

BELMONT VISION 21 IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE

Minutes, April 7, 2005

Members present: Tim Higgins, Matthew Houseman, Sarah Oaklander, Margaret O'Brien, Jennifer Page, Diane Stafford

Members absent: Victoria Haase, Paul Solomon, Barry Winston

Other present: Dolores Keefe

7:15 p.m. There being a quorum, the meeting was called to order by Chair Jennifer Page.

- The minutes from March 17, 2005 were accepted unanimously with one minor edit (5:0).
- Dolores Keefe provided the Committee with an update on Joe Greene. He is quite sick but is still doing fairly well.
- Sara Oaklander provided a brief update on the BEPG report to the Board of Selectmen. It was well received and a lengthy conversation took place with the Board. There was a front page article in today's paper. However, no formal action taken. Angelo Firenze and Paul Solomon were strong/vocal supporters while Selectmen Brownsberger wanted to see additional work on zoning concerns.

MCAN Training (Mass. Climate Action Network)

The Group assists municipalities in planning and designing for energy savings. They are having a training day on "clean power" on May 14th. There is a registration fee but there is money left over from the Environmental Fair which could be used. (\$20 day/\$10 half a day) If you would like to attend, please let Jennifer know.

Meet Belmont

The date has been changed to August 31st (Wednesday) at Belmont High School. It is generally for new-comers. Sara Oaklander expressed concern with the date as many people are away on vacation, and Delores Keefe told us that this is a week that many department heads take as vacation. A short discussion took place on the timing. Jennifer will let the Neighbors' Network folks know of these concerns.

Sustainable Belmont

Jennifer Page expects the Committee to create a mandate for this task force as this has been standard procedure in the past. She distributed a draft for discussion. Matt had a comment on the timeline and thought it should be more specific. Several comments were made concerning "process" and the "charge". Jennifer Page will weigh the comments and amend the document after hearing from others.

Town Day on May 21st

Delores has been investigating the fee for obtaining a table. It is believed that it is \$75.00 for a space but the owner must supply their own table. There has been some difficulty in obtaining information about the event which is not a good sign. Concern was expressed. The Committee would like to have a table, both in order to disseminate the Vision Statement and also to give Belmont Neighbors Network and Sustainable Belmont an opportunity to recruit members.

Planning for Belmont Center

Jennifer Page noted that Selectman Paul Solomon is launching a planning effort for downtown. A draft proposal from Selectman Solomon was distributed by Jennifer. He is looking for feedback on this proposal but would prefer the discussion to stay within the Committee as much as possible as it is so preliminary. He wants to present it to his fellow Selectmen rather than them hearing about it from others.

Jennifer specifically asked about the need to “design” the planning process by a Committee as proposed. Matt Houseman believed the process design phase needs to be cleaner.

Tim Higgins believed that the 1st phase of developing a planning process is not necessary. As proposed it will not allow enough time for implementation of any results at the April 2006 ATM. Zoning articles need to be developed a minimum of 60-90 days before Town Meeting for them to be considered for action at April 2006 (required public hearing process and development for the Warrant).

He opined that the Town follow the Waverley Re-Use Committee process. If implementation is not expected in April '06, the process as currently proposed can work. A discussion ensued about the process and the issues to be discussed and potentially resolved. Committee membership size was also discussed and it was proposed by Matt Houseman that a smaller group is far more functional.

Tim Higgins suggested reducing the size of the list of items for the new committee to consider. He suggested striking the parking issue (Vis a Vis a parking garage), the railroad grade separation and the effort to regulate traffic volumes. He believed the committee should accept the downtown “target area” as it is zoned. Otherwise, there are too many issues and too much to do in one year due to the need to publically vet the issues and the recommended solutions.

Sara Oaklander stated that it would be useful to review the body of previous work which is quite extensive (parking study, downtown street design, Economic Development Plan). Then the committee could review where the Fire Station and Electric Light Building fit in to the scheme. Discussion centered on using this existing work and obtaining public “buy-in”. Public participation in the early stages to begin the planning and throughout the process is critical. Framing the questions that are to be investigated is important. The committee must identify main issues to frame the planning process. Obtaining public comment on the synthesis of the issues is very important. A lengthy discussion ensued.

Waverley Square Fire Station Re-Use Committee Wrap-up:

Jennifer Page distributed a set of notes from a discussion several of the re-Use Committee members recently had.

Margaret O'Brien thought it was very helpful and will be useful to future Committees.

Tim Higgins also noted that he thought the planning process was very good (even though the result was not what he hoped for) and he suggested the process be employed in the downtown planning study. Then, the Town would not need to spend 3 months developing a new process for the downtown.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Timothy D. Higgins
Secretary Pro-Team