

**TOWN OF BELMONT
PLANNING BOARD**

**MEETING MINUTES
May 23, 2014**

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA

2014 SEP -8 PM 2:13

8:00 a.m. Meeting called to order

Present: Michael Battista, Chair; Elisabeth Allison, Vice Chair; Charles Clark; Joseph DeStefano; Jeffrey Wheeler, Liaison to Planning Board

Absent: Karl Haglund, Associate Member

8:00 a.m. Review and Discuss Issues Raised during Zoning Forum and League of Women Voter's Warrant Briefing

Mr. Battista provided an overview of the Forum and Warrant Briefing. He stated that the audience seemed satisfied with the format and style of the Forum presentation. Ms. Allison agreed that the informal presentation worked. Mr. Clark added that the style worked well because the presenters were engaging the audience on personal level and that the PowerPoint presentation was available to reinforce the answer to a question.

Mr. Clark raised several issues that he argued the Board must be prepared to answer including why Article 14 applies only to the General Residence Zoning Districts and that this amendment will create a lot more work for the Board. He suggested that a Planning Assistant may be necessary since it would be good to get as much done behind the scenes as possible before an application comes before the Board. He also queried the Board about the role it should be taking. Mr. Wheeler stated that this is a question that many communities were struggling with: what is the role of the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals in the permitting process?

Ms. Allison stated that the desire for a Planner raises the issue of who do you want to shape policy. Mr. Clark agreed and added that help will be needed with the 'nuts and bolts' of the process. Mr. Wheeler mentioned that the Office of Community Development is under significant reorganization and that it has yet to be seen how this will impact the process. Mr. Battista added that there were 38 demolitions in 6 years and that he suspects that this number will be reduced as a result of the new GR process. Mr. Clark reminded the Board that the real estate market is hot right now. Ms. Allison suggested that Mr. Battista should have a conversation with the Town Administrator to prepare him for this possibility.

8:40 a.m. Deliberate and Vote on Potential Zoning Amendments

Mr. Battista raised a concern that Article 14 would be diluted if there were too many amendments.

Amendment 1 to Article 14

Mr. Wheeler raised a question about whether the limitation on the placement of HVAC systems applied to just new construction or any installation. Mr. Battista stated that this amendment applied only to the GR districts and that it could be taken up later Town-wide. Mr. DeStefano stated that placement of HVAC systems is not a concern in the Single Residence A Districts since those lots are larger and the houses are more spread apart. Mr. Battista stated that the

concern is with new construction only. Mr. DeStefano stated that he did not want to allow HVAC in front yards at all. Mr. Clark suggested that limiting HVAC in the side setbacks could pose a hardship. He suggested that for any installation HVAC could not be in the front yard and that for new construction HVAC could not be in side setback as well. Ms. Allison stated that she was concerned about getting the Article passed. She argued that unless there was some good reason to change that Town Meeting should get what they've already seen and that these changes could impact a whole lot of other people. She cautioned the Board that something new has been introduced at the 11th hour and that this will confuse Town Meeting. She added that the Board could come back with this issue. Mr. Battista agreed and added that he did not want the Article to get sidetracked. Ms. Allison stated that if things dissolved into a million directions that this will create much confusion and suggested that this should be worked on after Town Meeting.

Amendment 2 to Article 14

Mr. Wheeler reviewed the amendment. The Board seemed comfortable with the wording and suggested it would recommend it to Town Meeting.

Amendment 3 to Article 14

Mr. Wheeler explained the amendment. Mr. Battista stated that the Board should have the ability to waive performance standards to preserve the original streetscape. Ms. Allison stated that she was not comfortable with this since it seemed too subjective, too far reaching and potentially favors one project over another. Mr. Clark stated that there has to be a way for the Board to waive. He suggested asking Town Counsel about wording to allow preservation of the existing structure. Mr. Battista suggested this should be tied to streetscape or to preserving the building. Ms. Allison agreed emphasizing that the building should be of historic or architectural significance. She added this would be another tool to help with historic preservation without being an economic burden. Mr. DeStefano stated that he liked the ability to waive the requirement but also agreed that the doors must be at the front of the building. Mr. Wheeler stressed that this provision will require thoughtful design and the sunset provision will require the Board to review this provision which will enable the Board to make changes if necessary.

Potential Amendments to Article 14

Mr. Battista explained the other possible amendments. Ms. Allison stated that to reduce the lot size for a single-family dwelling is too substantive of a change to make and that perhaps this change could be looked at later. Mr. Battista agreed and suggested that the Board could file for a subsequent amendment if it becomes a problem.

Comments from the Audience:

Judith Ananian Sarno, 37 Waverley Terrace, questioned the role that the citizen sponsors should play in the presentation to Town Meeting. Mr. Battista stated that it would be great for the citizens to stand with the Board to show their support. Mr. Clark agreed and added that the citizens should give their presentation after the Board has made theirs'.

Adjourned – 9:20 a.m.