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Belmont Vision Implementation Committee

Draft Meeting Minutes for February 7, 2013

Members in attendance: Tim Bowman (chair), Jennifer Page, Paul Solomon, Mary Power, Wendy Rundle, April Edrington, Doug John

Others in attendance: John Francois Goldstein

Meeting convened by chair at 7:10 pm in the Flett room of Belmont Public Library.

1. Minutes

Approval of the January 10 minutes was moved by Paul Solomon. After brief discussion and slight modifications the minutes were approved unanimously.

2. Chair report

The chair reported on an informal discussion with the chair of the Board of Selectmen. The Selectmen like the idea of a collaboration of the VIC with the Economic Development Committee to host a meeting/forum concerning economic development in Belmont. Tim raised the possibility of meeting with the Board of Selectmen in the future to discuss ideas for a forum.

The recent resignation of Jay Szklut from his position was noted.

3. Discussion of Economic Development Forum

The committee discussed steps to be taken to plan and hold a successful forum. All agreed that the Economic Development Committee should be invited to our next meeting to participate in forum planning discussions. The development of a discussion paper concerning aims of the forum was discussed.

The challenges of holding a forum on economic development were discussed. There are so many reactions to development. Many think of negative aspects such as increases in population density, traffic, strain on town services, parking, loss of neighborhood character, while others see positives of added variety of business services, new housing stock, increased tax revenue, and jobs. People will tend to approach discussions with entrenched positions and may get to a "granular" level too early in the process. Reaching out to wide cross sections of different generations and neighborhoods for participation is another challenge. Attendance of decision makers is vital. The possibility of holding multiple sessions was brought up. Many members felt it would be a hard task to have people commit to multiple meetings.

We discussed recent successful development projects in Belmont—the development of the former Belmont Center Fire Station, development of the Our Lady of Mercy property with collaboration of the neighborhood group with the developers. The possibility of looking to other towns for examples of development projects was discussed.

Possible formats for the forum program were discussed: 1) Role playing scenarios representing different views of development, 2) A pushpin exercise of possible development projects in town with a discussion of what Belmont needs and what Belmont doesn't want, 3) Discussion led by a negotiation facilitator from a Public Disputes Program of a local university.

The committee agreed that work of previous groups in town such as the Business and Economic Development Planning Group (BEDPG) and Belmont Center Planning Group would be important to review.

The creation of a "guidance document" for developers was briefly discussed.

The theme of the progression of Belmont through the centuries from a town of farms to a town of homes to a town of ??? was also briefly discussed.

Action Plan

Wendy will draft a straw program for the forum and distribute it to the members of the committee for comments before the next meeting.

Tim will contact the Economic Development Committee about our plans and a joint meeting.

The March meeting goal will be to finalize plans for the forum.

Respectfully submitted

Doug John

March 16, 2013