

**TOWN OF BELMONT  
PLANNING BOARD**

**MEETING MINUTES  
July 27, 2006**

**7:00 p.m.** Meeting called to order

Attendance: Karl Haglund, Chair; Andrew McClurg; Jennifer Fallon; Sami Baghdady; Andres Rojas; Jay Szklut, Staff; Chris McVay, Staff

**Discussion - Cushing Square Rezoning**

Chris McVay provided a memorandum to the Board outlining some of the key issues the Board would need to define so that staff could draft zoning language. She then facilitated discussion on these issues.

**Boundary of Cushing Square** - Staff proposed a boundary that included all of the current LB1 zone and all of the properties bounded by Horne, Williston, Trapelo, and Common St. Within this block are two properties zoned single-family, one property zoned general residence, and one parking lot zone. Mr. Haglund requested that the discussion tonight consider the LB1 zone and parking lot as the primary area under discussion and that a decision of whether to include the residential lots be reserved to later.

**Building Height** - Although the public meetings clearly indicated a preference for three stories, Board members felt that certain sites could appropriately be developed to four stories. One example is the former CVS building. The Board felt that there needed to be adequate design provisions to allow 4 stories. Members requested that staff look at different setback requirements for different story heights and also that sensitivity to abutting residential properties need to be reflected in the design guidelines.

**Business Size** - The Board unanimously agreed that size of businesses should be allowed to 10,000 ft<sup>2</sup> by right. This would simplify the approval process as currently a permit from the ZBA along with site plan review by the planning board is required.

**FAR** - The Board discussed the general purpose behind FAR requirements and their usefulness for development in Cushing Square. Generally speaking, FAR is best utilized on large lots where intensity of development is a critical concern. The Board felt that FAR may not be a useful regulation for redevelopment of Cushing Square.

**Mixed Use Development** - The Board strongly encouraged promoting commercial development on the first floor and residential uses on the upper floors. However, there was also a recognition that under certain circumstances or for certain establishments, commercial on upper floors should not be prohibited. For example, allowing retail on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> floors may be a mechanism for attracting higher end establishments. The Board is also concerned that residential development may require the use of incentives. Finally, the affordability restrictions on residential development in business zones may be an impediment to the objectives of this proposed zoning change. Staff was requested to propose possible incentives and to draft regulations reflecting affordability and upper floor commercial use concerns.

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Historical Preservation - The Board supported the development of design criteria that were sensitive to historical structures. Karl suggested that transfer of development rights might be utilized to preserve certain structures. It was generally agreed that TDR programs are practical in larger districts than Cushing Square. Staff will develop general criteria to be included in Permit Review that are sensitive to historical issues. Staff will also investigate the use of Historic Preservation Tax Credits as a tool for redevelopment of Cushing Square.

Parking - Clearly, the Board supported a relaxation of parking requirements as a fundamental goal of the proposed rezoning. However, the Board recognized that loosening restrictions on on-site parking did not diminish the parking problem and that the Town must begin to investigate potential solutions. Thoughts expressed by the Board included public or private parking structures; negotiating with Starbucks to redevelop their building and restructure the parking currently available at that site; closure of Horne Road and utilization of a portion of the CVS site for parking. Sami suggested that developers be given the option of placing funds in a parking account in lieu of providing parking spaces. This account would then be utilized to develop garage. Jay suggested that such fund could be utilized to lease space at Churches or other places of assembly with a Town funded trolley system utilized to transport persons to Cushing Square from the leased lots.

The Board then asked if there were any comments from audience members pertaining to the discussion. The Board was cautioned to carefully craft language on allowable building heights and to be sensitive to design of backs of buildings that may face residential areas. One resident felt that maintaining the residential zones on the "Horne" block served as a more adequate buffer to residential properties along Horne and Williston Streets. He did not comment on the fact that the two properties would be treated unfairly as they had no buffer. Finally, any encouragement of parking along residential streets would need a full and complete vetting to gain local support.

10:00 Meeting Adjourned

Next Meeting: Tuesday, August 22, 2006  
Town Hall, Selectmen's Meeting Room  
6:30 pm - 10:00 pm

8/22/06 MINUTES APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY