Town of Belmont, MA
Traffic Advisory Committee (T.A.C.)

Minutes of Meeting April 14, 2011

Members present: Michael Bair, Peter Curro, Don Mercier, Dana Miller (Clerk), Linda Nickens (Chair), and Tommasina Olson.

Ex-Officio members present: Glenn Clancy.

Also present, Planning Board Members: Jenny Fallon and Karl Haglund;
Residents: John Carson, Joe Gianotti, and Hope Kelly--all from the Winn Brook neighborhood

The meeting was called to order at 7:01pm by Linda Nickens, Chair.

Minutes: Tommasina moved and Michael seconded the motion to approve the March 10, 2011. The Committee voted to accept the minutes as presented.

Next Meeting: The next meeting of the T.A.C. will be held at 7pm on Thursday, May 12, 2011

Belmont Center Traffic:

Glenn reported that Belmont Savings Bank CEO, Robert Mahoney, offered the bank's support for the plan to remove six parking spaces from directly in front of the bank on Leonard Street—leaving three spaces in that area—so that the land can be combined with the green lawn behind those spaces. This will allow for a town common to serve as an attractive focal point for shoppers coming into the town center.

Glenn also reported on the experience with the trial barrels narrowing Leonard Street from its intersection with Moore Street to the railroad underpass. Most people find the road narrowing to be a great improvement, but Glenn has received three telephone complaints; two of them from the same woman about her travel on Clifton Street.

Tommasina moved to accept the plan for the treatment of the town-center streets after the re-paving and Michael seconded the motion. This plan includes:

- Re-installing parallel parking on Leonard Street;
- Narrowing the South//East-bound lane of Leonard Street from its intersection with Moore Street to the approach to the railroad underpass;
- Reconfiguring parking spaces in the town center to allow for a total increase of 10 parking spaces in the town center while also allowing for the realization of a small town common that can serve as a community-building, shopper-friendly focal point. As part of this plan, parking immediately in front of the Belmont Savings Bank will be reduced by six spaces—leaving three spaces in that location.

- Slight curb extensions at the intersection of Claflin and Channing combined with an island in the middle of the intersection to shorten the road area to be traversed by pedestrians;
- Widening of Concord Avenue from its intersection with Leonard Street towards the intersection with Pleasant Street, to allow for increased parking spaces.

Vote: Five voted in favor of the plan. Don voted against the plan and asked that the minutes note his opposition to the provision of any community or green space that could be used for parking instead.

Town Center, Next Steps:

Glenn will meet with the Selectmen to present the plan. The re-finishing of Leonard Street is occasioned by Water Department work that is necessary there. Because scheduled Water Department projects on Frances and Goden (from School to Washington Streets) Streets are already slated for 2012, the earliest that the town-center work would begin is 2013.

In his efforts to minimize costs to Belmont, Glenn has begun to explore whether or not the work might be eligible for some funding under a State grant. Glenn will report back with his findings.

Butler and Winn Brook School Traffic:

Glenn hopes to present a plan for traffic in both school neighborhoods at our next meeting. Those plans, if approved, would then be implemented in June, 2011.

Residents from the Winn Brook neighborhood spoke to their concerns about unsafe parking at the corner of Coolidge and Waterhouse Roads. Evidently, it is very common for parents to park at an angle in the intersection, thereby blocking the cross walk and obstructing the view for Coolidge Road drivers trying to navigate through the intersection. Residents also reported that commuters drive too quickly on Coolidge Road.

T.A.C. members noted that the March 10 discussion of the concerns at the Butler School benefited from the school principal's participation. Residents and TAC members agreed that, while the Police, Planning Board, and T.A.C. will implement changes to address concerns about school traffic, the process would be most successful if the Winn Brook administration and School Committee were to participate. Tommasina suggested that the newly elected School Committee members be invited to participate in efforts to remedy the problem with the school traffic. Resident John Carson offered to speak with the Winn Brook principal about the general interest in her participation in the process.

New Business: Glenn reminded the T.A.C. that Open-Meeting Law requires that all new business to be discussed at a meeting be raised prior to that meeting so that it can be included in the published agenda. New business cannot be discussed by the T.A.C. without first being listed on the meeting agenda.

At 8:10pm, Tommasina moved and Don seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted, Dana Miller, Clerk

OFFICE OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

MEMO

MEMO TO:	Board of Selectmen Thomas G. Younger, Town Administrator
FROM:	Glenn R. Clancy, P.E.
SUBJECT:	Belmont Center Concept Plan - Traffic Advisory Committee Recommendation
DATE:	June 3, 2011

Background

The roadway system in and around Belmont Center is in need of repair. Before reconstructing these roadways the Board of Selectmen agreed to commission a consultant to develop a concept plan that would offer improvements to various elements in the center.

The Public Information Process

The BSC Group was retained to develop a concept plan for improvements to Belmont Center. In 2005 a designer selection process was initiated in order to secure the services of a consultant for the redesign of the Trapelo Road/Belmont Street corridor. The BSC Group was chosen to be the designer. Since the services required for the Belmont Center project are similar to the Trapelo Road/Belmont Street project it seemed prudent to retain the BSC Group for this project.

The Traffic Advisory Committee (TAC) hosted a series of public information sessions to solicit input from the public on the many different interests in the center. Traffic operations, parking supply, bicycle accommodations, pedestrian access and improved streetscape were all topics for discussion.

Traffic management was the major focus early in the process since any alternative for managing traffic impacts all other aspects of the center. BSC made a considerable effort to explore traffic alternatives; at least eight different options were explored. It was important to let the public know that anything and everything was up for discussion. One way pairings (the grouping of a pair of roadways designed so each functions as a one way roadway), round-a-bouts and even the closing of Leonard Street were evaluated. Ultimately the volume of traffic during the peak hours and geometric limitations of some of the roadways surrounding the center made it impossible to consider any alternative other than the patterns that currently exist.

Once traffic management was addressed enhanced pedestrian and bicycle accommodation was evaluated. There is a strong feeling amongst visitors to the center that pedestrians require a more comfortable and safer means to get around the area. Bicycle advocates are interested not only in accommodating potential commuter bike traffic through the center but perhaps more importantly providing an opportunity for cyclists to travel to the center to eat and shop. The wide Leonard Street right of way and the expanse of pavement on the north side of the bridge offer opportunities to simultaneously accommodate bicycles while introducing islands and curb extensions for safer pedestrian movement.

On the south side of the bridge crossing Concord Avenue or Common Street has long been a concern for pedestrians. The nearest crosswalk, either at All Saints Church on Common Street or in front of the Post Office on Concord Avenue, is too far removed from the bridge and not utilized by most pedestrians trying to get to Belmont Center. The TAC process was an excellent opportunity to introduce a proposal to address this problem.

Any study of Belmont Center must recognize parking. The merchants feel strongly that any change that will reduce the number of parking spaces will have a detrimental impact on their businesses. Overall, every effort was made to increase the parking inventory in the center. The Planning Division of Community Development is in the process of studying the parking situation in the center with the goal of better utilizing the parking spaces through efficient management practices. The study will be completed soon and will be presented at a later time.

Streetscape was also discussed. Wider sidewalks and improved pedestrian amenities such as benches and safe crosswalks were mentioned as was new, attractive street lighting.

Traffic Advisory Committee Discussion

Once the public participation phase ended the TAC met on a couple of occasions to discuss some of the finer points of the proposed concept plan.

Angle Parking

The owner of Locatelli Properties asked the TAC to consider angle parking instead of parallel parking along his building. Reverse angle parking was also mentioned as an alternative but this was quickly rejected. Although angle parking would have created additional parking spaces, TAC did not support the concept, relying on studies that show an increase in accidents from vehicles backing out of this type of parking space.

Single Lane Configuration

During the heavy morning commute traffic travelling south on Leonard Street approaching the bridge breaks into two lanes at Moore Street making it very difficult for vehicles travelling north on Leonard Street to turn onto Concord Avenue and Moore Street. It is equally difficult for vehicles coming from Channing Road to turn left onto Leonard Street. The reason for the difficulty is that motorists navigate through one lane of traffic and many times are caught by surprise by the second lane of traffic. Also, the second lane of traffic can't easily see a vehicle making a turn. The TAC considered a concept that would force traffic to stay in one travel lane until it reached the bridge.

Traffic barrels were placed on Leonard Street for several weeks in order to mimic a single lane configuration from Moore Street to Concord Avenue. There were very few complaints about the impact this had on traffic getting through the center. Several people expressed their support of the configuration since it made it easier to make turns onto and off of Leonard Street. There were days when traffic was backed up on Clifton Street however this is not an unusual occurrence when barrels are not in place and when one realizes a single travel lane allows for a crosswalk system to be placed at the Channing Road / Concord Avenue / Leonard Street intersection, the trade-off is reasonable.

Claflin Street and Cross Street Intersections

Pedestrian mobility on Channing Road was discussed because of the Clafin Street Parking Lot and the Farmers Market located in the parking lot near Cross Street. A couple of years ago the Cross Street intersection was reconfigured and functions well. At the Claflin Street intersection residents pointed out that many vehicles park in this location during lunch time. TAC gave much thought to balancing parking demands with vehicular access to the Claflin Street lot and safety for pedestrian crossing the road.

Green Space Expansion

The green space in front of the Belmont Savings Bank was thoroughly discussed. There are currently six parking spaces on the one way section of roadway that runs along the bank parking garage. This location is a natural area to link with the existing green space delta to create a larger, more useful green space in the center. Staff attended at least three meetings with bank representatives to discuss a proposal to expand the green space across the roadway to the existing sidewalk in front of the parking garage. The bank was concerned about losing the six parking spaces in this area and also with the elimination of the road which they feel serves their customers well, providing easy access to the parking garage.

An alternative concept was developed that would eliminate the parking spaces but retain a narrow access road along the parking garage. This concept had a dramatic impact on the configuration of the green space. TAC could not support this alternative. The bank, and at least one other business, objects to losing these spaces. It is important to note that the six spaces are located within the public right of way and are not specific to any one business. Also, additional

spaces proposed on Concord Avenue will offset the loss of these spaces. The loss of six parking spaces in this location is a reasonable trade-off to gain a larger green space, a benefit that many want to see in the center.

Concord Avenue Widening

The BSC Group introduced a concept for widening the south side of Concord Avenue from the former municipal light building to the bridge. The concept also includes regrading the area between Concord Avenue and the railroad tracks. The result is additional parking along Concord Avenue, an open space area for people to enjoy and an optional bike trail connecting a rail trail to Concord Avenue and Belmont Center. The concept requires significant regrading of the current pedestrian walkway area. The pedestrian tunnel under the tracks would remain but would be shortened. The stone walls in this area would essentially be eliminated.

Traffic Advisory Committee Recommendation

The Traffic Advisory Committee recommends adoption of the concept as depicted on the attached drawings. Details include a single travel lane through the center and curb extensions at each crosswalk. A new crosswalk system is introduced on the north side of the bridge at the intersection of Channing Road, Concord Avenue and Leonard Street and a new crosswalk is placed on the south side of the bridge.

The current bus stop located in front of Asai restaurant will be relocated to in front of the delta creating an additional parking space in front of Asai. The tax cabs currently parking in front of the delta will relocate at their discretion. A dedicated taxi stand is not contemplated at this time.

The sidewalks along Leonard Street will be widened (or narrowed where required) in order to achieve the single travel lane and bicycle accommodation. Some street trees will need to be removed but new trees will be planted. New street lighting will be included as well.

The intersections of Cross Street at Channing Road and Claflin Street at Channing Road will each have a raised island constructed in the middle of the roadway to provide an area of refuge for pedestrians while also helping to foster safer vehicular movement.

Concord Avenue will be widened from the former municipal light building to the bridge. A new green space will be created, an optional bike trail will be considered and additional parking will be created along Concord Avenue.

The delta in front of Belmont Savings Bank will be extended to the existing sidewalk along the bank parking garage eliminating the roadway and six parking spaces. Under the concept plan motorists and bank patrons will continue on Leonard Street and turn right onto Concord Avenue to access the parking garage or Concord Avenue. Further public input will be necessary in order to finalize a plan for use of the expanded green space.

Overall, there is expected to be an increase of 10 parking spaces in Belmont Center.

All roads within the project limit will be reconstructed.

The Traffic Advisory Committee respectfully requests approval of this recommendation.

Moving Forward

The estimated cost of designing the project is $210,000. The estimated cost of construction is $2.7 Million. Approximately $650,000 of the estimate is for lighting. If the Municipal Light Department can fund the lighting piece of the project the estimated construction cost can be reduced accordingly.

Design funds could come from the annual pavement management appropriation however any pavement management money used for design means less money available for road reconstruction. Construction could be funded by bonding a portion of the project and from state grant funds. Pavement management funds may be an option for paying the debt service on a bond issue. Other suggestions are welcome and appreciated.

Traffic Advisory Committee

TOWN OF BELMONT

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Linda Nickens, Chair
Laurence Macdonald, Vice Chair
Dana Miller, Clerk

Committee Members
Michael Bair
Peter Curro
Donald Mercier
Tommasina Olson
Matt Sullivan

Date: **April 6, 2011**

To: **Members – Traffic Advisory Committee**

From: **Linda Nickens, Chair**

Subject: Agenda for Meeting on **Thursday, April 14, 2011 at 7:00 PM** in the **Town Hall Conference Room 2.** If you cannot attend the meeting, please contact Linda via e-mail.

Agenda

7:00 Call to Order

7:00 – 7:05 Minutes

7:05 – 8:00 Belmont Center Discussion and Possible Final Vote

8:00 – 8:10 Old Business
- Butler School Update (No Action Required)
- Winn Brook School Update (No Action Required)

8:10 – 8:15 New Business
- No Known Items

8:15 Adjourn

Cc: Board of Selectmen
Tom Younger, Town Administrator
Glenn R. Clancy, Town Engineer
Sgt Kevin Shea, Belmont Police Department
Richard McLaughlin, Belmont Police Chief
Peter Castanino, Director, Department of Public Works
Karl Haglund, Planning Board