

TOWN OF BELMONT
PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
February 14, 2023

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA

DATE: March 22, 2023
TIME: 2:19 PM

Present: Matt Lowrie, Chair; Thayer Donham; Jeff Birenbaum; Karl Haglund, Carol Berberian

Absent: Renee Guo

Staff: Ara Yogurtian, Assistant Director, Offices of Community Development

This meeting was held remotely using Zoom video conferencing technology, as permitted by the Massachusetts Act Relative to Extending Certain State of Emergency Accommodations, that became effective July 16, 2022.

Mr. Lowrie introduced Planning Board members and reviewed a summary of the items that were on the agenda.

1. Meeting Called to Order 7:00 PM

2. Continued Cases:

a) Case No. 23-04 - Design and Site Plan Review 350 prospect Street- Belmont Hill School

Kelly Cardoza, representing the Belmont Hill School, introduced her colleagues, Bob Fitzgerald with Goodwin Law and Eric Kramer with Reed Hilderbrand. Mr. Kramer was there to share the landscape plans for the project. He presented an image of the Belmont Hill School's existing campus. He walked through the changes and described them in detail. He began with the upper lot and described the new circulation pattern for the drop off area. He noted that they will add additional canopy trees, shrubs and grass here to add shade to the paved surfaces. He pointed out the new location for the crosswalk. Next, he moved onto the Zamboni lot and began by showing the existing conditions. He presented the new plan for the Zamboni lot and noted that they will maintain as many of the healthy trees as possible. They will add an 8-foot-tall solid wood fence and planting trees and shrubs along the road. They will add birch trees along the edge of the Jordan Athletic Center. He described the lighting fixtures that will be used in the parking lot as 16 foot tall with a symmetrical distribution and there was no light trespass onto the street. He presented the existing east campus map and pointed out the location of the Norway maple trees, black cherry trees, ash trees, hickory trees, a few oak trees, and a few sugar maple trees. He noted that they would create a long-lived canopy that would be a native New England sustainable woodland. He noted that the hedgerow along the stonewall along the Rutledge Road neighbors would be maintained, including the largest healthiest trees. The 8-foot fence location with wildlife would be discussed with the neighbors. The parking is porous, and the water would be cleaned before it is collected into the swale and the wetlands. The sidewalk will be extended and there will be new canopy trees planted along the edge of Prospect Street. Mr. Kramer presented the proposed lighting and the new canopy and shrub trees to be added along the edge.

He noted that there would be a band of plantings in between the parking bays, along the back of 301 and additional planting all along Prospect St. and Park Ave.. and around the facilities and this will make a robust landscape and a lot of shade. Next, Mr. Kramer presented the existing and proposed plans for the Facilities Lot. He reviewed the planting plan, showing the mix of plantings along the drive to provide shade and this would be surrounded entirely by the same solid wood fence. He reviewed the lighting fixtures plan.

Mr. Birenbaum asked for clarification regarding a tree evaluation beyond 25 feet (from the street) and he noted that these trees had not been surveyed. He asked about tree growth time frame on the east lot. Mr. Kramer noted that the trees would be 3-4" trees and each tree could be between 15'-20' and the growth rate differs. Some will grow quickly, and some will reach the 35' range in 5-10 years. Mr. Birenbaum asked for a 6-8" DBH. Mr. Kramer noted that a larger tree would undergo more stress in the replanting process. He said that it was best to plant more smaller trees as they will catch up in five years and grow faster. Mr. Birenbaum asked if the trees in the parking circle on the east campus could be evaluated and saved. Mr. Kramer said that to make things happen they must remove the trees and in the long run they are getting a landscape that functions well for the long term. Mr. Birenbaum noted that he would like to see more details about the health of the existing trees.

Mr. Lowrie asked Mr. Kramer to describe what exactly it was that they were removing from the existing parking loop. Mr. Kramer noted that there were overgrown yews at this location and there was nothing that was rare.

Ms. Cardoza noted that they have done what the Zoning By-law requires for the tree evaluation.

Mr. Fitzgerald, Goodwin, representing the Applicant, noted section 5.3 landscaping requirements had been met and the 25-foot area had been laid out as per the Zoning By-Law requirement. Town Counsel confirmed that parking was an educational use under the Dover Amendment and the school has set their demands and designed the project to meet those demands. He explained that the request of a tree survey beyond the 25-feet could lead to a prohibition on an educational use.

Carolyn Bishop, address not stated, asked if the abutting houses were going to be torn down. She noted that this would solve the problem of where to put the parking spot. Mr. Lowrie described the use for the homes that were on the property. She noted that it was unfortunate to replace woods with beautiful landscaping.

Darisse Paquette, 25 Dunbarton Road, asked for an explanation for the conditions for protecting the existing wildlife. She noted that the wildlife will be affected by the demolition of the woodlands as the new plantings will take many years to be able to support wildlife. The spring nesting season would be affected by the removal of the woods and could not be done while the birds were nesting.

Peter Dorfman, Bellevue Road, asked for a description of the longer-term plans. Ms. Cordoza noted that the school will have a need for a future dining hall. He asked if there were future

plans for the three houses on the east campus. Mr. Kramer noted that there were no immediate plans. Mr. Dorfman asked if it was possible to develop parking on the space that is now showing as open and undeveloped and why does the plan not utilize this area. Mr. Kramer noted that they were conscious of the view of the street, and it was less preferable than putting it internal to the property screened from the abutters and the people on the street. He explained that there was a value judgement made on the yews and the trees and they found that they were no of significant value other than the interestingness of their age. Mr. Dorfman noted that he was concern about the impact of wildlife and that there may have to be a tradeoff for a view of the parking lot to keep the yews for the wildlife.

Mr. Lowrie noted the next topics would be traffic and stormwater. Lighting, signage and other topics could be discussed at future meetings. He asked to see the updated acreage numbers for what is being cleared. Ms. Cardoza explained the calculation details for the proposed acreage uses.

MOTION to continue to February 28, 2023 was made by Mr. Lowrie and seconded by Ms. Donham. Motion passed. Vote was unanimous.

3. Adjourn 9:04 PM.

The Planning Board's next scheduled meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 21, 2023.