was not present. Town Administrator David Kale and Assistant Town Administrator Kellie Helms were present.

Also present were Belmont Police Chief Robert McLaughlin, and Ms. Barbara Miranda on behalf of State Senator Will Brownsberger.

No Texting While Driving

Belmont resident Mr. John T. Carson appeared before the Board of Selectmen to discuss the dangers of texting while driving and other forms of distracted driving by drivers of all ages.

Mr. Carson has lived in Belmont since 1997. In 2010, while riding a moped on Concord Avenue in Belmont, he was struck by an automobile that was operated by someone who was texting while driving. This incident caused him numerous injuries and as a result of this experience, he is trying to raise awareness about the issue.

He explained that, currently, the issue is perceived to be an issue only with teenage drivers, even though this is a problem with drivers of all ages. There are 4.6 million registered drivers in MA, and the majority of them are adults. He noted that the issue just isn't about teens texting and driving, it's also about adults who are more and more frequently using their mobile phones while driving.

Ms. Patricia Jacobs appeared before the Board to share information about the AT&T "It Can Wait" campaign. Mr. Carson is working with her and other partners to raise awareness about the issue. She spoke about some current efforts to heighten public awareness about the dangers of texting while driving. Ms. Carson explained that "There's no text that's more important than your safety". They have produced a 10 minute video to play in the schools.

Mr. Carson asked if there are things that might be done in the Town of Belmont to raise awareness about the issue.

Police Chief McLaughlin explained that this is an important issue. Unfortunately, limited

resources make it very difficult to specifically target efforts to cell phone use while driving. Chief McLaughlin agreed that there needs to be more general education about the issue and the dangers that it can cause. When there is an auto accident, one of the first things that an officer will do is to ask for the driver's cell phone to determine if they were texting while driving. Even when officers give tickets for this offense, many cases are discharged by the courts. The Chief would be interested in working with Mr. Carson and the Board of Selectmen to come up with some preventative ways to raise awareness in the Town. Mr. Carson suggested that the Police Department could pick 2 days each year to be proactive about pulling cars over to alert them to the dangers of distracted driving. The Police Chief stated that enforcement and education need to go hand in hand. He would be more than glad to work with Mr. Carson to establish an awareness program.

Mr. Carson stated his appreciation for the Police Chief and the Selectmen to get involved with this issue. He would like to see the Town make a statement and to work to make Belmont residents and travelers more aware of the problem. They can show that Belmont is serious about texting and driving.

Selectman Rojas discussed the issue and noted that distracted driving also could happen when someone is changing their ipod music. There needs to be an increased public understanding about this issue. He stated his support for having the Belmont Police Department pick 2 days to raise awareness and have an information campaign about the issue.

Chair Paolillo asked for ideas about what the Board and Town can do to assist in the effort. Some ideas are to give notices to school kids to take home to their parents, or to put information on the Town's website. Mr. Carson stated that there are many options.

Town Administrator David Kale suggested that perhaps we could put the DVD on the Belmont Cable television channel, or that a show be produced to play on the cable channel.

Chair Paolillo suggested that the Town could promote the campaign with increased signage and by sponsoring an education and awareness campaign for drivers. He suggested that the Board could put this on a future BOS meeting agenda to discuss this in more detail and to decide on future steps by the Town.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 a.m.



Mr. David Kale, Town Administrator