

**Belmont Historic District Commission
MEETING MINUTES**

Tuesday, March 8, 2022
Remote Meeting via Zoom

**RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA**

DATE: April 19, 2022
TIME: 2:42 PM

Staff Present:

☒ Gabriel S. Distler, Staff Planner, OCD

Commission Members Present:

☒ Lisa Harrington, Chair

☒ Stefan Ahlblad

☐ Michael Chesson

☒ Carol Moyles

☒ Drew Nealon

☒ Carl Solander

☒ Nushin Yazdi

Community Members Present:

Mary Hafferty

Elizabeth Gibson

Cathy Yeo

Chris Yates

Julia Yates

John Michalak, Nitsch Engineering

Sean Sanger, CWDG

Bonnie Friedman, Vice Chair of Community Path Project Comm.

James MacIsaac, Police Chief

Vincent Stanton

1. 7:02 PM Meeting called to order.

2. Public Hearings

a. Case 22-03 480 Concord Ave – Window replacement

Owner Cathy Yeo expressed the need for replacing three 35-year-old windows, due to the windows' old condition and heat loss. The new windows were selected to match and conform to the existing windows used elsewhere in the residence.

L. Harrington agreed that this constituted an improvement and moved to approve the request. The motion was unanimously approved and a certificate will be sent out.

b. Case 22-04 11- Sunnyside Place - Removal of Chimney

The request concerns the removal of an existing chimney. G. Distler informed the committee that none of the abutters have objected to the removal.

The owner Chris Yates informed the committee that an engineer had surveyed the condition of the chimney and found it to be non-compliant. Ms. Yates also informed that the fireplace in the house is not being used and therefore the chimney does not serve a purpose at this time. The owners prefer to have the chimney removed.

N. Yazdi requested to see a photograph of the house and the chimney. The tall and narrow chimney appeared to the committee members as an odd element on the building and the removal would not be negatively impact the architecture of the house. C. Solander moved to remove the chimney and repair the roof to match the existing roof surface. The motion was approved and a new certificate for the removal will be issued.

3. Approval of Minutes

Approve draft 2/8/2022, 1/14/20, and 4/9/2019 Minutes

All the outstanding minutes were reviewed and approved with the condition of incorporating minor amended corrections.

4. New Business

a. Belmont Community Path's impact on Pleasant Street Historic District

- John Michalak of Nitsch Engineering responsible for the road engineering design for the Belmont Community Path gave the committee a comprehensive and detailed review of the 25% progress stage of the project. The pathway occupying the right-of-way along the MBTA rail track will have a width of 12' and a 4' wide shoulder walk. The design was presented on a rendered plan drawing covering the area from Waverly Place Station location to the west and Brighton Street Road crossing to the east. The portions of the path given special attention in the design are: The area adjacent to the Belmont Train Station and its relation towards Belmont Center, the midpoint of the path where the path intersects with a new north south path leading under the railroad track using a new-constructed tunnel, and thirdly the point where the path crosses Brighton Street. J. Michalak pointed out the designer's attention to meeting Mass DOT standards as well as MAAB (Massachusetts Architectural Board) and ADA compliance. Special red brick patterns have been proposed for a wide area crossing area over Concord Avenue to

provide safety and emphasis towards the Historical part of Belmont Center. Along the straight liner portion of the path privacy and safety towards the residential lots, and on the opposite side a safety barrier towards the train tracks. The design team is aware of the need for a variety of accessories connected to the path such as: signs, benches, kiosks, bike repair etc.

- S. Ahlblad asked the planning team to consider trees and greenery at least in certain locations along the path facing the train tracks to lessen the impact of a long unattractive wall or fence. The connection towards Pleasant Street along Alexander Ave. and towards Concord Ave. in the opposite direction is particularly valuable for connecting neighborhoods to the Community Path.
- C. Moyles requested more visuals (elevation drawings) showing relationship to existing Belmont Public Buildings to the north.
- C. Solander noted that at the bridge overpass is essentially the only place where the path connects to the Historic District.
- The project will have public funding. Steve Sanger of CWDG related a current preliminary estimate of \$17million and funding by MASDOT based on a 25% design completion.
- Sean Sanger of CWDG and James MacIsaac (Police Chief) both addressed the need to study the path and its relation to the Municipal Light building and the existing parking area and chain link fence in this location.
- Bonnie Friedman and Vincent Stanton, members of the Community Path Committee, are open to more discussion and questions. and they appreciate the information on the signs and all the historic information available on the web site.
- L. Harrington suggested the need for a subcommittee to represent HDC for the design team of the path and recommended that Michael Chesson would serve as a member, who did not attend this meeting but will be asked to join later. Carol Moyles volunteered to join the subcommittee.

b. Benton Library

Elizabeth Gibson, President of Friends of the Benton Library, gave an overview of the current status of the library. Benton Library, built in 1892, owned by the town of Belmont. The building is currently not listed on the State Register , but E. Gibson emphasized that it will need to be included.

- Initially a cracked chimney needed repair, but on Feb 10 the chimney collapsed and destroyed some pipes and other parts resulting in the interruption of heating. The bulkhead door was also damaged. Currently bids for repairs are requested. The Library has hope for insurance coverage. Both the Benton Library and the Town hold insurance for the building. E. Gibson met with the adjusters and with any luck the damages will be

covered with insurance – no answers yet. They are looking at the option to apply for a CPC grant. They submitted an application as a placeholder and CPC have asked for an endorsement from HDC. We asked for \$150,000 which would include yet unknown problems with the building which may need to be fixed. With the encouragement by CPC and submitted a request of \$20,000 for envelopment study. In addition to the chimney, two roof fans, no longer in use, need to be removed and the roof to be re-shingled. The insurance adjuster was clear that no insurance would cover roof fan removal.

- L. Harrington: We agree that the Library is a treasure.
- E. Gibson: The Library has functioned as a library, but is now closed
- C. Solander: Are the fan used for ventilation? The answer is no. The library currently has air conditioning and the fans do not serve a purpose.
- L. Harrington.: We cannot vote for the request at this meeting because it was not on the agenda. However, we can formally vote at the next meeting.
- L.Harrington.: However, we can informally vote to remove the chimney and provide an envelope study.
- Unanimous informal approval vote.

c. Waverly Square ULI/ Technical Assistance plan

C. Solander proposes that this item should be included on the next month's agenda.

5. Continued Discussion

a. Work Plan

- L. Harrington notes updates and changes and notations of High Priority, which include rotating minutes and site visit duties. Updates will be on a monthly basis. Longer term assignments to be reviewed next month. A discussion evolved regarding the best time for reviewing meeting minutes of the previous meeting. Suggestions were for first item and last item on the agenda. Preference moved towards addressing the minutes after the Public Hearings in order not to unnecessarily keep outside attendees waiting, but not leave the review till the end of the meeting when participants may be inattentive.
- High Priority tasks assignments
 - Website review: S. Ahlblad volunteered to look into the issue.
 - Design guidelines: C. Solander, Carol Moyles and Lisa Harrington
 - Historic Signage: Michael Chesson (see below)

b. Replacement of Pleasant Street Historic District Signage

G. Distler informed the committee that Michael Chesson attended the Historical Society meeting and met with V. Haase. She found a contractor who would be able and willing to restore the two old existing Pleasant Street Historic District signs. He could start in late May and the Historical Society would likely be able to fund the restoration. The contractor would provide the Society with a quote. The Society has been in contact with the Highway Department that would be able to install the signs. The original locations need to be identified. A joint Historical Society event and a rededication ceremony with HDC can be arranged in the fall.

c. Municipal Light Building RFP

G. Distler informed the committee that Glen Castro noted that the CPC funding for 2020 has expired and an application for a new funding of the same \$25,000 from CPC must be made. The RFP must go out the year for which the funding has been approved. Belmont Light is now under a newly formed elected board which has jurisdiction over the process. HDC need to know what the new board position is.

d. Upcoming projects for HDC review/ McLean Barn second phase

- Currently no update.
- C. Solander proposes a working group.

e. HDC membership update

- Jacqueline Appel's application for appointment to the HDC was reviewed. The benefit or disadvantage of a candidate with an experience not directly involved in historic preservation, architecture or city planning was discussed.
- C. Solander expressed the desire for more information about the candidate. The other committee members were satisfied with the current information and considered a different background potentially an asset to the committee's work.
- L. Harrington made a motion to recommend J. Appel as an alternate member to the Select Board. N. Yazdi second. The members approved to proceed with the membership application.
- L. Harrington will go ahead to put J. Appel on the next agenda and stated that the HDC still needs additional alternate members.

f. Demolition delay Bylaw renewal

- G. Distler: Copy of revised Demolition Delay Bylaw was approved by the Bylaw Committee and sent to Town Council for review and Carl S. drafted a summary of the article. The purpose of the article is to make permanent the Demolition Delay Bylaw, which will expire at the end of 2022, with minor changes eliminating obsolete clauses and update references.
- L. Harrington will send the article for review to Patrice.
- C. Solander: will it be presented to Warren Committee? Is it ready for Town Meeting?
- G. Distler: will check with Warrant committee.
- L. Harrington: if approval from planning board is obtained, next step will be to obtain favorable actions for the Select Board.
- L. Harrington: It will be important to demonstrate what Demolition Delay means and why we have this demand. This should be accompanied with examples with bad outcomes that occurred before demolition delay was enacted. Responses to questions that may arise at the Town Meeting need to be prepared in advance. Preparing numbers and graphs?
- C. Moyles as a past town meeting member notes that the most important thing is to present a slide show to make it very clear of what has been proposed and having the endorsements of Selectmen and Warrant Committee to make the process very easy.
- V. Stanton: I would strongly recommend a quick reprise of why we have Demolition Delay Bylaw in the first place and I would illustrate it by picking the two or three most tragic losses. I would put the First Congregational Church of Waverly which would dramatize for the Town Meeting members what can happen in the absence of Demolition Delay Bylaw when the property just disappears and nobody had a chance to comment on it. I would anticipate challenging questions from the Town Hall members. Detailed backup information needs to be valuable.

6. General Housekeeping

- G. Distler: The need for a member visit to 467 Pleasant Street. The owner will apply prior to March 29 to be on the April agenda. To be discussed at the next April meeting.
- G. Distler: The Owner of 76 White Street near Waverly Square has applied for a demolition permit. This property is not on Demo Delay list. It is on the MACRIS list and the permit was denied because they wanted to build a two-family residence which requires conditional approval. Worth keeping an eye on for the future.
- Planning board wants to finalize all issues on McLean on Thursday April 7.
- C. Solander asks if he will need to attend the meeting. We have our written conditions.

- L. Harrington: There might not be a need for us to attend. G.Distler. will ask Robert about it.

Meeting adjourned at 10:07 PM

Respectfully submitted by Stefan Ahlblad