

BELMONT HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

April 28, 2003 3 p.m.

Town Hall

Attending:

Commission Members: Richard Cheek and Lydia Ogilby, Co-chairs, Paul Bell, Richard Pichette, Nancy Richards, Sharon Vanderslice

Board of Selectmen: William Brownsberger, Anne Marie S. Mahoney, Paul Solomon

Office of Community Development: Thomas Gatzunis

Municipal Light Department: Timothy McCarthy

Highway Department: Peter Castanino

Tree Warden: Tom Walsh

Traffic Advisory Committee: Linda Nickens

BSC Group: Charles Kalouskas, Marybeth Murphy

Various Belmont residents

PLEASANT STREET RECONSTRUCTION

The Commission met at the request of Will Brownsberger, Chair of the Board of Selectmen, in order to resolve the Commission's remaining concerns about the Pleasant Street Reconstruction Project. Design plans are scheduled to go out for bid in June and an approval letter from the Historic District Commission is required in order to proceed with the project.

The Commission requested that the proposed 29½-foot roadway between Concord and Leonard Streets be narrowed in order to save significant trees, slow traffic, and maintain the existing buffer zone between homes and the street. The Selectmen decided not to pursue this request because to do so would remove the project from the state's funding list for this fiscal year. The Selectmen did agree to reconsider the design in October 2003 after new regulations for state roads through historic districts are released as part of the Community Roadway Improvement Program. Should opportunities exist to narrow the road without significant additional expense to the town or major delay of the project, the Selectmen agreed to consider doing so.

The Commission had requested that wooden guard rails be specified wherever guard rails are necessary within the Historic District. The Selectmen voted to pay the cost of

installing these guard rails, which are more expensive than the rusted steel guard rails that the state had specified.

The Commission had requested that the new granite curbing within the district be chamfered, that is, angled on the outer side, to help maintain the road's original rural appearance. The Selectmen decided not to grant this request because squared-off curbing is perceived to be safer for pedestrians and more effective in draining water from the road.

The Commission had requested more detailed specifications on the reconstruction of each section of stone wall within the district. The Selectmen directed the BSC Group to incorporate the appropriate language in the design plans.

The Commission had requested that changes be made to the revised landscaping plan received on April 25, 2003. They asked specifically about the proposed removal of an old chestnut tree in front of the Rausch property. Three pages of written comments were given to the Town Engineer, the BSC Group, and to the town's Tree Warden, all of whom were asked by the Selectmen to try to incorporate these comments into the design plans during the next two weeks, before the plans go out for bid. The comments included a request that a row of elms that were to be planted in front of the Belmont Woman's Club be removed from the plan in order to preserve the view of this signature property from the street. The Selectmen directed the BSC Group to continue to consult with the Historic District Commission for the duration of the project, whenever changes were required to the landscape plan.

The Commission had requested that signage on the street be kept to a minimum and mounted on existing utility poles if possible. The Selectmen directed the Town Engineer and the BSC Group to reduce the specified signage wherever possible.

The Commission had requested that utility wires be buried. The Selectmen voted, after consultation with the director of the Municipal Light Department, to install a system of underground conduits and vaults that would accommodate all existing electric wires on the street. (Conduits would terminate in handholes at property lines for connection of underground electric services to abutting buildings at a future date.)

The Commission had requested that full cut-off lighting fixtures be installed on the existing utility poles. The Selectmen directed Timothy McCarthy to work with a lighting consultant and the Historic District Commission to choose appropriate fixtures. McCarthy stated that it would be difficult to install full cut-off fixtures without increasing the number of poles, but said that partial cut-off fixtures would be an option.

Selectman Brownsberger then strongly urged the Commission to approve the project. The Massachusetts Highway Department needs to receive an approval letter by April 30.

Shortly after 4 p.m., the Commission members and Town Engineer Tom Gatzunis moved to Town Hall Conference Room 4. Gatzunis confirmed that underground conduits would

be installed by the Municipal Light Department during the road reconstruction and that electrical wires between Moore Street and Leonard Street would be buried. Two of the three primary, or high, wires between Trapelo Road and Concord Avenue would also be buried in the near future.

After further discussion of signage and landscaping, the Commission voted 6 – 0 to approve the Reconstruction Project. Richard Pichette is to draft an approval letter to the Cultural Resources Department of Mass Highway and Sharon Vanderslice is to draft a cover letter to the Board of Selectmen detailing the design changes approved by the Selectmen today. This letter will be circulated via email on April 29 for comment by all members present at the meeting. It will then be signed by Co-chair Richard Cheek.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 5 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Sharon Vanderslice.