

## BELMONT HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

Town Hall

December 4, 2003

Meeting Minutes

Commission Members Attending: Co-chairs Richard Cheek and Lydia Ogilby (second half), Paul Bell, Matthew Genta, Lisa Harrington, Arleyn Levee, Rick Pichette, Michael Smith, Sharon Vanderslice. Absent: Caroline Darbyshire, Linn Hobbs, Nancy Richards, Jonathan Treat.

### 25 SOMERSET STREET

Attending: Sarah and Joseph DeStefano, owners.

Mr. and Mrs. DeStefano asked the Commission to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for a clapboarded family room addition to the southeast side of their c. 1855 Italianate house. The plans incorporated a suggestion made by the Commission's architects at a previous meeting: that the addition be moved approximately one foot farther back from the front of the house so as not to conflict with a first floor window on the original house. The certificate was approved by a vote of four in favor, none opposed, with two abstentions.

### 585 PLEASANT STREET

Attending: Norman Kherlop, architect; Frank and Gillian Aguilar, abutters; Kit Dreier, neighbor.

Mr. Kherlop presented revised plans for a two-story rear addition to this 1950s ranch house. The addition included a new breakfast room, mud room, and family room on the ground floor, and a 715-square-foot master bedroom suite on the second floor. The width of the second story was 37 ½ feet with a setback from the rear property line of 40 feet. Commission members questioned the overall size of the addition, which would increase the square footage of the house by 60 percent. They cited the prominence of this corner lot (on a knoll overlooking Belmont Center), its small buildable area, and the height of surrounding houses as reasons to restrict the size of any addition, especially one that included the introduction of a second floor. The addition as designed was inappropriate in scale for the house, the site, and the neighborhood. Richard Cheek and Michael Smith remarked that the typical ranch house was designed to be one story and to sit low and long on the ground, and that any addition should appear subsidiary to the original house. According to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, homeowners should consider altering existing space on the interior of the house before planning for an addition, Mr. Smith said. Paul Bell suggested that rather than designing a second story, the architect might try to reclaim more living space on the 2319-square-foot basement

level. The application for a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed addition was unanimously rejected, but the owners and the architect were urged to return with revised drawings.

#### PLEASANT STREET RECONSTRUCTION

The Commission reviewed a letter to the Board of Selectmen regarding a federal law that may apply to this project (Title 49, Section 303), which states that no changes may be made to a historic district during the course of a road rebuilding project until all possible alternatives have been explored. Arleyn Levee agreed to make revisions to this draft and re-present it to the Commission.

#### TRAPELO ROAD PLANNING

Having done a preliminary visual survey of all the buildings along Trapelo Road and Belmont Street, Matthew Genta reported that 90 percent of them have no historic value. However, any future rezoning of the corridor should be written so as to protect those that do have architectural and/or historic significance. He specifically cited the Phelan Insurance building and the residential property behind it at 6 Willow Street, and also the Cushing Square Plaza, which he described as “a beautiful example of 1920s Georgian Revival retail, with a cupola on top.” Commission members discussed various ways of preserving these buildings through economic incentives that discourage tear-downs. It was suggested that graduate students from the Preservation Studies Program at Boston University be recruited to research the history of each building, that historical photographs be obtained from the SPNEA Photo Archives or the Claflin Room of the Belmont Library, and that the Massachusetts Historical Society be consulted about preservation incentives. Lisa Harrington agreed to call Gretchen Schuler at BU to see if any students were available to work on this project. Matt Genta will meet with the Boston Redevelopment Authority to discuss the methods used to revitalize Washington Street.

#### PLEASANT STREET DESIGN GUIDELINES

Lisa Harrington said she had reviewed the design guidelines for homeowners in the towns of Concord and Hingham. She will write a first draft of guidelines for Belmont and present them at the next meeting in January.

#### TOWN HALL ANNEX RENOVATION

Michael Smith reported that a flat chimney cap needs to be installed on the building’s elevator shaft. He will present the architect’s recommended design for HDC approval at a future meeting.

## MINUTES

The minutes of the October and November meetings were approved.

*Minutes recorded by Sharon Vanderslice.*