

BELMONT HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

Town Hall

May 5, 2004

Meeting Minutes

ATTENDING: Co-chair Lydia Ogilby. Members: Paul Bell, Arleyn Levee, Richard Pichette, Nancy Richards, Michael Smith, Sharon Vanderslice. Associate Member: Matthew Genta. Absent: Co-chair Richard Cheek, Linn Hobbs, Lisa Harrington.

515 CONCORD AVENUE

Laura Elvins and Mark Kohler, owners, came before the Commission to discuss appropriate exterior paint colors for their house, which was built in 1963 and is within the borders of the Pleasant Street Historic District. Commission members advised them that, according to the U.S. Department of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, a paint color should be appropriate to both the building and the district. The ideal place to begin, they were told, is with an expert paint analysis of the house to determine what colors it had been painted in the past. Then an appropriate color should be chosen, using paint chip catalogues from the 1950s and 60s and taking into account the neighborhood context in which the house stands. The Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA) guide to period paint colors is a useful reference. The owners will present their desired color to the Commission for approval before repainting.

WAVERLEY FIRE STATION

Matthew Genta reported that the Town is investigating the possibility of having this historic building, which is in a General Residence District, rezoned for commercial use. After a site visit, Mr. Genta and Paul Bell, both architects, said they believed the building would be worth more if it was sold for condominium use. The town's consultant on the Trapelo Road redevelopment, the Cecil Group, has suggested that the property be rezoned for mixed use. Commission members discussed possible wording of a proposed article on the 2004 Town Meeting warrant that would allow the Board of Selectmen to sell the building, while preserving its historic exterior. Richard Pichette said he would review the legal guidelines for historical commissions to determine exactly what the HDC's responsibilities were in this case, as the Waverley Fire Station is not in any historic district. Michael Smith said he would contact Roger Colton, Chair of the Fire Station Re-use Steering Committee, to confirm a time when the HDC could meet with this committee to discuss preservation options. Arleyn Levee agreed to consult Bob Kuehn of Kuehn Development Company, a developer who has experience with historic buildings, to discuss financially-viable preservation approaches.

PRESERVATION 101 PROGRAM

Commission members agreed that this presentation by PreservatiON MASS, hosted by the HDC on April 29, had been a success, attracting approximately 50 people from Belmont and from historic commissions in surrounding towns. They discussed other ways to publicize the importance of historic preservation and how it contributes to the character of the town and to real estate values. All agreed to take turns writing a series of educational articles for the *Belmont Citizen-Herald* highlighting historic structures and neighborhoods, including “newer” buildings like those on Snake Hill Road that are now over 50 years old. These articles could then be collected into a book and adapted for posting on the town’s website. Every member is to bring two suggested topics for articles to the next meeting on June 2.

TRAPELO ROAD CORRIDOR PLANNING

Matthew Genta reported that the Belmont Citizens Forum had contacted M.I.T. for suggestions on ways to rezone this corridor. M.I.T.’s Urban Studies and Planning Department has agreed to study the Trapelo Road corridor in its Community Growth and Land Use Planning course next fall. Both professors and second-year graduate students will work on the project. They will focus on ways to protect landmark buildings and neighborhoods in the event that higher density development is allowed. Arleyn Levee suggested that M.I.T. be given an historic atlas of the town to use for reference purposes.

PLEASANT STREET RECONSTRUCTION

Sharon Vanderslice reported that although the town’s Municipal Light Department planned to bury some electrical wiring along the street, the telephone company (Verizon) and the cable company (Comcast) are not required to do so unless there is a town by-law requiring wires to be buried within historic districts. She will speak to Tim McCarthy of the Municipal Light Department to discuss wording for a possible by-law to present to Town Meeting.

MINUTES

Meeting minutes of April 7, as recorded by Richard Pichette, were discussed, amended, and approved.

DEMOLITION DELAY

Lamenting the many tear-downs that had occurred in Belmont over the past year, members discussed the benefits/drawbacks of a demolition delay by-law that would require a moratorium of a month or more before any building over 50 years old could be

torn down. Matthew Genta agreed to investigate existing by-laws in other towns and to write a newspaper article on what other towns had done and why.

FENCING IN HISTORIC DISTRICT

Members discussed a new fence that had appeared in the Pleasant Street Historic District on the corner of Pleasant and Leonard Streets. Any new fence in the historic district requires approval from the HDC before it is erected, although many residents are unaware of this rule, as building permits are not required for fences less than six feet high. This point should be highlighted in the design guidelines being drafted by Lisa Harrington.

Minutes recorded by Sharon Vanderslice.