

Belmont Historic District Commission MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, February 14, 2023, via Zoom

Staff Present: Gabriel Distler

Commission Members Present:

Carol Moyles, Co-Chair

Carl Solander, Co-Chair

Michael Chesson

Jacqueline Appel

Stefan Ahlbad

Meg Reilly

Drew Nealon

Absent: Nushin Yazdi, Mary Perry

Community Members Present: Elizabeth Kenrick (Case 23-02 landscape architect), Wendy Murphy, Kimberley Keslea Selness (website renewal committee), Juliet Jenkins

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TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA**

DATE: March 15, 2023

TIME: 9:16 AM

1. Meeting Called to Order:

- a. C. Moyles and C. Solander presiding

2. New Public Hearings:

- a. **Case 23-02:** 504 Concord Ave – Extension
 - Extension of previously approved work. Elizabeth Kenrick with Gregory Design, landscape architecture firm for project. Last year, HDC granted extension for previous approved work, new driveway, garage. No changes since prior approvals, just asking for another time extension.
 - Stefan made a motion for extension approval. Carol seconds. All in favor. Extension passes unanimously.
 - Case 23-02 was closed.

3. Approval of Minutes:

- a. Approve Draft 1/10/23 Meeting Minutes
 - Discussion of Mary not being in attendance. Stefan can make changes to minutes as needed.
 - Query of Dave Blazon and Matt Haskell's titles; issue can be resolved with a basic wording change. Jackie confirms Matt Haskell title is Budget Analyst, Town Admin's Office, and Town of Belmont. Dave Blazon is listed as director of facilities, per Carl's review of town website.
 - Page 3: Carl S asks for clarification on Michael Chesson's reference to district/districts. Agreement to strike from the minutes.
 - Part 5: Spelling error of Carl's name.
 - Carol moves to approve. Michael seconds. Unanimous approval, as amended.

4. New Business:

- a. Discussion with Kimberley Kelsea Selness from the Website Renewal Committee
 - Kimberly notes Stefan has been overseeing web page initiative update. Stefan's outline and website and comparison – highlighted "scramble" from what website was intended to be, due to reorganizations. Stefan highlights inconsistencies in links to PDFs or pages with sidebars. Key challenges: location of necessary information is buried; specifically FAQs being placed deep within the pages. Demolition Delay or significant buildings and sites: these commingle HDC legal responsibilities versus HDC other responsibilities.
 - Discussion of readjustment of buttons to minimize confusion and improve user access (again, especially with lengthy PDF files.)
 - Gabriel asks how this aligns with work already underway by Website Renewal Committee. Kimberley highlights the general need for a refresh, streamlining, and ensuring consistency. This effort is meant to make the process easier for the town to have an accessible, useful website based on the needs of the users. This work is based on the website analytics, as well. She shares specific details that highlight the challenges for users to navigate the page and notes that, aside from manpower, nothing prohibiting the town from doing these improvements. Kimberley emphasizes the need to understand the audiences for the website structure.
 - Carl identifies the utilitarian audience and an audience seeking to learn. Stefan reaffirms the need for a clear gateway. Kimberley recommends starting with the homeowner perspective re: process. Reevaluate things like the prominence and functional significance of FAQs. Kimberley provides best practices for website navigation (i.e., not using scanned or pdf docs).
 - Juliet Jenkins serves on Community Preservation Committee but wanted to flag for Gabe & Stefan to meet with a few people and work within the existing website if the process for total evolution will be a longer timeline. Mitch in the town admins office has been coordinating this work; Gabriel is continuing to meet with Mitch.
 - Gabriel has held off advancing decisions with Mitch, in consideration of the extent to which we should wait until there is a new provider. Kimberley recommends user-friendly, concise, web-style writing.
 - Carol asks about local models we should consider and navigate. Kimberley asks: are the rules different for Belmont than from our surrounding communities? Trying to answer some questions ahead of time for community members. Examples of other towns' sites and priorities are given.
- b. Overview of 2022 Annual Report-Carol
 - Note change in order from original agenda: Discussed **after** Women's club. Carol shares report as procedural information re: members, purpose, activities, and future plans. Built on the template of past reports, but Carol is open to comments and recommendations from other members.
 - Discuss and vote on Women's Club request for Community Preservation Committee Funding – Michael
- c. Belmont Women's Club (BWC) request.

- Wendy identifies application for BWC to gain CPA funds to restore all the windows at 661 Pleasant Street. Received funding, moving ahead. At least a third of the way through so far. New requests only pertain to third floor windows, which, once removed, could not safely be reinstalled due to water damage from a prior roof-related damage. Framing now so unstable that even the plywood pieces have fallen out. Found new contractor – JJ & Sons – fully recommended by Al Ponte.
- Received a price of \$34k, which includes scaffolding, to do all windows, framing, and restoration and pieces to hold new windows within the framing.
- Juliet Jenkins – community preservation committee – noted dramatically escalating costs on some ongoing projects in that committee. First estimate was 900, now it is 1900. Total request is now 35k. Because BWC is a private entity, 10% will be coming from them. CPA approval is subject to the HDC's approval,
- Carl asked if the framing/bracing will be visible. Wendy confirmed that JJ & Sons assured it restores the internal boxes within which the window is reinserted. The bracing refers more to the process than the object. Carl asked about detailed description of the work.
- Juliet Jenkins highlights that contractor's writing is "not his strong suit," but he was highly recommended by the referring contractor who did write up some details. Continued discussion on types of bracing, which Carl confirms with Wendy will not be a variation from what was originally approved.
- Wendy seeking letter of support for the 35k project (of which WCB will pay 10%). Juliet would like a motion approving and supporting the application because the CPA approved subject to our support.
- Carl motions with caveat that bracing does not affect exterior view, Michael seconds. Unanimous support for motion.
- Wendy noted the spec wall for parking spot project, there is currently a 10-foot mock up there for HDC to inspect, comment, and feedback. Discussion of need for a formal vote to approve; Gabe to manage placement on future agenda. Discussion of coordinating visits between HDC meeting cycles. It was decided that Carol visit site to review the mockup prior to the next HDC meeting.

5. Continued Discussions:

- a. HDC Membership Discussion
 - Mary Perry announced resignation from HDC due to family issues. Nushin, the historic district resident on the committee, would also like to step down in the near future – but as the only resident as the Pleasant Street Historic District, we need to maintain one historic district resident. Gabe urges anyone with HD connections to suggest application. BSLA is also willing to post content to attract Landscape Architect applicants. Carol suggests a proactive campaign to reach out to historic district residents. Gabe had sent out postcards 6 months ago.
- b. Town-owned historic Assets Building Inventory (CPC Projects)-Jackie
 - Draft RFP circulated at last meeting. Jackie seeking comments now – Matt Haskell had one comment re: not divulging how much we were willing to pay for the study. Discussion as to purpose of stating fee/maximum payment. Carl notes that firms bidding on a project will want

to know ballpark of proposal fee. Carl did first pass of full document but notes the time intensive review needed.

- Carl suggests edits re: concise language, need for structural engineer, need to tighten up scope. Edits made within document during meeting. Discussion over description and need for “close observation”. (Cherry picker v binocular – driven by giving contractors option to reduce costs.) Validated that we don’t have a hard and fast timeline. C Solander recommends a review of insurance requirements. Jacqueline to reach out to Matt Haskell to follow up on requirement review of financial statements.

c. Work Plan

i. HDC Potential Funding Stream

- Michael asks did we cover this. Carol notes this is somewhat in the work plan.
- Carol confirms that we are consolidating relevant pieces to HDC for awareness of available funding streams we can attach.

ii. 2023 Work Plan Review – Carol

- Areas to focus on are in red: reaching out to Mike Chesson to identify what we can bring forward for upcoming CPA applications for this year and what might be appropriate. As far as updated guidelines, today’s website info was very insightful. Meg, Carl, and Carol to consider what we might review and set project plan/timelines.
- Mike Chesson discussion of maps and registration procedures.
- Website – great discussion and lots to consider about what we post and how our citizens engage. Carol recommends update of graphic materials identifying what our districts are.
- Discussion of design guidelines – Carol will cover landscape, Carl can handle architecture – beginning with windows and gutters, Meg to take on overview for readability/engagement for audiences/consistency/redundancies. Carol closes issue.

iii. MBTA Community Zoning Update – Drew

- Drew notes no updates to share. Gabe adds site visit (Waverly Square and Belmont Center) with MAPC on Friday. Agenda to be posted, 2/15/2023.

iv. Housing Production Plan Advisory – Carl

- Carl notes they haven’t had a meeting since our last meeting, but a Town Hall event at the Beech Street center occurred. A larger version to be planned in March/April timeframe.
- McLean Barn – tour already happened. Another one scheduled, Mike intends to attend. Historical Society must be out of Library in September, but the Barn does not seem a realistic option. If one or more groups gets approved to use the Barn, that might be a CPA funded project that the HDC could recommend.

6. General Housekeeping: Nothing new!

Michael Moves to adjourn, Carol seconds.

Unanimous, meeting adjourns at 9:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Mary Perry