

TOWN OF BELMONT
PLANNING BOARD

MEETING MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 11, 2012

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7:00 p.m. Meeting called to order.

Attendance: Sami Baghdady, Chair; Michael Battista, Vice Chair; Elisabeth Allison, Charles Clark, Joseph DeStefano (recused himself for the Cushing Village Public Hearing), Karl Haglund; Andres Rojas, Liaison to the Board of Selectmen; Jeffrey Wheeler, Staff .

Mr. Baghdady opened the meeting with a brief moment of silence in memory of the tragic events of September 11, 2001.

Mr. Baghdady next introduced Elizabeth Allison, and welcomed her as a member of the Planning Board.

7:00 p.m. Proposed Richardson Farm Historic District

Joseph Cornish, representing the Historic District Commission, addressed the Board. He began by stating that Belmont had 2 historic districts: one along Pleasant Street and one along Common Street. The proposal currently under consideration is to create the Richardson Farm Historic District. The new district would include the Joseph Wright house at 306 Washington Street, the Thomas Richardson house 336 Washington Street and approximately 10 acres of active farmland behind these houses.

Mr. Clark observed that much of the land was already subject to an agricultural preservation restriction, and questioned the necessity of an additional historic restriction. Mr. Cornish responded that the agricultural restriction would not apply to certain aspects of the property, such as the stone walls which have an archeological significance. Designating the properties as historic would ensure the long term preservation of the stone walls. Moreover, the agricultural restriction has been granted to The Belmont Land Trust, Inc., which is a non-municipal nonprofit corporation. The Town has no control over the actions of The Belmont Land Trust. However, the Town through the Historic District Commission would have jurisdiction over exterior improvements to properties within the historic district.

Ms. Allison asked whether or not a single owner of property could be forced to have his property designated as historic. It was responded that this is a possibility, but a historic district would need the approval of Town Meeting.

Mr. Battista asked what the current boundary of the property was. Mr. Cornish approached the Board and showed them on a map prepared in conjunction with the preliminary historic district report.

Ms. Ogliby, the owner of the property in question, stated that she is concerned that the legislature will over-ride the agricultural preservation restriction, and the historic district designation would give an extra layer of protection.

Mr. Baghdady noted that the Historic District Commission would be holding a public hearing on the proposed historic district. He added that once the Historic District Commission issues its final report, the Planning Board will make a recommendation to Town Meeting on whether to support the creation of the new Richardson Farm Historic District.

7:20 p.m. Public Hearing Continued - Wellington School Building Committee

Mr. Baghdady read a letter from The Wellington School Building Committee requesting a continuation of the public hearing to October 23, 2012. He stated that the Planning Board was waiting for the results of the noise mitigation measures which, he was informed, would become available within the month.

Moved by Mr. Battista to continue the public hearing to October 23, 2012 at 7:00 pm. Mr. Clark seconded the motion.

Motion passes.

7:25 p.m. Election of Planning Board Officers

Moved by Mr. Battista to elect Mr. Baghdady as Chair of the Planning Board. Seconded by Ms. Allison.

Motion passes.

Moved by Mr. Baghdady to elect Mr. Battista as Vice Chair of the Planning Board. Seconded by Mr. DeStefano.

Motions passes.

7:25 p.m. Committee Updates

Mr. Battista reported that the Capital Budget Committee still continues to prioritize projects.

7:25 p.m. Approval of Minutes

Moved by Mr. Battista to approve the minutes of May 8 and 22, 2012 and June 12, 2012.

Mr. Clark seconded the motion

Motion passes.

Calendar

Mr. Baghdady stated that the meeting scheduled for the evening of Tuesday, September 25, 2012 (Yom Kippur) will be changed to Thursday, September 27 at 7:00 pm.

Mr. DeStefano recused himself from the remainder of the meeting. The Planning Board took a 10 minute recess.

7:40 p.m. Public Hearing Continued: Cushing Village Application

Mr. Donohue, attorney for the Applicant, stated that following the July 10th public hearing the

Applicant felt discouraged and unsure whether he could comply with the height and mass limitations suggested by the Planning Board. However, since that last meeting, Smith Legacy has reconsidered the comments offered regarding size, scale and mass and is enthused to move forward with the project within the parameters suggested by the Planning Board. Mr. Donohue commended the Board's willingness to engage in working sessions and felt that these sessions have been extremely helpful to moving the project forward.

Mr. Donahue stated that a project within the Planning Board's height and mass parameters could result in 113 to 118 residential units, with about 37, 500 square feet of commercial space. Mr. Baghdady stated that unit count can be an imprecise measurement because it depends on the size and number of bedrooms within each unit, and that it was important to focus on size, scale and mass. Mr. Baghdady stated that if the other criteria were satisfactory, including the fiscal impact analysis, traffic analysis, impact on municipal infrastructure and other criteria, then unit count would not necessarily be the determining factor. Mr. Haglund and Mr. Battista agreed that unit count should not be the primary deciding factor in the analysis.

Ms. Allison clarified that she would not be voting on this matter since she was not a member of the Board during the previous public hearings.

Mr. Donohue stated that the Applicant may need some flexibility in order to meet the State Building Code. He added that there specific areas that the Applicant will need the Board to allow for some flexibility: parking; inclusionary zoning; and value engineering in design. He noted that future presentations will focus on updates to the traffic and parking analysis. Mr. Quinn, architect for the project, stated that the development team has met with the Town's engineers to help with the analysis. He said they would have the site plan to the Board in the next several weeks.

Mr. Baghdady reiterated several times that the most important matters for the Applicant to immediately focus on are revising the plans of the three proposed buildings and creating 3-D visualizations so that the Town can get a better understanding of the development. He added that these should be placed on the Town's website for all to view.

Moved by to continue the Public Hearing to September 27, 2012 at 7:00 pm. Seconded by Mr. Battista.

Motion passes.

Adjournment: 8:15 p.m.