

## VISION 21 IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE

### Meeting Minutes

January 19, 2006

Accepted February 2, 2006

Members Present: Austin Bliss, Donna Brescia, Victoria Haase, Meg O'Brien, Jennifer Page, Ann Rittenburg, Paul Santos, Paul Solomon

Also in attendance: Delores Keefe; Kathryn Bonfiglio and Adine Storer (Co-chairs of the Belmont Neighbors Network)

Members absent: Vinnie DeNovellis, Sara Oaklander, Jay Szklut

### 1. Administrivia

- Jennifer called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m.
- Introductions were made around the table.
- Minutes of January 5, 2006 were unanimously accepted.

**2. Discussion:** Review of progress and achievements from work by Belmont Neighbors Network, re: becoming a welcoming community, valuing diversity. Determine if follow-up by the Vision Implementation Committee or others is called for.

**2.1 Introduction:** Jennifer Page gave a review of how the group started. Joe Greene and Jennifer Page held several meetings inviting newcomers to attend. The lack of attendees led them to believe that it was important for longer term Belmont residents to be involved. Jennifer recruited Adine and then Kathryn, who felt it important to welcome diverse people into the Town.

**2.2 Description of Initiatives Undertaken.** The first "Meet Belmont" event took place in August 2003. Invitees included many town officials and community organizations. In addition to flyers in the real estate agencies and around town, Sue Pizzi provided a list of new homeowners so that Adine could send postcard invitations to them. In 2004, "Meet Belmont" added a number of new organizations and quite a few long-term residents came. With additional growth in 2005, the location was moved from the Library Assembly Room to the High School Cafeteria.

**2.3 Success.** It has been a successful event because it showcases how wonderful Belmont is.

**2.4 Opportunities and concerns.** The Neighbors Network is a one-event organization because it is small. While it has given thought to doing Meet Belmont twice a year, it has not happened. One question is how to multiply the single event, whether through multiple events, or electronic or video media.

**Opportunities.** Increase participation at the event through growing the 60+ newcomers attending in the second year. Globe Northwest section and Citizen-

Herald give it coverage. Exhibitors join newcomers and long-term residents in visiting the exhibits.

### **Concerns / Brainstorming**

Making sure that new renters as well as new homeowners are contacted about Meet Belmont. Perhaps we need to do more than the blurbs in the Light Dept. bills, and newcomer packets given out at the schools, recreation department, and other places that newcomers might go.

How many community representatives should be invited? Meet Belmont was envisioned as an opportunity for newcomers and others to learn about our municipal agencies and volunteer organizations in town. Members of the business community and many "booster" groups for school teams and activities have also expressed an interest. Businesses were solicited to provide "welcome" discount coupons for newcomer packets in 2005.

Inclusion of representatives of the various houses of worship in Belmont.

Expanding the event to a larger site such as the football field where many exhibitors could be accommodated.

Retaining the small and intimate feeling that is welcoming to newcomers. If the event becomes too large it will lose that feel.

Kathryn suggests that Welcome Belmont be kept simple so that it will be easier to continue. Adine offers that it's good to rely on the strength of the existing event.

Other events can serve other purposes: Businesses other than those of Belmont Center might be included in Town Day. Perhaps, the Trapelo Road corridor could create a "Town Day" as well. Ethnic celebrations such as the Chinese New Year offer another opportunity.

### **Other Opportunities.**

Neighbors' Network considered doing a tour of Town Hall, similar to that undertaken by the Historical Society at the time of the rededication of the Town Hall. Both guided tours and the opportunity for self-guided tours were offered. Perhaps the Neighbors' Network and the Historical Society could partner using materials produced by the Historical Society.

Block parties are a good way to build a sense of community in the neighborhoods. There were many suggestions for how the VIC might encourage block parties: Identify current 10-20 block parties across Belmont and their organizers. Adine would be willing to host a coffee for these leaders and gather ideas. Belmont Citizen Herald reporter could be invited to report ideas shared. Organizers might also be asked to write about their experiences. Consider ways in which single family vs. multi-family neighborhoods might organize parties, Produce a Channel 8 video of various block parties. Media message might be: lets you get to know each other. Possibly designate a weekend or month or date for block parties. Call Town Meeting Members to find out who would be good organizers of block parties in their precincts. VIC could get a grant or obtain coupons to defray costs of block party. VIC could hold a block party at a neutral site like the Town Hall complex to provide an example for others.

The VIC could take a two-pronged approach to block parties that include 1. Person-to-person contact and education and 2. Identification of organizers by TMMs.

### **3. Discussion: Welcoming Booklet**

3.1 Jennifer Page provided a review of how the booklet came into being. It was funded by \$250 contributions from each of 9 realtors. Sue Pizzi of Lawndale Realty sold the idea to her cohorts and raised the money, \$2,250 to cover the \$2,169 costs. Of the 5,000 booklets printed, 300 were given to each contributing realtor leaving some 2,300 to be distributed through municipal departments.

3.2 It was unanimously agreed to redo the booklet.

3.3 Next steps. Suggestions for revisions to the booklet (brainstorming)  
Add Q & A section  
Add maps of the Town showing precincts, voting locations, schools, Squares.  
Add more information about the community gardens and farmers market if it comes into being.  
Add information about houses of worship.  
Add an application to volunteer on Town committees  
Add web address to cover  
Add price of \$1.00  
Edit TV and cable service section  
Add coupons for businesses to pay for booklet or sell advertising space.  
Add calendar of town events that are held on the same day each year.  
Organizations' phone numbers go out of date quickly. Might refer to Town website instead.  
How can we best prepare for changes in Town office phone numbers?  
Add mail backer  
Add notes page at the rear of booklet.

4. Announcements of events relevant to the VIC's work  
Thursday, Feb. 2, Traffic Advisory Committee meeting about putting up barriers along Rte. 2 Access Road to prevent cars entering Beatrice Circle, Town Hall (Note that this conflicts with VIC meeting – but you could encourage others to go!  
Wednesday, Feb. 8, What is "Smart Growth?" by Jay Sklut and Karl Haglund  
7:30-9:00 pm, Chenery Middle School  
Thursday, Feb. 9 "Green Design and Construction in Lexington"  
Presentation by Green Roundtable, Inc.  
7:00-9:00 pm, Cary Memorial Library, 1874 Mass. Ave., Lexington

5. Ann passed out copies of the report of the Superintendent's Task Force about the future of Belmont Public Schools in preparation for its discussion at our next meeting. Members were asked to read it before our February 2 meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Meg O'Brien  
Secretary Pro Tem

Next meeting: Thursday, February 2, 2006