

**TOWN OF BELMONT  
PLANNING BOARD**

**MEETING MINUTES  
NOVEMBER 7, 2012**

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**8:05 a.m. Meeting called to order.**

Present: Sami Baghdady, Chair; Michael Battista, Vice Chair; Charles Clark, Joseph DeStefano, Elisabeth Allison; Andres Rojas, Board of Selectmen Liaison; Jeffrey Wheeler, Staff.

**8:05 a.m. Discussion on Issues Related to Existing Sign By-Law (Section 5.2)**

Mr. Baghdady stated that the recent denial of a special permit for two free-standing signs at 3-11 Brighton Street warrants a discussion about the Town's Sign By-law.

Mr. Baghdady summarized that in the case of the Brighton Street property, there already exist numerous signs for a market, an animal hospital, and a law firm. Yet, the applicant requested two additional free-standing signs at the site. Where there are already several signs on a property, a request for a special permit to authorize additional free-standing signs cannot be considered in isolation.

Mr. DeStefano agreed, stating that otherwise there is a risk for "sign pollution". Mr. Battista also agreed, and confirmed that a request for a special permit for a free-standing sign cannot be looked at in a vacuum. The other characteristics of the property must be considered as well. Ms. Allison also agreed. She observed that a different reading of the By-law would not promote Class A office space.

Mr. Clark observed that the Sign By-law worked in the case of the Brighton Street application. Others agreed that the Sign By-law does not need to be amended. However, it would be useful to have additional guidance on the Board's expectations for free-standing signs. Mr. Baghdady suggested that the Board draft sign rules and regulations to provide applicants with guidance about the Board's considerations and expectations. All supported that idea.

Mr. Baghdady directed Mr. Wheeler to prepare and present a draft of such rules and regulations to the Board at a subsequent meeting.

**8:50 a.m. Proposed Religious and Municipal Building Preservation By-Law**

Mr. Baghdady reported that he and Mr. Rojas met with the developer who is purchasing the Waverley Congregational Church, to urge him to preserve the Church building. Apparently, the developer plans on demolishing the Church and replacing it with three two family houses on the property. Mr. Baghdady reported that he and Mr. Rojas advised the developer that the Planning Board was working on a preservation by-law which would provide strong incentives to preserve the Church. The developer indicated that he was uncertain if he could wait until such a by-law was adopted at the Annual Town Meeting. The developer stated that his purchase and sale agreement requires him to purchase the property before year-end. Given the large inclusionary housing fee required by the Town, it would not be affordable to carry the property for an

additional 5 to 6 months while the preservation by-law went through the Town Meeting and Attorney General approval process.

What if the preservation by-law is not adopted at Town Meeting? That is a risk the developer is unwilling to assume. Mr. Rojas and Mr. Baghdady nevertheless urged the developer to wait before demolishing the Church. They advised him that residents of the Town would be very upset if they lost this landmark to Waverly Square. The developer indicated he would take the request under consideration.

In light of that meeting, Mr. Baghdady stated that he wanted to make adoption of the preservation by-law a priority for the Planning Board. The other members agreed.

Mr. Wheeler provided the Board with a packet that included all religious, municipal and school properties and pictures, and plot plans for each property. The packet outlined possible zoning scenarios. Mr. DeStefano noted that a condominium development in Watertown on Common Street was a good example of religious building preservation.

Mr. Baghdady thanked Mr. Wheeler for preparing such a helpful packet of information. It was agreed that the Board will review the packet, and be prepared to discuss at a later meeting which properties should receive the benefit of the preservation by-law.

**Moved by Mr. Battista to approve the minutes of September 27, 2012. Seconded by Mr. Clark. Motion passed.**

**Adjournment: 9:30 am**