

BELMONT HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

Town Hall

July 7, 2004

Meeting Minutes

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

UPDATE ON TRAPELO ROAD PLANNING PROCESS

Attending: Sue Bass, Belmont Citizens Forum

Sue Bass informed the Commission that the MIT study of this traffic corridor, which is to begin this fall, will include an evaluation of the Our Lady of Mercy Church site at 401 Belmont Street. This parish is scheduled to be closed by the Catholic Archdiocese of Boston in November. The Belmont Citizens Forum, which is funding the study, is gathering background material to supply to the MIT group. Matthew Genta volunteered to represent the Historic District Commission at the first MIT planning meeting on September 14 in order to discuss buildings in the corridor that the Commission has identified as having historical significance.

MCLEAN TELECOMMUNICATIONS TOWER

Co-chair Richard Cheek circulated copies of a letter he had sent on June 15 to the project engineer at Terra Search, the company designated to construct a new telecommunications tower in the McLean Hospital National Register District near the intersection of Concord Avenue and Somerset Street. The letter stated that the Commission supports the erection of the tower, despite its adverse visual impact on the area, "because it is an essential part of the emergency and safety communications system in Belmont." The letter recommends painting the tower so that it blends in as much as possible with its surroundings. It also stated: "Another means of reducing the top-heavy appearance of the tower would be to reduce the number of private telecommunications arrays, but the Commission voted to approve the number as planned with the understanding that by allowing space for up to three sets of arrays, the Town will be eliminating the need for any additional telecommunications towers on Belmont Hill and will therefore not allow any further towers to be constructed on the Hill." The full text of the letter is attached to these minutes.

NEWSPAPER ARTICLES ON PRESERVATION ISSUES

Matt Genta is drafting the first in a series of planned newspaper articles written by HDC members for publication in the *Belmont Citizen-Herald*. The subject of Mr. Genta's article is Demolition Delay Bylaws. He will circulate a draft among Commission members via e-mail for review. Nancy Richards will draft the second article in the series, dealing with economic incentives for historic preservation.

LIBRARY SITE PLANNING

Paul Bell and Richard Cheek are representing the HDC on the Town's new Library Site Planning Committee. Mr. Bell attended the committee's meeting on this same night, July 7, to urge its members not to use the grassy park in front of the Underwood Pool as a site for either a new building or a parking lot. The Library Site Planning Committee hopes to make a site recommendation for a new main library to the Board of Selectmen by September. Construction costs would be partially funded by donations from the Friends of the Belmont Public Library.

RE-USE OF THE WAVERLEY FIRE STATION

Richard Cheek reported on the results of a joint meeting held on June 24 between the Waverley Fire Station Re-use Committee and seven members of the Historic District Commission (Richard Cheek, Lydia Ogilby, Paul Bell, Matthew Genta, Lisa Harrington, Richard Pichette, and Sharon Vanderslice). The Re-use Committee shared a draft of its final report to the Board of Selectmen, which recommends that this historic structure be sold to a developer for conversion to condominium apartments. The report also recommends that a Preservation Restriction be attached to the deed of sale. Lisa Harrington volunteered to draft the wording for this restriction, circulate it for comment by the Commission's architects, and forward it to the chair of the Re-use Committee. Such a restriction would be held by the Massachusetts Historical Commission and administered by the Belmont Historic District Commission. It would require that any changes to the exterior of the building be approved by the HDC, according to guidelines set by the U. S. Department of the Interior. Two of the Commission's architects, Paul Bell and Michael Smith, previously met with Roger Colton, Chair of the Waverley Fire Station Re-use Committee, and Ken Buckland of the Cecil Group (consultant to the Town) to discuss how parking spots could be placed on the site without ruining the landscape.

HOW TO FACILITATE DELIBERATIONS AT HDC MEETINGS

The Commission continued its discussion of ways to facilitate its deliberations and make them more accessible to members of the public. Suggestions included:

1. Arriving and starting meetings on time.

2. Re-reading our mandate, so that every Commission member is aware of the Commission's role or responsibility in a given situation.
3. Having more members volunteer to take over the work that must be done outside of scheduled Commission meetings.
4. Inviting audience members to walk up to the table during meetings in order to review architectural drawings under discussion.
5. Displaying drawings on a corkboard behind the table.
6. Circulating architectural photographs among members of the audience.
7. Asking audience members to identify themselves and to voice comments or opinions before any votes are taken.
8. Arranging tables so that no Commission member is sitting with his/her back to the public.

MINUTES

Draft minutes of the Commission's June 2 meeting were reviewed and several amendments were made. Michael Smith then moved that the minutes be approved as amended. Nancy Richards seconded. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION AWARD

The Massachusetts Historical Commission's annual conference will be held in Salem, MA on September 10. At the conference, Lydia Ogilby will receive an award for her contributions to historic preservation at the local level. Richard Cheek encouraged all members to attend.

PLEASANT STREET RECONSTRUCTION

Attending: Arthur Wolfson, Pleasant Street resident

Mr. Wolfson told the Commission that the bids for this project had come in \$1.8 million over the original estimate made by the Town's consulting engineer, BSC Group. After discussion between BSC and the Mass Highway Department, the state agreed to award the job to Roads Corporation for \$7.6 million. Construction is currently planned to begin in August. Several members of the HDC remain concerned about the width of the new roadway as it passes through the Historic District. A motion was made to designate Richard Pichette to meet with the Town's acting Director of Community Development, Glenn Clancy, to ask if the road could be narrowed under a change order. Mr. Pichette will also put this request in writing to the Board of Selectmen, citing enabling legislation. The motion passed by a unanimous vote.

Minutes recorded by Sharon Vanderslice.