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Belmont Vision Implementation Committee
Draft Meeting Minutes for September 20, 2012

Members in attendance: Tim Bowman, Jennifer Page, Paul Solomon, Doug John, Mary Power, Michael Sattler, Wendy Rundle

Others in attendance: April Edrington – Belmont resident and visitor, Kevin Cunningham – Belmont School Committee liaison

Meeting convened by chair at 7: 15pm in the Flett room of the Belmont Library.

1. Minutes: Review of meeting minutes was deferred until a subsequent meeting.

2. Update on the August 14, 2012 VIC Meeting with Jennifer Van Campen of Metro West

Collaborative Development: Background: Jennifer Van Campen represents Metro West CD, a private, non-profit providing housing advocacy in Belmont, Lexington, Watertown, and Waltham. Jennifer is working with Jay Szklut at the Belmont Planning Department on a Housing Development forum to be sponsored by the Belmont Housing Trust.

Jennifer Page reported that November 1, 2012 is the newly-scheduled date for the public forum.

Discussion ensued regarding whether or not VIC should co-sponsor this event, and if VIC might be helpful in promoting it.

There was general consensus that the language of "Our Common Goals," (part of the Working Vision for Belmont's Future), implies the importance of affordable housing: "We will welcome newcomers and value diversity, while caring for our neighbors and for the needs of children, youth, and seniors." In addition, affordable housing is a component of the Community Preservation Act which was recently approved by Belmont voters.

Paul Solomon read VIC's criteria for lending sponsorship to events.

There was discussion regarding the agenda of the Metro West CD and the Belmont Housing Trust, and it was generally agreed that the VIC would support an event which provided an open forum focused on affordable housing, even if the organizing group has an advocacy agenda.

It was agreed that Jennifer Page will contact the Belmont Housing Trust to learn more about the planned forum, to inquire about how VIC might assist, and to raise the possibility of VIC co-sponsorship. Jennifer will report her findings back to Tim. Further details will be discussed at the VIC September 27th meeting.

If VIC co-sponsors, it will be important for a VIC representative to say a few words at the outset of the forum about why we are doing so and the relevance of the topic to the VIC.

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3. On-line Communications and Civic Engagement: Brainstorming continued on topics discussed at past meetings, including the on-line communications and networking tool "Belmont Commonplace." There was interest and energy around the idea of promoting the use of such a tool with issue-oriented committees and organizations, and articulating why this communication vehicle might be appealing to them. Paul mentioned that he had recently met with David Kale, Belmont's Town Administrator, and they had discussed the challenge of maintaining communication within the community.

Tim Bowman noted that VIC member Michael Sattler was named a Belmont Civic Hero as part of the Belmont Commonplace site.

4. Debrief on Meet Belmont: Jennifer asked for feedback on Meet Belmont and there were kudos all around for Sara Oaklander's and Jennifer's efforts. Comments included:

- It was engaging
- The Belmont Religious Council connected with several new projects for its Belmont Serves program
- Addition of the political corridor was a positive, although some exhibitors felt a bit marginalized by the physical location of their space

Jennifer acknowledged that the political piece is a work in progress and we have at least 2 years before the next major election season.

She also reported that the demographics and stats were about the same as last year's event. Jennifer reported that, other than media outlets, day care and nursery schools, she and Sara allowed two for-profit ventures in the event because they thought these services were important for newcomers: 1) an on-line job and service posting/matching site, and 2) an on-line babysitter directory and co-op service.

Jennifer noted that they turned down a lot people who are starting businesses.

Sara and Jennifer have the Meet Belmont system in place and want to begin to hand it off to others starting next year.

5. Envision Belmont Forum: One of the strengths of Meet Belmont is that it facilitates people and organizations coming together and meeting up "in real life." VIC members agreed that it would be nice to plan and host an event that brings together small start-up companies, sole practitioners, and other small enterprises for business-to-business networking, and for outside visibility, job creation, and business sales. This effort might be focused on the social enterprise end of the business spectrum.

This might be considered a commercial angle on Meet Belmont, like a Belmont Business Fair. And might include a professional workshop or a guest speaker.

To be discussed again at a future meeting.

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Our guest April Edrington shared a bit about her background and her time in Belmont. She expressed interest in joining the committee and was directed on how to apply for formal appointment to the committee.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Wendy Rundle, Secretary Pro Tem
Sept 20, 2012