TOWN OF BELMONT
PLANNING BOARD

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MEETING MINUTES
October 7, 2014

Present: Michael Battista, Chair; Elisabeth Allison, Vice Chair; Charles Clark; Joseph DeStefano; Karl Haglund, Barbara Fiacco (Associate Member), Mr. Jeffrey Wheeler, Office of Community Development

7:05 p.m. Meeting called to order

7:05 p.m. Continued Public Hearing

<u>70B Thomas Street</u>

MOTION made by Ms. Allison to accept the letter of withdrawal for the proposal at 70B Thomas Street. Seconded by Mr. Clark. Motion passed.

7:05 p.m. Deliberate and Vote

<u>13 Birch Street</u>

MOTION made by Mr. Clark to continue deliberations on 13 Birch Street to Tuesday, October 21, 2014. Seconded by Ms. Allison. Motion passed.

7:05 p.m. Request to Re-Open Public Hearing

Mr. Battista reported that he and Mr. DeStefano had a working session with Mr. Ed Oteri to discuss the changes to his proposed construction, and if the Board chooses to move forward, we can hear his proposal and vote on this matter tonight. Mr. DeStefano reminded all that the Public Hearing had been closed, and as such not new material could be introduced. Mr. Clark proposed that the Public Hearing be re-opened so the Board could review the new material.

MOTION made by Mr. Clark to re-open the public hearing on 318 Trapelo Road. Seconded by Ms. Allison. Motion passed.

MOTION made by Mr. Clark to continue the public hearing on 318 Trapelo Road to October 21, 2014. Seconded by Ms. Allison. Motion passed.

7:15 p.m. <u>Procedural Discussion on the Review of Special Permits Applications</u>

The Board suggested and discussed possible guiding principles that might be used to help better define a neighborhood. The Board discussed Town Counsel's responses posed to him regarding how to interpret the new zoning By-Law. He stated that the FAR can be used to inform a decision, but cannot be used to make it. Additionally, he stated that the Performance Standards are based on comparability with the surrounding neighborhood that the Board has to define the neighborhood and weigh the Standards accordingly.

Ms. Allison strongly supported the gathering of neighborhood data to aid in the decision making

process. She agreed that this data should inform the Board's judgment in defining a neighborhood, and that the developer should not be the one to define it. She outlined the following action items that the Board must take:

1. Define a neighborhood and assemble the relevant data;
2. Move the process along as expeditiously as possible and generate the quantitative data before the developer goes before the Board;
3. Determine whether proposed changes increase the conformity; and,
4. Determine whether the proposed structure is in harmony with the neighborhood.

Mr. Haglund noted that there were professionals who are trained to make design judgments and perhaps the Board can reach out to them. Mr. DeStefano commented that new construction often enhances a neighborhood, and felt it was the Board's charge to ensure that new construction also enhances the town. Ms. Fiacco commented that the Board should have some discretion in weighing these factors.

The discussion briefly focused on lot coverage as a defining indicator for the neighborhood. Mr. DeStefano commented that this process could be a very useful tool to provide a general view, but doesn't want to get "bogged down" and slow down the process. He felt it was important to make a decision quickly.

The discussion briefly turned to working sessions and discussed at what point a request from a developer for advice about a project should become something the whole Board should discuss. Mr. Clark felt that transparency was of the utmost importance. Mr. Battista stated that working sessions were useful in an effort to save time, as many issues could be discussed and ironed out in advance of a meeting. Ms. Allison stated, however, that it was important for the Board to hear the applicant's presentation before meeting in working sessions.

8:50 p.m. **Schedule for November and December**

After a brief conversation regarding schedules, the Board decided that the meetings for the rest of year 2014 would be held November 6 and 20, and December 2 and 16 at 7:00 p.m.

Adjourn: 9:00 p.m.