

TOWN OF BELMONT
PLANNING BOARD

MEETING MINUTES
March 27, 2012

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7:00 p.m. Meeting called to order.

Attendance: Sami Baghdady, Chair; Michael Battista, Charles Clark, Karl Haglund, Andres Rojas, Jeffrey Wheeler, Staff

Absent: Joseph DeStefano

7:00 p.m. **Public Hearing Continued: Cushing Village Application**

Attorney Mark Donohue, the applicant's lawyer, addressed the Board regarding reconfiguring the designs of the Cushing Village Project as they pertain to density and massing. He reported the following concerns that were raised at the last public hearing:

Winslow Building – Concerns were expressed about how the building interacts with the other two buildings and about its density and mass.

Pomona Building – Concerns were raised about the clock tower and the impact the building would have on 13 Horne Road. More step-backs and staggered walls were called for. Also, people wanted to see a reduction of building height and the roof line.

Hyland Building – Concerns were raised that this building was too big and inconsistent with the character of Belmont. People asked for a reduction in mass and increased step backs.

Mr. Quinn presented revised drawings of the Cushing Village project to address these concerns.

Hyland Building – The new plans include the elimination of the top story. The front of the building would have step backs at 20, 28, and 50 feet which will give some relief to 569 Belmont Street. Additional step backs would be in the back of the building at 20, 26, 47, and 61 feet to provide relief to 16 Horne Road, which reduces the shadows significantly.

Winslow Building – A redesign of the gable ends of the building to reduce the perceived heights was suggested as a solution.

Pomona Building – The new plans increase the step backs an additional 5-10 feet on the 4th floor.

Mr. Quinn stated that redesign of the Hyland will begin once they get a sense from the Board that they were headed in the right direction.

Mr. Rodin reported that he has withdrawn his application as a Peer Review Consultant and has been hired by Mr. Starr to help redesign the Hyland Building.

Mr. Haglund raised a concern regarding the maximum height of the Hyland Building and wanted to know how the height of the proposed structure compares with the height that is allowed under the existing By-Law. Mr. Quinn responded that those calculations haven't been made.

Mr. Baghdady clarified that the design team came to the public hearing with concepts, and not real numbers. He asked if a reduction in the mass of the buildings would result in a reduction in the number of units.

Mr. Baghdady opened the floor to public comment:

Audience Comments:

1. Chris McVay, 109 Brookside Avenue, spoke in support of the project and expressed confidence that the Board will make the right decision for Belmont and also thanked the developers for re-working the designs. She would like the units of the development to be larger, but she expressed a building height concern. She read a letter from Laurie Korn of Common Street, which expressed her support for the project and mentioned her excitement about the revenue that it would generate.
2. Tomasina Olson, 10 Bay State Road, spoke in support of the project and was encouraged by thoughtful development so that the school system would maintain its excellent reputation. She said the project has been predicted to contribute \$260,000 per year to town taxes. She reported that initially she was against the project, but has come to realize that the plusses far outweigh the negatives. She added that the shops will help revitalize Cushing Square.
3. Ed Kazanjian, 355 School Street, spoke in support of the project and urged the Board to grant the permit for the project without undue delay.
4. Steve Rosales, 48 Farnham Street, spoke in support of the project and stated he would like to see the Square vibrant again. He urged the Board to move the project forward. He also stated that the Town will benefit from the tax revenues that the project would generate.
5. Anne Marie Mahoney, 24 Goden Street, spoke in support of the project and stated that Belmont cannot afford to lose any more revenue. She felt the design of the project was thoughtful, attractive, and sensitive.
6. Doug Koplou, 18 Oak Avenue, stated that while property taxes are an important consideration, everyone was looking at the wrong metric. He cautioned the Board that the devil is in the details and the Board needs to see more details.
7. Vincent Stanton, 32 Royal Road, stated that an economic analysis from an impartial consultant is needed in order to determine the revenues from this development.
8. Lalg Musserian, 7 Greybirch Circle, spoke in support of the project and wanted to recognize the efforts of the architect to reduce the massing of the buildings. She argued that the Town needs the additional revenue that will be generated from this development.
9. Roger Colton, 34 Warwick Road, spoke in support of the project. He stressed a need for a wider variety housing options to support to short and long term housing needs. He argued that this development will increase the surrounding neighborhood's property values.

10. Walter Flewelling, 55 Hill Road, argued that Cushing Square has to catch up with Belmont Center and this development is one way to achieve that goal. He urged the Applicant to come up with a more positive design that the Board can support.
11. Paul Mutch, 27 Harriet Avenue, spoke in support of the project and reported that he moved to Belmont for the great school system. He asked everyone to consider what would happen to the home property values if the properties remained undeveloped. He argued that something needs to be done to get rid of this eye sore.
12. Ray Huey, 101 Chilton Street, spoke in support of the project and stated that he has watched that area deteriorate over the past 15 years and would like to see the project get built.
13. Sue Bass, 530 Concord Avenue, spoke in support of the project and stated that she would like to see a revitalized Cushing Square. She stated that the Overlay By-Law allowed for 3 stories, with limited 4th story. She also urged everyone not to be misled by the possibility of tax revenues.
14. Devin Brown, 54 Horne Road, stated that the discussion should be about whether or not this proposal conforms to the zoning By-Law. He urged the developers to come up with a design that conformed to the zoning.
15. Martin Cohen, 21 Dunbarton Road, stated that this project sets a bad precedent for the Town. He suggested that the By-Law was poorly written.
16. Gerard Natoli, 99 Oliver Road, spoke in support of the project and stated that this is a golden opportunity for the Town. He stated that the project is well conceived and a wonderful fit for Belmont.
17. Claus Becker, 20 Poplar Street, spoke in support of the project and stated that many young people would like to live in Belmont and this would provide them that opportunity.
18. Matt Sullivan, 121 Hammond Road, stated that the plans changed dramatically and further noted that the developer is willing to work with the Town.
19. Michael Kan, 16 Horne Road, was fearful that the Town would lose its charm if the buildings were built too tall. He questioned whether the buildings would block out the sun and impact his privacy.
20. Cynthia Vergados, 623 Belmont Street, stated that the buildings should be scaled down and expressed concern about traffic that will be generated for the development.
21. Sonia Boyajian, owner of Real Estate 109 in Cushing Square, spoke in support of the project and stated that she envisions a vibrant Cushing Square as a result of this development.
22. Mark Kohler, 324 Belmont Street, Watertown, thought the buildings were still too high and argued that the quality of life will be negatively impacted as a result of this development.

Mr. Haglund questioned why the development had to be 142 units. Mr. Donohue stated that the number of units has to do with the capital markets, but the team was focusing on the massing of the buildings and not the number of units. Mr. Rojas acknowledged that the developers have been responsive. He argued, however, that the number of units is critical since it affects the massing of the buildings. He further stated that this process involves multiple iterations and that this is the normal development and approval process.

Mr. Baghdady stated that he favored the spirit of the hearing and that the process was heading in the right direction. Mr. Clark agreed stating that he felt positive about the developer's response to this point and stated that the development is headed in the right direction.

Mr. Rojas inquired about what percentage of the project has a 4th floor. He said this was a crucial piece of the discussion. Mr. Baghdady also wanted to know about open space and what green areas were going to be provided on site.

**Moved by Charles Clark to continue the Public Hearing to April 10, 2012, at 7:00 pm.
Seconded by Andres Rojas
Motion passed unanimously.**

9:10 Update on Solar Energy Systems Zoning Amendment

Mr. Battista and Roger Colton co-Chair of the Energy Committee reported on the status of the proposed Solar Energy Systems zoning amendment. It was agreed that the public hearing would be held on April 17, 2012 at 8:30 am.

9:15 Committee Updates

Mr. Rojas reported that EDAC is being interviewed for a local business journal.

Mr. Battista reported that the Capital Budget Committee is meeting to start the process of what can and cannot be appropriated.

Mr. Clark reported that the Housing Trust is looking for development opportunities.

9:20 Update on the Demolition Delay By-Law Amendment

Mr. Baghdady reported that he and Joseph DeStefano worked with the Historic District Commission to draft the Demolition Delay By-Law amendment. He reported the following:

1. Certain commercial properties will be exempt for the Delay By-Law: Cushing Village, South Pleasant Street including the connected properties that front on Trapelo Road and properties known as the White Street triangle.
2. Municipal Buildings will have a different timing since the delay will start as soon as the Selectmen announce that the properties will be put up for sale.
3. Additional language will be added that would close a loophole which would allow the

public hearing to be continued ad infinitum, clearly not the intent of the By-Law.

Finally, the Board agreed to submit an amendment to Town Meeting to change the date of the structures that would be subject to the demolition delay. All agreed to tie the By-law to 1921 to correspond with the Historic Accessory Building Preservation By-Law.

9:30 Discussion on Peer Review Services for Cushing Village

The Board decided that the following groups would be interviewed for the Peer Consultant:

1. Fay, Spofford & Thorndike (FST)
2. Vanasse Hangen Brustlin (VHB)
4. BSC Group
5. ICON architecture

Mr. Battista noted that BSC and FST had familiarity with Belmont.

Interviews would be scheduled on April 3 and 5 beginning at 8:00 am.

9:40 Approval of Minutes

Moved by Andres Rojas to approve the minutes of December 6 and 12, 2011, January 9, 17, and 31, 2012. Seconded by Charles Clark.

Motion passed unanimously

Adjournment: 9:45 pm