

## BELMONT HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

Town Hall

June 2, 2004

Meeting Minutes

ATTENDING Co-chairs: Richard Cheek and Lydia Ogilby. Members: Paul Bell, Lisa Harrington, Linn Hobbs (second half), Richard Pichette, Nancy Richards, Michael Smith, Sharon Vanderslice. Associate Member: Matthew Genta. Absent: Arleyn Levee.

### 5 SOMERSET STREET

Attending: Frank Aguilar, owner; John and Sara Sos, abutters.

Mr. Aguilar came before the Commission to seek approval of the installation of two skylights in the roof of his 1841 carriage house, as an addition to his previously approved application (2/13/02) for the renovation/restoration of the carriage house. He showed photographs of the interior of the carriage house, conveying evidence of earlier framed openings in the roof, and a historical drawing of a similar Vermont barn and carriage house with two 12-light windows in the roof. Mr. Sos stood to express his support for restoration of the carriage house. After the Commission reviewed the materials presented, Michael Smith, who recently visited the site, made a motion to allow the installation of two skylights on either the Pleasant Street side or the back side of the carriage house. The Commission approved the motion on a voice vote. Mr. Aguilar will return with drawings of the actual custom-made skylights that he plans to install, at which time the Commission will add the skylights to the previously approved application.

### MCLEAN TELECOMMUNICATIONS TOWER

Richard Pichette, the Historic District Commission representative on the McLean Land Management Committee, reviewed the history of this proposed tower, which is to be sited on a high point of the McLean Hospital property, on a portion of the land that will become open space accessible to the public under the McLean rezoning agreement approved by Town Meeting several years ago. The 120-foot high tower, which will stand inside a fenced yard measuring 50 x 50 feet, is being erected primarily for use by the Belmont police and fire departments. However, there will also be space on the tower available for rental by three different cellular communications companies. Because the tower would sit in a national historic district, the Belmont Historic District Commission has been asked by the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) to determine whether the tower will have any adverse impact on the surrounding area.

The Commission reviewed computer-simulated photographs showing what the tower would look like from four vantage points on Concord Avenue and on the McLean property. A motion was made to approve the erection of the tower, which Commission

members said would have an adverse visual impact on the area but was necessary for health and safety reasons. The HDC suggested that the high visibility of the tower could be lessened by painting the tower a flat black-green color up to the tree line and a flat pale blue or gray above the tree line. A letter detailing Town planning for the tower and the Commission's comments will be sent to the MHC. This motion passed by a vote of 7-1.

## HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGN GUIDELINES

Lisa Harrington said that the best place to publish these guidelines for homeowners in the Pleasant Street Historic District is on the Town's website. That way, homeowners could easily access only the sections they need at whatever level of detail they require. She would like to include links to the numerous Preservation Briefs published by the National Park Service.

She has incorporated photo graphics and a glossary and would also like to include a history of the development of the district and why its borders were set where they are. It was suggested that Town Historian Richard Betts might be able to help write this section. Ms. Harrington will contact Mr. Betts.

The sections on cleaning and repointing of masonry have been expanded; and more detail has been added to the sections on windows, fenestration, and massing.

Commission members suggested that the guidelines also include detailed suggestions on appropriate fencing for historic properties and rules on partial demolitions within the district. (Paul Bell reported that the Cambridge Historical Commission enforces its rules on fencing by withholding building permits for future work and/or delaying sale of a house until fencing is brought into compliance with Historic District guidelines.)

Ms. Harrington will forward her most recent draft of the Design Guidelines to Commission members via email later in the month.

## TRAPELO ROAD CORRIDOR PLANNING

Richard Cheek suggested that one or more members of the MIT design team that is studying this corridor be invited to attend a future meeting of the Historic District Commission to discuss the history of the street.

## PLEASANT STREET RECONSTRUCTION

Several Commission members expressed interest in continuing to pursue the possibility of narrowing the proposed width of this street in the Historic District. Narrowing the paved roadway would save some mature trees and preserve green space between the curb

and the houses on the south side of the street during the upcoming state-funded reconstruction. Michael Smith will arrange for the Commission to appear at a future meeting of the Board of Selectmen in order to request permission to contact the Massachusetts Highway Department to discuss this issue and also to consult with the Selectmen on the burial of cable and telephone wires. Representative Anne Paulsen, Municipal Light Department Director Tim McCarthy, and the new chairperson of the Cable Advisory Committee will be invited to attend. Sharon Vanderslice will contact Mr. McCarthy regarding the mechanics of burying utility wires.

#### WAVERLEY FIRE STATION

A joint meeting of the Historic District Commission and the Waverley Fire Station Re-use Committee to discuss future use of the station has been arranged for Monday, June 21, at 7 p.m. Location is to be determined.

#### MEMBERS REAPPOINTED

Richard Cheek congratulated Nancy Richards and Arleyn Levee on their recent reappointment by the Selectmen to the Historic District Commission. Associate Member Lisa Harrington also has been appointed, as an Alternate Member with voting status. She replaces Jonathan Treat, who resigned from the Commission this spring. Mr. Cheek suggested that a new, non-voting Associate Member be added to take Ms. Harrington's old spot. He agreed to contact a town resident who previously responded to the Selectmen's 2003 request for volunteers.

#### LIBRARY SITE COMMITTEE

Richard Cheek announced that he had been asked to represent the Commission on a new town committee that will help determine the site for a new or rebuilt Belmont Public Library. Some discussion followed on possible building sites.

#### 509 PLEASANT STREET

Realtor member Nancy Richards asked whether the house at 509 Pleasant, which is currently for sale, could be demolished by a new owner. Richard Cheek responded that no structure within the Historic District could be completely demolished.

#### PRESERVATION PUBLICITY

Members suggested a list of nine topics for newspaper articles on preservation-related issues. Matt Genta will prepare a draft of an article on demolition delay by-laws for

review at the Commission's next meeting on July 7. Nancy Richards will prepare a draft of an article on how historic preservation increases real estate values for review at the Commission's meeting on August 4. Linn Hobbs, with research assistance from Paul Bell, will prepare a draft on the historic development of Pleasant Street for review on September 1. Other articles will follow. Sharon Vanderslice will contact Linda Pinkow, editor of the *Belmont Citizen-Herald*, to discuss placement.

*Minutes recorded by Sharon Vanderslice.*