

TOWN OF BELMONT  
PLANNING BOARD

MEETING MINUTES  
August 2, 2011

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BELMONT, MA.

SEP 30 9 45 AM '11

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

Attendance: Sami Baghdady, Chair; Michael Battista, Andres Rojas; Charles Clark, Joseph DeStefano; Jay Szklut and Jeffrey Wheeler, Staff

Absent: Karl Haglund, Associate Member

Minutes of June 28, 2011 and July 12, 2011 were approved.

Sami Baghdady introduced Joe DeStefano, new Planning Board member and welcomed him.

Mr. Baghdady informed the Board that he had received an email inviting the Board's participation in "Meet Belmont." "Meet Belmont" is an annual event put on by the Vision Implementation Committee, to welcome new residents to Belmont and to serve as a general source of information for them. The event will be held Tuesday night, August 30, 2011 from 6:00 pm to 8:30 pm. Sami Baghdady noted that at past events, the Planning Board did not have a designated table set up. Andy Rojas stated that he would attend the event and represent the Planning Board, and would welcome the company of any other member who wanted to attend.

Jennifer Paige, Meet Belmont Organizing Coordinator, noted that she would be delighted to have the Planning Board be represented at the Meet Belmont Event.

### Committee Updates

Economic Development Advisory Committee – Mr. Szklut reported that the last meeting of the committee was a site visit to the South Pleasant Street area.

### **7:15 P.M. Discussion of the South Pleasant Zoning Proposal**

*- Request for Reconsideration by Planning and Economic Development Manager*

Mr. Baghdady reported that the Planning and Economic Development Manager had submitted a memo to the Board requesting a reconsideration of the decisions made by the Board at their July 12th meeting.

Sami Baghdady gave a little background information regarding the steps leading up to the Board's decisions. He said there was a lot of public input at each meeting for months, and summarized that the Board unanimously voted at the July 12<sup>th</sup> meeting:

1. to limit the boundaries of the zoning district under consideration to include only those properties on Pleasant Street from the White Street extension northerly to the Clark Street foot bridge and not to include the properties abutting Trapelo Road. He said the Board did not vote to take those Waverley Square properties out of consideration. It is the Board's intent to look at Waverley Square in the future, and

2. to not allow residential uses on the South Pleasant Street properties.

These decisions were made after two hours of debate and lengthy deliberation.

Mr. Baghdady further stated he thought the Mr. Szklut's memo was out of order because Mr. Szklut had been a participant in the Planning Board's deliberations leading to the decisions, and the memo raised no new considerations. He explained that if the Planning Board would reconsider its decisions at such request of a nonmember, it would set a bad precedent because any party who did not agree with the Planning Board's decisions could continuously request reconsideration.

Charles Clark – Stated that Mr. Baghdady explained the process very well, and that Mr. Szklut has spoken out in an honest way as manager. He then thanked Mr. Szklut for bringing up the issues.

Michael Battista - Agreed with Mr. Clark and said there were surprises such as the residential component on South Pleasant Street that needed to be addressed and the Board did that. He reiterated that he supported the Board's decisions.

Joseph DeStefano – Stated that he was not a member of the Board when the decisions were voted upon. He thanked Jay for his viewpoint, and said that he needed to digest the issues and actions taken but supported Mr. Baghdady's position.

Andy Rojas spoke to the vision of the Development, saying that it was based on the input of the residents and the vision is coming from the community and that it developed organically through a public processes. He noted that he did not think that the Planning Manager's vision should take precedence over the community's vision. He asked for Mr. Szklut's help in implementing the community's vision.

Jay Szklut spoke to some procedural matters and stated that there was nothing legally preventing the Board from reconsidering their decision and mentioned that the Board reconsidered a decision it made in the Wellington School proposal.

Sami Baghdady responded that Wellington School was a different situation because neighbors who were supposed to be notified by Staff (at his request) that Wellington School was on the Board's agenda were not in fact notified. As a result, concerned residents who offered a different perspective did not participate in the decision making process, and felt that their views were not heard.

**Moved by Mr. Clark that the decisions the Board made on the South Pleasant Street proposal are final and the request for reconsideration is inappropriate.**

**Seconded by Mr. Rojas**

**Motion passed unanimously.**

Mr. Jay Szklut was granted permission by the Chair to make a few clarifications regarding the interpretation of his memo. First, he did not intend to imply that the Board was taking the

inclusion of the Waverly Square property off the table. Second, as Planning and Economic Development Manager he believes it appropriate to comment on decisions of the Board as they relate to zoning proposals and he would continue to do so.

Andy Rojas noted that Mr. Szklut's position should enable him to write a memo to the Planning Board in that context, and that it was fine to do so, but sending the memo to the Board of Selectmen and the Economic Development Advisory Committee was not. He said that felt like Mr. Szklut was trying to pressure the Board and it felt inappropriate.

Mr. Szklut noted that he reports to the Town Administrator and the Board of Selectmen and therefore felt it appropriate to copy them on the memo. Further, he noted that he did not send it to the entire Board of Selectman, but only to two members, the Liaison and the Chair. He further stated that he did not send it to the Economic Development Advisory Committee but only to the Chair of that Committee at his request. Once the memo was sent to the Planning Board, it became a public document. During the Committee's site visit to South Pleasant Street, Mr. Szklut mentioned his memo to the Planning Board and that the memo had covered some of the same points made during the site visit. The chair subsequently asked for a copy and then forwarded it to the committee members.

Jennifer Paige was recognized by the Chair.

Ms. Paige thanked Jay for his role in long range planning. She stated that she felt it was very appropriate that he raised questions in his memo.

Adam Tocci was recognized by the Chair.

Mr. Tocci noted that he was perplexed because as an owner of the property removed from the zoning proposal he never received notification of the July 12 meeting. He said if he had, he surely would have attended that meeting. He also noted that any delay in the rezoning proceedings would be a substantial one and he felt it was inappropriate to "rake Jay over the coals".

The Chair asked if there were more comments. Seeing that there weren't any, he moved to the next item under the South Pleasant Zoning Discussion.

*- Estimates of Per Capita Costs of town and School Services*

Sami Baghdady thanked Liz Allison, chair of the Warrant Committee for the oral report on per capita costs on town and school services she presented at the last Board meeting and noted that Ms. Allison now wished to share with the Board a written copy of the cost of services report.

Ms. Allison distributed a report on the analysis of average cost of providing municipal and educational services for FY2011 to the Board. Liz Allison said that she planned to provide the members with an interactive spread sheet that would calculate costs based on any figure plugged in to the spreadsheet.

Following Ms. Allison's discussion, Mr. Szklut presented to the Board an analysis of cost of educational services and revenues generated for a sample apartment building noting that apartments, especially those with a majority of 1 and 2 bedroom units generated surplus revenue to the Town.

Mr. Szklut also presented the executive summary of an UMass Donahue Report on the Fiscal Impact of Mixed-Income Developments in Massachusetts, noting that school enrollment is not the most significant factor driving increases in school costs.

*- Bulk and Height Limitations*

Andy Rojas stated that the Planning Division had hired a consultant with experience in generating 3D models and would provide the Board with those visuals so they could proceed with the discussion on Bulk and Height Limitations and present it to the public.

*- Design Standards*

Sami Baghdady talked about the importance of strong design standards for a successful rezoning of South Pleasant Street. He noted that he was very impressed with the Design Standards for the Oakley Neighborhood Smart Growth District and that these should serve as a model for the South Pleasant standards to be developed. He stressed the need for illustrations.

Mr. Szklut noted that he had distributed to the current members the various standards (Oakley neighborhood, Cushing Square and the general standards) developed by the Planning Board and requested Board members to review and comment for applicability to South Pleasant Street. He had also distributed to members a draft model for design guidelines for South Pleasant Street. The model included specific items to be covered under the design guidelines with illustrations.

Charles Clark commented that the more pictures presented the better.

Mr. Szklut urged the Board to review the materials presented and to submit comments prior to the next Board meeting.

*- Timeline for the Town Meeting Presentation*

Mr. Szklut presented a draft timeline for presentation of a zoning article to the Special Town Meeting in November. Andy Rojas said the initial review of the Design Standards will be on the September 13 agenda.

*Comments from Residents*

- Jennifer Paige commented that she was glad that the Board wasn't rushing into a rezoning, and encouraged the Board to give updates and reports on their progress.

Sami Baghdady thanked her for her comments, and asked if there were others. Hearing none, he asked for a motion to adjourn.

**8:20 P.M. – Meeting Adjourned**

**Next Meeting:** Tuesday, September 13, 2011, 7:00 p.m.  
Board of Selectmen’s Meeting Room, Town Hall

List of Documents presented:

- July 22, 2011 memorandum from Planning & Economic Development Manager to Board
- Report of average cost of municipal and educational services for FY2011
- Analysis of costs and revenues associated with apartment development
- Executive Summary of UMass Donohue Institute Report on Fiscal Impact of Mixed Use Developments
- Draft Design Review Guidelines for Commercial Developments.