

## BELMONT HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

September 5, 2007  
Meeting Minutes  
Belmont Town Hall

Attending: Michael Smith, Richard Cheek, Paul Bell, Lisa Harrington, Peter Gunness, Linn Hobbs, Arleyn Levee, Nancy Richards, Lydia Ogilvy, and Richard Pichette

### 1. REVIEW THE PLANS FOR THE REHAB OF THE CENTRAL FIRE STATION

Mr. Brian Burke Jr. of the Burke Land Company presented the latest iteration of his plans for the rehabilitation and preservation of the Central Fire Station. Mr. Smith introduced the discussion.

A. Where are we in the process? This is the third full Commission meeting (July, August, September). Since the August meeting the following has been accomplished:

- " Met with Mr. Burke three times as a subcommittee
- " Visited site to see boundary markers of proposed third floor
- " Reviewed drawing revisions and window submittal
- " Meeting with Mr. Burke, Glen Clancy, Jeffrey Wheeler where the following was revealed:
  - a) Proposed addition makes three-story building, not in compliance with zoning by-law; a special permit is required from the Zoning Board of Appeals
  - b) Mr. Burke must submit a Plot Plan to the Building Department with calculations to determine compliance with zoning requirements for setbacks, FAR, height, parking, etc.
  - c) There can be a fast track to the early October ZBA hearing, if Mr. Burke can have his plans ready in time.

Concerns expressed to date by the HDC (and others) include:

- " East (Leonard Street) façade - design of windows and doors, masonry repairs
- " North façade - extent and detailing of proposed egress balcony; suspended air handling units
- " South façade - extent and detailing of proposed atrium, intrusion of atrium into corner buttress of the first station
- " General - inconsistencies and lack of detail in drawings to date

Historic District concerns:

- " Review design in relation to preservation of existing 1899 fire station façade and tower in accordance with Secretary of Interior's Standards and Guidelines for the Rehabilitation of Historic Properties.

Tonight's meeting:

" Approve with conditions and/or disapprove proposed modifications to each façade of the historic fire station

" Comment and make recommendations on proposed third-story addition

B. Burke's Presentation. Mr. Burke presented his plans for the northeast and south facades of the building. His proposals were in general quite responsive to concerns expressed by the Commission at previous meetings of the Commission. In some instances the details he proposed, though acceptable to the Commission, were not adequately included in the drawings submitted by Mr. Burke. These drawings ultimately will be the record of what has been proposed by Burke and approved by the Commission. Mr. Burke presented plans for the third-story addition which, it turns out, are not in compliance with the zoning by-laws and will therefore require a special permit from the Zoning Board of Appeals. The HDC has a responsibility to comment and make recommendations regarding the addition of the third floor in line with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for the Rehabilitation of Historic Properties and additions to historic buildings.

Regarding the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Rehabilitation, several direct references from the Standards were quoted by Commission members, including, but not limited to the following:

" "The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided."

" "Distinctive features . . . that characterize a historic property shall be preserved."

" "New additions, exterior alternations or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment."

" "Not Recommended" includes:

a) "Attaching a new addition so that the character-defining features of the historic building are obscured, damaged or destroyed."

b) "Designing a new addition so that its size and scale in relation to the historic building are out of proportion thus diminishing the historic character."

c) "Designing and constructing new additions that result in the diminution or loss of the historic character of the resource, including design, workmanship, location or setting."

d) "Designing new additions . . . that obscure, damage, or destroy character-defining features of the historic building."

e) "Constructing additional stories so that the historic appearance of the building is radically changed."

C. Commissioners' Questions and Concerns. The concerns & questions of commissioners were expressed about the details of the proposals for the north, east and south facades. If these details can be shown on future plans to the Belmont District Commission's satisfaction, the Commission will adopt them. However, there was near unanimous objection to the third-floor addition. Concern was expressed about the scale (it is too large for the space) and the effect it

would have on visual perspectives of the historic tower. Even if the third story were to be built and scaled down and there was no intrusion of the roof of the fire station, Commissioners expressed concern about the negative impact such a structure might have on the historic character of the tower and the central fire station.

D. Audience Questions. The questions and comments from the audience paralleled those from the Commission. One questioner asked why the two chimneys that were part of the third-story addition were not included on the model or on the drawings (one is for a fireplace and the other is for exhaust from the kitchen restaurant).

E. Commission Actions. The Commission took the following actions pertaining to the original 1899 façade and tower:

1) North Façade

It was moved and voted unanimously, to approve the proposed design of the North façade subject to the following conditions:

- a) Exterior Egress Balcony - Burke Land Company (BLC) will submit to the HDC, for approval, large scale detailed drawings showing proposed materials, sizes, color and connections.
- b) Exterior Wall-Mounted Air Handling Units - BLC will submit to the HDC, for approval, additional information describing the proposed size, configuration, color and attachment details of the A.H. units as well as confirmation that the proposed system is in compliance with local by-laws and Commonwealth of Massachusetts Regulations.
- c) Third Story Additions to the 1899 Fire Station - The HDC does not approve the proposed outdoor deck, the Conference and Utility Rooms within and/or atop the roof structure of the 1899 building, and will await resolution of any proposed third-floor additions by other municipal bodies.

2) East Façade (Leonard Street)

It was moved and voted unanimously, to approve the proposed design of the East façade subject to the following conditions:

- a) Doors, Transoms, Windows, Bollards - BDC will submit to the HDC, for approval, drawings (minimum 1/2" scale) showing the proposed design, including materials, color(s) and configuration of brickwork restoration, exterior doors, transoms, windows, and bollards to be fully coordinated between the restaurant and BLC architects.
- b) Lighting and Signage - BLC will submit to the HDC, for approval, drawings and related product literature, describing proposed exterior lighting and signage.

3) South Façade

It was moved and voted unanimously, to approve the proposed design of the South façade subject to the following conditions:

- a) Exterior Stair and Enclosure - BLC will submit to the HDC, for approval, drawings, details, materials, color(s) and related product literature for the proposed design of the exterior stair to the second level and exterior enclosure of the stair leading to the proposed basement.
- b) Elevator - BLC will submit to the HDC, for approval, the proposed design of the exposed-to-exterior elevator doors, including style, material, and color, and treatment of the exterior masonry opening of the existing historic tower proposed to house the elevator.
- c) Door to Restaurant - BLC will submit to the HDC, for approval, drawings and related information showing a design of the door and transom to the restaurant coordinated with the design of the East façade and/or based on the design of the original door using historic photographic evidence.

4) Proposed Third Floor Addition

It was moved and voted unanimously to recommend against a third story addition to the 1899 fire station and its rear wing; however, should the proposed third story addition be allowed by the Town, the HDC recommends the following:

- a) Above the 1899 fire station, the proposed lobby be reduced in size and made more transparent
- b) The proposed Conference Room and Utility Room above, and the proposed outdoor deck recessed in the 1899 roof be eliminated.
- c) Every attempt be made to create an addition that does not restrict or obscure views of the essential form of the historic tower from Concord Avenue (exiting the tunnel), Moore Street, Pleasant Street and Leonard Street.
- d) The size of the addition be restricted to the 1500 square feet described by BLC and its proposal to the Town, rather than the approximately 2,400 square feet shown in the plans.

As background to the discussions leading to the votes described above:

1) The HDC distributed to everyone at the hearing a copy of the agenda (attached) describing the process that has taken place to date; previous concerns expressed by the HDC about the proposed design; and the charge of the HDC to review the proposed design of the existing 1899 façade in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for the Rehabilitation of Historic Properties..

2) Historic photographs of the original 1899 fire station were shown by Mr. Burke; and recent photographs of the 1899 fire station and its tower, from vantage points on surrounding streets, were displayed by the HDC.

## 2. REVIEW APPLICATION FOR A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS FOR A CHANGE IN THE EXCHANGE PAINT COLOR OF 504 CONCORD AVENUE.

Resident Steve Knight presented samples of the colors proposed for the house, trim and shutters. These were approved by the Commission.

## 3. DISCUSSION OF THE TRAPELO ROAD, BELMONT STREET CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

Peter Briere of the BSC group presented the plan for the Corridor. It is at the 25% level of planning. The plan included many interesting features and a variety of the ways to make it safer, more attractive, and in general improved. A number of questions were asked by the Commission. Two items stood out: 1) the narrowing of sidewalks in Cushing Square seems to be counterproductive to a pedestrian-friendly neighborhood shopping restaurant atmosphere; 2) more importantly, the commission was informed, if not reminded, about significant changes on Pleasant Street at the junction of Trapelo Road. Mr. Briere asserted that these changes were not part of the Pleasant Street Project but a new and separate one. Whatever the case, Pleasant Street will be widened to accommodate a third lane at that point so that west-bound traffic on Pleasant Street can make a protected left turn into the new access road to the McLean developments. This widening of Pleasant Street will have a major impact on historic stone walls and the gate house. The Commission expressed grave concern about the impact this project will have on those historic walls and wanted assurances that they would be protected.

## 4. REVIEW APPLICATION FOR RENEWAL OF CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS ISSUED IN 2005 FOR RENOVATIONS AND ADDITIONS TO 509 PLEASANT STREET

Approved by the Commission.

5. REVIEW PROPOSAL FOR THE RECONFIGURATION OF THE CENTRAL ENTRANCE TO THE MUNICIPAL LIGHT BUILDING TO ALLOW ACCESS FOR THE HANDICAPPED.

A youth group is interested in using the electric light building. David Johnson, a local architect has worked with Richard Cheek on an appropriate design.

6. HOW TO INITIATE AND FUND AN ARCHITECTURAL SURVEY OF 50-YEAR OR OLDER BUILDINGS IN THE TOWN CENTER AS REQUESTED BY THE BELMONT CENTER PLANNING GRUP

Lisa Harrington will review possible options and report back to the Commission.

7. UPDATE ON THE INSTALLATION OF NEW AIR CONDITIONING CONDENSERS FOR THE HOMER MUNICIPAL BUILDING

The new air conditioning condensers installed are noisy and unsightly. It is hoped that once natural screening is in place, the sound will be reduced and at that time another assessment of noise will be made.

8. UPDATE ON THE SIDEWALK CONSTRUCTION WITHIN THE PLEASANT STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT

The Commission returned to the current Pleasant Street Project with Peter Briere present. In particular, comments were offered by some Commission members about the careless treatment of trees. The Commission felt that earlier a great effort had gone into the saving of some trees but that subsequent treatment of their root systems will undoubtedly lead to the demise of some. There was also an active exchange about the treatment of sidewalks. Concerns were expressed that there was too much concrete, too little green and, in one case, too much slope and intrusive manhole covers. In particular, the frontage in front of 483 Pleasant Street and the Frost House were of great concern, and the Commission asked Peter Briere and the BFC group to produce more detailed drawings of the proposed solutions. Commission members felt that both these concerns must be taken seriously and that good faith efforts to solve the problems would be essential. For members of the Commission who have served for the duration of this complex project, it seemed that managers of the project were ignoring the authority of the Historic District Commission in finding solutions to the problems that have come up.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 p.m.