

Belmont Economic Development Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes for 4/12/2012

Attendees: Lalg Musserian, Tommasina Olson, Anthony Leccese, Joe DeStefano, Keith Andre, Erik Rhodin, Edmund Starzec

Absent: Steve Savarese, Jay Szklut

Guests: Paul Bell, Co-Chair Belmont Historical Commission

Location: Belmont Town Hall Room 1

Minutes:

- Meeting was called to order at 8:06 a.m. by Lalg Musserian with Ed Starzec acting as Meeting Secretary.
- Lalg introduced new Planning Board representative to the EDAC, Joe DeStefano. Lalg indicated that Andy Rojas will likely be the new Board of Selectmen liaison, but that decision is not finalized yet.
- Minutes from 3/29/2012 were approved as presented.
- Lalg informed the EDAC that the segment she and Andy taped for the Belmont Business Report was aired on April 5th.

Demolition Delay By-Law Discussion

- Tony Leccese opened discussion of the demolition delay bylaw by asking what is its intent and goal and noting that it may have an impact on some types of commercial development.
- Tommasina Olson agreed and asked if an inventory of historic properties might be a better tool for determining applicability of the bylaw than a building age metric.
- It was noted that plans are underway to use CPA funds to inventory historic properties, excluding South Pleasant, King Property, and the Cushing Village site. Funds will be available for the survey in mid-2013.
- Paul Bell of the Historic District Commission pointed out that the bylaw will affect very few properties. Only two of the 42 demolition permits issued between 2008 and 2011 would have been affected. He also noted that it is the Historic Commission's intent that the building age metric would eventually be replaced by an inventory, but it will take several years to complete the inventory.
- In response to a question, Mr. Bell clarified that after 12 months of demo delay, there is no way to further delay the demolition of a preferably preserved buildings.

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- Tony noted that the delay could impact economic development. Tommasina Olson agreed, noting the potential impact to commercial projects.
- EDAC resolved to provide any further input on the bylaw to Lalg, who will forward it to the Historical Commission and the Board of Selectmen.

Review of Permitting Process

- Tony worked with Jay Szklut on an initial review of the town's permitting process including both building permits (standard to all towns) and zoning relief/special permits. Most complaints regarding timeline are with the latter category.
- Belmont's own guidelines say the process takes six months to complete. Lexington's website indicates that it will streamline the process and Watertown estimates 60 to 90 days.
- Belmont is unusual in that ZBA members write most decisions themselves, instead of staff. This can take up to 90 days, followed by a 21 day appeal period.
- Lalg asked if there is anything we can copy from surrounding towns?
- Erik Rhodin noted that Belmont does not offer the opportunity for up-front dialogue between developers and the Planning Board/ZBA. For example, the Cushing Square special permit requires full engineering plans be submitted up front so much money is being spent without guidance.
- Tommasina suggested that EDAC's position on the bylaw could be to support demo delay only with an inventory instead of a building age provision. The EDAC members present expressed general verbal agreement with the position.
- Tommasina suggested that perhaps the bylaw would be better received after the CPA funding is available to prepare an inventory.
- Joe DeStefano noted that the Planning Board would like to use the year 1921 and before as the "building age" standard. The EDAC members present agreed that the 50 year standard was not optimal and will have a negative impact on economic development in the town.

Action items:

- Jay and Tony will identify potential steps to streamline the zoning relief/special permit process in town.
- Lalg will contact Chris McVay about attending the next meeting.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:20 AM

Next Meeting: April 26, 2012 @ 8:00 a.m.
Room 1, Belmont Town Hall

All meeting materials are on file at the Office of Planning and Economic Development in the Town Hall.

Minutes prepared by Ed Starzec