

## BELMONT HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

MINUTES from Meeting of 8/1/07

Attending:

Commission: Richard Cheek, co chair; Peter Gunness; Linn Hobbs; Rick Pichette, Nancy Richards; Mike Smith and Arleyn Levee (Acting Secretary)

Absent: Lydia Ogilby; Paul Bell; Lisa Harrington

Guests: Brian Burke--Burke Land CO.

Leon and Grace di Magistris;

Rick Kobus-Tsoi/Kobus & Assocs., archts; with Elaine Soo Hoo and Kate Wendt

Neighbors: Evanthia Malliris;

John Beaty (618 Pleasant St)

Natalie A. Reid and Judith Reid Marley ( 626 Pleasant St)

Sue Pew

Arthur Wolfson ( Pleasant St)

### 1. CENTRAL FIRE STATION

Presentation and discussion of model and plans. Building of a model had been suggested at previous sub-committee meetings of the BHDC as needed to clarify features and changes under consideration in this complex project. Model showed Fire Station with its tower, attached rear 3-story building as now proposed, abutting frame building, now housing the Burke company, and the proposed connecting structure. Additionally, a fountain-bench design was included for the sidewalk area between the fire station and frame building. The model was very schematic, with little detail indicated, and many existing or proposed elements not shown.

Discussion ensued among members of the Commission concerning the model and the various changes in design from presented plans:

Linn Hobbs expressed concerns regarding the locations, size, etc., of air handling units, their setbacks especially with regard to issues of vista.. He also questioned the mass of the proposed rear building which is larger and taller than the historic fire station and wondered how the design that the Commission was currently considering reflected what the Selectmen had agreed upon earlier.

Mike Smith thanked Mr. Burke for responding to the sub-committee concerns by building the model and trying to address some of their suggestions. He continues to be concerned about the mass of the back building, particularly with its 3rd story which he feels overwhelms the historic structure.. He also expressed reservations about the materials with which Mr. Burke proposed to cover this building.

Nancy Richards expressed concern about the visual relationship between the tower and the proposed glass atrium. It is important to her that the tower feature not be obscured.

Peter Gunness is concerned that the external elements of the ventilation system be hidden.

Rick Pichette questioned the issue of the 3rd story addition on the rear building which he felt interfered with both the tower and with the dominance of the notable historic structure which it is the duty of the Commission is to protect/preserve. He felt the legal implications of this addition should be explored in terms of zoning, etc. The flat-roofed addition heightens the original rear building, slated for demolition, by about 9' with an additional chimney for a proposed rear fireplace. Additionally, there will also be visible ventilation elements.

Arleyn Levee expressed concern about the ventilation equipment on the roof of the historic fire station. She questioned the construction details (not shown) for the atrium, especially with regard to potential drainage problems, and suggested setting the front face of the atrium behind the corner pier of the fire house façade to lessen its visual impact.

Richard Cheek noted that the accepted principle of adding on to an existing historic building was to do so with great subtlety so that the historic structure remains dominant. The Commission's direct jurisdiction is over the façades of the building but it can comment/make recommendations concerning the impact of any additions upon these features.

Discussion was opened to the audience:

Judith Reid Marley, who abuts the fire station site along the back boundary, wants to make sure that the impact upon the Historic District is carefully managed, noting that Belmont Center has served as a buffer for the homes in the HD along Pleasant St. She is concerned about the noise of the AC units, commenting that those on the CVS roof are noisy. She is also concerned about the cooking smells from the proposed restaurant. She had attended the earlier meetings (Date?) when the original addition was made to the back of the fire station. At that time, she noted, another story was not allowed.

John Beaty, also an abutter questioned the glass atrium as a "bastardization" of historic integrity of the 1850 and 1890 buildings that it would link. Richard Cheek responded that such newer structures, appropriately designed, could be allowed under principles of adaptive re-use-as a compromise to make historic buildings accessible and viable for new uses.

Arthur Wolfson made some suggestions regarding design of the atrium posts. Additionally, he noted that the HVAC units for the building could be recessed into the back roof and that high velocity fans for the kitchen be considered to disperse the effluent higher.

Natalie Reid asked how long the project construction would be on-going. Mr. Burke replied that he hoped it would be 6 months.

Mike Smith summed up the discussion noting that while he was pleased by the progress made, he felt that advice of Town Counsel was necessary concerning the 3rd story issue, a concern that Linn Hobbs echoed.

## 2. RESTAURANT PROPOSAL FOR FIRE STATION

Rick Kobus presented plans, some of which the Commission had not previously seen. He noted that the plans are for 130-seat restaurant, of which 18 seats would be at a 'food counter.' Additionally, outdoor seating is planned on the building 'apron' for 18 people. He noted that all exterior finishes are to be done by the Burke Co.; that the windows are to be 6 over 1; that the wood-burning grill required exhaust through the roof and that 3 smaller air handlers will be required. Also he noted that the ornamental ceiling would be retained though some of the brick needed restorative work.

Discussion concerned the proposed doors to be used in the fire door openings. He hoped to have some that operate like those used at Restaurant Sonsie. Richard suggested that these should be detailed like the original doors in terms of panes, etc. Burke would like to restore the original granite tire guards at the restored central post but it is unclear whether this would work with the proposed doors.

Elaine Soo Hoo noted that the aim was to create a rustic Italian bistro, "sophisticated with an unpretentious menu."--to be a contemporary classic with both lunch and evening sittings. The sidewalk café is to be enhanced by plantings for privacy and perhaps with umbrellas.

Richard requested that consideration be given to keeping the fire pole where it was originally located. He also questioned what kind of signage would be used. [as yet undecided.]  
Mike requested that all subcontractors are to be instructed from the outset that all utilities are to be hidden, not just screened.

3. RE: CHANGE OF EXTERIOR PAINT COLOR FOR 613 PLEASANT ST.

Rick Pichette presented the paint colors-all Benjamin Moore Historic or 'classic' colors:

Clapboards: Montgomery white  
Trim: Vanilla Ice Cream'  
Shutters and accents: Black Forest Green  
Doors: Georgian Brick.

Colors were approved.

4. REVIEW OF TRAPELO RD./BELMONT ST. CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT PROJECT FROM BSC GROUP

The request to review these plans came both from the BSC Group and from MA Historic Commission who had noted in their letter of July 17, 2007 to the MA Highway Dept ( with copy to BHDC) that there are several historic properties in Belmont within the 2.6 miles of this reconstruction area which could be affected. [While the MHC letter noted the various structural complexes potentially affected, it did not mention the Beaver Brook Reservation, one of the items mentioned by BSC] The BSC Group was looking for a letter of support to be sent to the Mass Highway DEPT.

Since most of the Commission had not had a chance to study the plans, it was decided to ask the BSC Group to present their proposals in person at a Commission meeting. Richard noted that the Commission will need to retrieve data from its files on various structures along this corridor to better understand how the proposed improvements will impact the town's historic resources.

Arthur Wolfson noted that there was a possible problem with the location of bus stops.

5. SIDEWALK RECONSTRUCTION WITHIN THE PLEASANT ST. HISTORIC DISTRICT

The issue of the concrete color for the sidewalks and the treatment of the handicap ramps, as discussed in the July 11th minutes, was again noted. Additionally, as the work progresses along Pleasant Street, concern was again expressed over the sidewalk regrading and the stability of the historic stone walls. Arleyn Levee registered her dismay at the potential threat to the long and important wall at 483 Pleasant Street. There is a considerable (18"- 2') change in grade between the finished level of the street subgrade layer and the currently exposed wall base. Additionally, in some places the space between wall and curb is quite narrow. It is unclear how the grade change and the narrowness will be handled to meet code and to protect the historic resources. BSC Group and or MA Highway will be contacted for clarification. She was asked to follow up with Peter Briere of BSC,

6. FUNDING ARCHITECTURAL SURVEY OF BUILDINGS (50 YEARS OLD OR OLDER) IN BELMONT CENTER

Belmont's architectural survey is greatly in need of being updated, especially in view of the Raymond House problem. Information must be sought from MHC and other sources as to their available grants, the deadlines and guidelines for these, etc. It was not decided who would supervise this project.

7. UPDATE ON 40R OVERLAY FOR OUR LADY OF MERCY PROPERTY

Richard Cheek noted negotiations are continuing with town and neighborhood groups working together, with emphasis on the Housing Trust working cooperatively with the neighbors. He noted that there is a possible developer for the site who seems to be amenable to working with the neighbors. There is a meeting scheduled for August 21. One issue still under consideration is that of developing design standards with incentives to save the Church but allow greater density on other parts of the parcel.

8. REVIEW OF MINUTES OF JULY 11 MEETING

Minutes were distributed, read, corrected and approved with certain changes noted.

9. OLD OR NEW BUSINESS

Long-time co-chair Lydia Ogilby has decided to become 'emerita'; therefore Mike Smith was elected by a unanimous vote to become co-chair in her place.

An issue has developed concerning additional HVAC equipment for the Homer Building to serve the computer room. Linn Hobbs agreed to investigate and evaluate the situation.

Mike Smith noted that \$16,500 was voted to repair the historic doors of the Town Hall Building complex.

The meeting adjourned at 10:15pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Arleyn Levee