

TOWN OF BELMONT
PLANNING BOARD

MEETING MINUTES
September 8, 2011

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

Attendance: Sami Baghdady, Chair; Joseph DeStefano, Andres Rojas; Karl Haglund, Associate Member; Jeffrey Wheeler, Staff

Absent: Michael Battista, Charles Clark

Mr. Baghdady called the meeting to order.

Minutes of August 2 and 10, 2011 were approved.

Mr. Rojas reported that the Economic Development Advisory Committee will be presenting a report to the Board of Selectman on September 22 regarding the potential tax dollars that future development projects might generate.

Mr. Rojas represented the Planning Board at the “Meet Belmont” event and reported that a good number of residents showed interest and concern with issues facing Belmont. He felt that this was a good way to reach out to residents and that the Board should attend this event in the future.

Mr. Baghdady, Mr. Haglund, and Mr. Rojas signed the Site Plan Approval Decision for 58 and 70 Concord Avenue. Mr. DeStefano did not sign the decision since he was not a member of the Board at the time the decision was made.

7:20 p.m. Preliminary South Pleasant Street Zoning Proposal

Mr. Baghdady introduced Architect Luis Cetrangolo and explained that he was hired to draft some visualizations of the South Pleasant Street area to help make sure that the dimensional regulations make sense. Mr. Cetrangolo explained the software that he would be using to visualize this area. He stated that he would use the current zoning to develop some calculations to figure out what areas could be considered for changes. Mr. Cetrangolo showed images of the existing properties and their respective buildings and showed examples of how buildings can be changed by simply changing the Floor Area Ratio (FAR). This generated discussion amongst the Board regarding bulk and height limitations, design standards, and parking requirements. The Board agreed that parking could potentially have a significant impact on any development in the area and that the Board should consider amending the parking requirements and encouraging it to go underground. Mr. Rojas suggested looking at an FAR of 2.5-3.0 and relaxing the lot coverage and open space requirements.

7:50 p.m. Discussion Regarding Fall Schedule

Regulation of Solar and Wind Energy Generating Facilities

Mr. Baghdady introduced Jim Palmer from the Belmont Municipal Light Department. Mr. Baghdady explained that as more and more environmentally friendly sources of energy are being developed, such as solar and wind energy, the Board should make sure that these installations properly sited. Mr. Palmer explained that the Belmont Municipal Light Department is looking at

renewable sources and recently had tariffs and an Interconnection Policy approved by the Light Board (both of which are pending before the state). He explained that the Interconnection Policy limits and regulates the number of facilities from which the Light Department will buy power (this will not limit the number of facilities, rather only those facilities that the Light Department will buy power from) - 297 residential and 31 commercial customers will be eligible to participate in an energy buyback program for installing solar panels. Mr. Palmer also mentioned that wind energy is also possible, but existing height limits in Town will preclude these facilities; he explained that wind mills need at least 100' to clear the canopy of trees. He further noted that wind energy is not a pressing need at this time. Mr. Palmer concluded by stating he expected the Interconnection Policy to take effect by mid-October.

Mr. Baghdady stated that the Board must look to reasonably regulate solar and wind power facilities. Mr. Rojas noted that the challenge will be to integrate the solar panels with the existing structures to preserve the quality and character of the surrounding neighborhood. The Board discussed the economics and necessary size of solar panels to provide sufficient electricity. Mr. Palmer stated that a typical Belmont house will require about 500 square feet of solar panels, approximately 20' X 25'.

Demolition Delay By-Law

Mr. Baghdady stated that the Planning Board has been instructed by the Board of Selectmen to work with the Historic District Commission to draft a demolition delay by-law. He explained that this would not be a zoning by-law, but rather a general by-law of the Town. He stated that this recent attempt to draft a by-law was the result of the possible demolition of the Clark House at 59 Common Street. Mr. Rojas requested that the Board be careful in drafting this by-law so that it does not hinder progress in the commercial districts. The Board discussed what age of structures to protect and the length of delay – two issues that will be quite controversial. The Board agreed that they do not want to capture every structure, just those worthy of protection. Mr. DeStefano expressed concern about what gets built in place of the demolished structure; he stated that he would like to see some sort of review of the new structure. Mr. Baghdady discussed the creation of a sub-committee combining several members of the Planning Board and the Historic District Commission in order to draft an acceptable by-law.

Town Meeting Communications Committee Presentation

Mr. Baghdady explained that the Ad Hoc committee on Town Meeting Communications will be present at the Board's next meeting in order to review its suggested recommendations for improving Town Meeting.

8:30 p.m. Meeting Adjourned

List of Documents Presented:
None