

TOWN OF BELMONT
PLANNING BOARD

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MEETING MINUTES
September 27, 2011

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

Attendance: Sami Baghdady, Chair; Michael Battista, Charles Clark, Joseph DeStefano, Andres Rojas; Karl Haglund, Associate Member; and Jeffrey Wheeler, Staff

Andy Rojas reported that the Economic Development Advisory Committee recently made a presentation to the Board of Selectmen regarding potential tax revenue. The committee reported how various commercial projects could generate five million dollars in tax revenue. Mr. Rojas mentioned that the committee and the Selectmen were supportive of the South Pleasant Street project, but felt that a lot more discussion needed to take place with the community.

7:14 p.m. Presentation to Save the Clark House

Erik Rhodin, architect and Belmont resident, presented the most recent plans to save the Clark House. His proposal calls for moving the House next to the Lions Club on a 9,000 square foot lot with 75' of frontage to comply with zoning regulations. He explained that the Royal Road property is owned by the Town and contains several drainage easements. He mentioned that he had just recently presented the plans to representatives of the Lions Club and that the plans were changed in an attempt to address the concerns raised during the meeting. As Mr. Rhodin described, the plans seek to redirect traffic patterns in front of the Lions Club. He argued that this would accomplish several things including eliminating traffic jams at events and holiday sales and slowing down traffic going up Royal Road. He also recommended changing the intersection of Royal Road and Common Street and the intersection of Royal Road and Clark Street and making the road width consistent along the entire road way.

Mr. Rhodin presented a slide show with specific focus on the realigned roads in front of the Lions Club. He showed a slide of the traffic flow on Royal Road and suggested that the road way in front of the Lions Club should be cobble stone or other historically accurate block, in keeping with the historical context of the Clark House. Mr. Rhodin also mentioned that an area north of the Lions Club would be used as a parking area during Lions Club event sales, such as Easter or Christmas.

Sami Baghdady asked for comments or questions from the Board. Charles Clark asked about the historical significance of the house. Erik Rhodin explained that the house is extremely significant since it was originally constructed in 1760. The middle wing of the house was added in 1850, and the garage was added in the early 1930's.

Andy Rojas expressed concern about the length of time needed to complete the process to move the house and whether it was possible to do so within the 6 month time frame that the developer has give to the Town to relocate the house.

7:35 p.m. Demolition Delay By-Law

Sami Baghdady reported that Jeffrey Wheeler and the Historic District Commission were working on a draft Demolition Delay By-Law.

Discussion ensued about the particulars of the By-Law. Jeffrey Wheeler stated that the age of the structure and the length of the proposed delay are the two main factors to consider in drafting a By-Law; he added that these are also the most contentious issues to resolve.

The Board questioned how old a structure should be in order to be considered historically significant and therefore worthy of delay. Should a structure of fifty years or more be considered historically significant, or should the By-law specify a date?

Sami Baghdady questioned the length of the delay. Although the actual demolition delay period in the proposed By-law is one year, the actual delay is about 15 months if you factor in the hearing process.

Andy Rojas expressed concern that the Demolition Delay By-Law would affect economic development opportunities in town. He stated that he would not want to see the delay of any commercial project.

Mr. Baghdady concluded the discussion by reporting that he and Joe DeStafano will be meeting with the two Chairs of the Historic District Commission to address the matters raised by the Planning Board.

7:55 p.m. Ad Hoc Committee on Town Meeting Communication

Representatives of the Ad Hoc Committee on Town Meeting Communication, William Green, Ann Donohue and Elizabeth “Sue” Pew reported their Committees findings to the Board. Mr. Green presented a slides show outlining issues discussed by the Committee and recommendations to address the issues.

Discussion focused on the recommended opening and closing of the Warrant in January rather than March, which is the current practice. Jeffrey Wheeler asked whether the Board understood the implications of closing the Warrant in January. He explained that the public hearing process would have to be completed by January in order to have the text of the zoning amendments ready for the Warrant. He further explained that the public hearings on the amendments would have to take place in the fall.

Sami Baghdady stated that he supported the idea of moving the Warrant dates since Town Meeting Members have commented in the past there is not enough time before Town Meeting to discuss and understand zoning amendments.

8:30 p.m. Update on South Pleasant Street Zoning Proposal

Andy Rojas reported that Luis Cetrangolo is continuing to focus on visualizations for South Pleasant Street.

Sami Baghdady reported that Mr. Cetrangolo should be prepared to present his initial visualizations at the October 11th meeting. Mr. Rojas stated that the City of Seattle had extensive design review guidelines online and that they try to capture the sense of a neighborhood. He recommended that the Board review them for a sense of what Design Guidelines can accomplish.

8:50 p.m. Discussion of Alternative Energy Generation By-Law

Sami Baghdady presented his research and recommendations to the Board regarding regulating the location of solar energy and wind turbines. Mr. Baghdady mentioned that he had a conversation with Town Counsel regarding these limits and that Town Counsel felt that these didn't seem to be 'unreasonable' – the statutory limitation within MGL, Chapter 40A. He showed a few pictures of different homes with solar panels and wind turbines ranging from aesthetically pleasing to very intrusive.

Discussion amongst the Board members ensued regarding placement of solar panels and wind turbines and how placement of these structures might affect safety, the general welfare of the Town and property values. The Board agreed that solar energy facilities should not be placed in front yards, that they should be counted within the lot coverage, and if placed on a roof, they should not extend more than 3 feet beyond the roof ridge of the house.

Jennifer Paige encouraged the Board to be forward thinking and to encourage residents to use solar and wind energy.

Meeting Adjourned: 9:35 pm

List of Documents Presented:

- Kopelman and Paige Opinion regarding Siting Solar and Wind Energy Facilities Under the Zoning Act and the Green Communities Act, January 20, 2011
- Town of Carlisle Solar Power Generation and Wind Conversion Systems Bylaw, 2009
- Draft Demolition Delay By-Law, prepared by the Belmont Historic District Commission, September 13, 2011
- Demolition Delay Bylaws, pp 49-52, Preservation through Bylaws and Ordinances, May 6, 2003