

MINUTES
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BOARD OF SELECTMEN
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2005
REGULAR SESSION
SELECTMEN'S MEETING ROOM, TOWN HALL

Call to Order

A regular meeting of the Board was called to order in open session at 7:00 PM in the Selectmen's Room of Town Hall. All members were present. Town Administrator Tom Younger and Assistant Town Administrator Jeff Conti were also present.

Questions from Town Residents

There were no questions.

Action by Appointment

Town Administrator's Report

Woodfall Road land swap: Mr. Younger hopes to have a Letter of Intent executed within the next week or two. There are no significant issues, but negotiations have been dragging.

Our Lady of Mercy/Senior Center: The appeal of the parish closure is still at the Vatican and there is no schedule for it to be acted upon. Disposition of the property is therefore on hold. The Archdiocese will look more seriously at some temporary continuation of the tenancy, perhaps a tenant-at-will arrangement.

Mr. Younger presented the Selectmen with a three-month calendar of their schedule. They will be able to access this online and make changes to it. The Board's next meeting is January 9.

Mr. Younger reported that he has been looking at Mr. Adams' bump-out issue from the last meeting and will be meeting with Mr. Adams with some recommendations.

Last night there was a meeting of the Warrant Committee's special task force on capital building projects. The task force will be putting together recommendations to the Warrant Committee. Looking at potential building projects over the next 25 years, he envisions 3 on the town side and 2 on the school side.

The Superintendent of Schools and the Town Administrator have been working closely to put their budget numbers together and are cooperating well.

Mr. Conti reported that Andros Diner has filed some of the materials to apply for a new liquor license to replace the one they failed to renew. No other applications for this license have been received, so it is expected that Andros will be able to get it back. If all the paperwork is done, the earliest the Board could approve the license is January 9. However, the Alcohol and Beverage Control Commission will probably take until February at the earliest to give final approval.

Action by Consent

Approval of Belmont Media Center Agreement

Board of the Media Center Chair Jonathan Green appeared before the Board of Selectmen. A contract between the Town and the Media Center has been agreed to. Mr. Green summarized the progress of the negotiations over the past several months. This contract has been approved by the Cable Advisory Committee Chairman Greg Poulos.

The Board moved: to approve the proposed Belmont Media Center contract.

The motion was carried unanimously (3-0).

The Board members proceeded to sign three copies of the contract. Mr. Green submitted a request for payment to expedite the financial transaction to get a check ASAP to ensure the Center's funding is continuous.

There was a discussion about the possibility of involving the Information Technology Advisory Committee (ITAC) in the financial software project. Mr. Green, a member of the committee, agreed that the ITAC has the expertise and the availability to be helpful in this process. Up until now there has been no active effort to include ITAC in the process. Mr. Younger pointed out that Town Meeting authorized the Town to hire a consultant who has been working on developing this project. It was agreed to have the consultant come to the next ITAC meeting to brief the committee and obtain its input.

The Board thanked Mr. Green for his efforts and also recognized other Media Center members who were present.

Action by Appointment

Status of Uplands 40B Application

There was discussion of a memo from Planning and Economic Development Director Jay Szklut on the status of this proposed project called "The Residence at Acorn Park". The proposal is a 299-unit, multi-building rental housing

development, 60 units of which would be set aside as affordable housing (20%) for 30 years. The development will be mostly 1 bedroom units. The Zoning Board of Appeals is the governing board for a comprehensive permit and it is expected that the review process will take 9-12 months. The ZBA must hold a public hearing which is tentatively scheduled for Jan. 12. Additional copies of the application are expected for distribution. All documents will be published on the Town's website. A meeting with the City of Cambridge is also being set up at this time.

The Board noted that the Town's by-law requires that 25% of the units be affordable. Mr. Younger confirmed that this issue would be negotiated as the process moves forward. The Board also noted that the number of 1-bedroom units has been increased from previous proposals and that this is a positive development.

Selectman Firenze noted that the developer had previously planned an office building, and then a 179-unit senior condo development which ran into difficulties in the planning process and led to this 40B proposal. He suggested that the earlier proposal now may seem to have some favorable aspects compared to this one and the Board should not rule out encouraging the developer to move back in this direction. The units would be more expensive, generating the same revenue for the Town but putting less of a burden on the schools and other Town services. Selectman Brownsberger noted that the property is zoned for an office building and they can build that by right if they feel the market is favorable. However, there are Town meeting members who simply will not vote for housing at this location, so 40B may be the only residential option for the developer.

Selectman Firenze pointed out that if the Board tries to work with the developer and not create an adversarial relationship, it could get the most favorable development, and the developer can spend money on givebacks to the Town rather than on legal fees. The Board noted that Town Meeting does not play a role in a 40B application, however the Board should take a position on it. The Board discussed trying to change the 30-year affordable housing set-aside to one that is in perpetuity. The office building still might be the best option for both the developer and the Town if the market conditions are favorable.

Mr. Brownsberger stated he would prefer that if there is going to be residential here it should include an affordable component and he would not want to see that weakened.

It was agreed that the Board's main goal is to ensure that the Town's response to this application is intelligent and well-thought out. Mr. Younger and Mr. Szklut will work to achieve this.

Mr. Firenze noted that if units meeting affordable criteria from the 4,000 rental units in Belmont were counted by the state in the total number of affordable units we actually have, there is a good amount of affordable housing in Belmont, over 20% of total dwellings. But the state law does not count these units.

Other

There was discussion of problems with the ticketing process in our public parking lots where people return to park a second time later in the day and our system treats them as if they have been there all day in violation of the two or four hour limit. Mr. Younger will look into this.

Mr. Conti presented the Board with a history of the Belmont Library found recently in the archives.

The Board wished all residents a happy holiday season.

The Board moved: to enter into executive session for the purpose of discussing litigation and not to return to open session.

The motion was carried unanimously (3-0).

The Board entered executive session at 8:00 PM.

(During the executive session, one substantive motion was made and passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 PM.).

Thomas G. Younger
Town Administrator