

- **MINUTES**
- **TOWN OF BELMONT**
- **BOARD OF SELECTMEN**
- **SPECIAL JOINT MEETING**
- **ASSESSORS' CONFERENCE ROOM**
- **HOMER ANNEX BUILDING**
- **Tuesday, October 21, 2008**
 - **8:00 AM**

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- **CALL TO ORDER**
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- A special meeting of the Board was called to order in open session at 8:04 AM by Chairman Firenze in the Assessors' Conference Room of the Homer Annex Building. All the Selectmen were present. Town Administrator Tom Younger and Assistant Town Administrator Jeff Conti were present. The Board met in joint session with the Board of Assessors and Assessing Administrator Dick Simmons.

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- **QUESTIONS FROM TOWN RESIDENTS**
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- There were none.
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- **“Highest and Best Use” Discussion**
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- The Selectmen asked about the ability to assess properties at their “highest and best use” rather than their current use, for example in the case of vacant buildings. The Assessors explained that state statute requires all properties to be assessed at their “full and fair cash value”, which is generally assumed to be based on the current condition of the site. For commercial property, the Assessors must use two different measures of value, and must justify to the Department of Revenue any assessment based on possible usage. This is sometimes done with vacant lots, but it is a headache. Also, “highest and best use” can only include what is possible to do by right under existing zoning.

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- The Selectman asked how the Assessors treat revenue-generating activities on a site such as illegally rented parking spaces. The Assessors indicated that they must consider the actual use of the site whether it is legal or not.

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- **PILOT payments**
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- The two Boards discussed their mutual attempts to negotiate the possibility of PILOT payments with the Belmont Hill and Belmont Day schools. The Selectmen expressed their interest in putting pressure on the schools in any way that is feasible, and considering whether there may be accessory sources of revenue at their properties that could be taxed.

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- **Recap**

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- The Assessors indicated that property values in Belmont have declined about 4 percent since last year. The tax rate will go up about 5%, or roughly 62 cents per thousand. There has been a fairly good amount of new growth. Mr. Reardon described the status of the overlay account as “running on fumes”. The current balance is about \$789,000. Some of this must be held to cover uncollectables and disputed revenue from telecommunications wiring.

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- The Board of Selectmen recessed at 9:47 AM and reconvened in Conference Room 12 of the Homer Annex Building.

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- **VFW Lease**

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- Selectman Jones said the lease agreement with the VFW must indicate that any payments from the Town to the VFW are subject to Town Meeting approval. There was discussion of the propriety of writing off the VFW’s utility debts. It will be characterized as an agreement to resolve disputed mutual outstanding claims.

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- The Board requested that the language be clarified before the lease is signed.

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- **Other**

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- There was discussion of the agreement with Burke regarding the former central fire station, under which Burke would pay the Town \$75,000 if he did not obtain an occupancy permit within 15 months. This was verbally agreed to by the parties but somehow did not make it into the lease-purchase agreement. The Board discussed its options including the possibility of suing Town Counsel.

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- There was discussion of the negotiations to be held with developer Chris Starr regarding the conveyance of the parking lot. It was clarified that these negotiations must be held in open session.

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- The Board adjourned at 10:48 AM.

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- Thomas G. Younger, Town Administrator

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