

TOWN OF BELMONT
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES

April 23, 2024

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA

DATE: June 6, 2024
TIME: 2:54 PM

Present: Online: Jackie Appel; Michael Chesson; Carol Moyles, Co-Chair; Drew Nealon; Matt Schonewald; Carl Solander, Co-Chair

Staff: Online: Delia Ferguson, Staff Planner, Office of Planning & Building

Members of the Public: Mr. Fabien Dubois, Nate Murray, Keri Murray Architecture, Vince Stanton, Christie

1. Meeting Called to Order:

Mr. Solander called the meeting to order at 7:00pm. Quorum was established.

2. New Public Hearings:

a. 529 Pleasant St (Case # 24-04)

Mr. Fabien Dubois presented his proposed landscaping project. Mr. Dubois said that he would like to build a stone wall using stones already on hand. In addition, Mr. Dubois plans to make some simple plantings. Images were shared online showing what the result is anticipated to look like. It was asked if there were enough stones which Mr. Dubois confirmed. Mr. Solander asked if the stones would be joined with mortar and Mr. Dubois replied that he is planning to build a drywall. Mr. Dubois added that the stone wall would be level with the driveway and that the resulting height would be dependent on the number of stones available for use on his property, perhaps as high as the brick behind the lavender.

MOTION to approve Case # 2404 made by Mr. Solander. SECONDED by Ms. Appel. With all in favor, the motion passes. Mr. Solander said that a Certificate of Appropriateness will be issued within a week.

3. New Discussion

a. 210-212 Payson Road (Demolition Delay Property)

Nate Murray presented, representing Keri Murray Architecture. Mr. Murray presented this renovation project as being focused on a three-story structure comprised of a basement and enclosed two-story garage including the interior. Mr. Murray stated that the foundation would be rebuilt and new conditioning and insulation would be added to bring up to code. Images were shared online of the house and the proposed renovation. The house was built in 1910 by Richard Shaw and is a shingle-style colonial revival. There is some water

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damage. The intent of the proposed renovation is to make this space a functioning part of the house as the owner plans to add a kitchen and seating area. It was asked what the role of the HDC is as this is not a historically significant building. If the demolition delay was enforced on the property, there would be a one-year waiting period before demolition. Mr. Murray said that a double window would be added on the north façade. The owner generally wants to allow more light into the space. In the kitchen area, the windows would be slightly higher than they currently are due to the planned position of the cabinetry. The owner plans to use Anderson windows. Mr. Murray said that a second egress would be added. On the other side of the structure, four windows will replace where there are currently three. The basement window will be replaced with a larger version and a new basement door will be added. The Demolition Delay clause allows for this type of renovation as the portion of the house which the owner proposes to rebuild seems to be a later addition than the year the home was built and is not a historically significant feature of the house. In addition, the proposed renovation does not involve the main massing of the home or any other part of the home under its distinctive roof. Mr. Murray said that the two units are side-by-side and have a shared middle floor much like a Philly-style layout. The Commission was supportive of this proposed renovation.

Mr. Solander said that a vote will be taken when the permit is submitted.

4. Continued Public Hearings:

- a. None

5. Approval of Minutes:

- a. Approve draft of 3/12/2024 Meeting Minutes

Carl and Carol agreed to proofread these minutes.

MOTION to postpone the approval of draft 3/12/2024 meeting minutes made by Mr. Solander. SECONDED by Mr. Schonewald. With all in favor, motion passes.

6. Continued Discussion:

- a. Community Path Project meeting: April 24th, at Town Hall. Time change from 7pm to 5pm

Vincent Stanton presented. Ms. Moyles indicated that she plans to attend the meeting and that she had spoken with Holly. Mr. Solander cautioned that HDC about creating a quorum if enough members attended the meeting. Mr. Stanton said that Nitsch Engineering is designing Phase 1 of the Community Path Project and is committed to completing 75 percent by June 30, 2024. Mr. Stanton said that it would be valuable for Nitsch Engineering to get HDC input sooner rather than later. Mr. Stanton said that he is in regular communication with both John Michalak, Project Manager and Sean Sanger, Lead Landscape Architect.

In response to the question of what an eight-foot chain link fence would look like across the bridge at the entrance to Belmont Center, Mr. Stanton provided a presentation which he added is also available online. Mr. Stanton mounted

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tennis balls on garden poles to create a visual representation of what an eight-foot chain link fence would look like. Many of the details presented are included in Mr. Stanton's presentation deck which he also agreed to distribute to Holly. In addition to these details, Mr. Stanton added that the purpose of the eight-foot chain link fence is to deter climbing. A timber rail, with three horizontal slats, is proposed to abut the edge of this fencing. A brick pavement walkway is planned which would go across to the M&T Bank location. A stairway and new ramp will be built. The wrought iron fence currently in place is intended to prevent pedestrians from walking over to the edge of the bridge. The question of asking the MBTA if they would consider extending the boarding platform further across the bridge was raised. Ms. Moyles supports this idea. Mr. Stanton showed the visual of the chain link fence from both sides of the Belmont Center bridge. Ms. Moyles said that it was very helpful to visualize the proposed chain link fence.

Ms. Moyles asked if the existing fence might be repaired as the proposed chain link fence would be substantially higher than the current fencing and, being tightly woven, create a visual barrier against the historic atmosphere of Belmont Center. The Unitarian Universal Church would be obscured with its sight line blocked. Ms. Moyles said that sight lines are important in order to make a visual connection. Mr. Stanton strongly encouraged Ms. Moyles to advocate to have the current fence repaired at tomorrow's meeting. Landscaping detail will be locked in at 75 percent. Now is the time to provide feedback. After the last meeting, Edwin Shy appeared. At this time, Mr. Stanton shared Ms. Moyles and Mr. Solander's input, including four bullet points, with Holly and then Mr. Michalak who said that they would be able to address HDC concerns yet provided no specifics. Mr. Stanton recommended that the HDC develop an alternate plan, perhaps a four- to five-foot-tall chain link fence; however, any tightly woven chain link fence would add opacity. Ms. Moyles stated that in addition to this issue, the fence across the bridge needs to be shortened. Ms. Moyles said that she is concerned that the timber rail would be intrusive and suggested that other materials, such as granite, be explored and wants to see what these would look like. Ms. Moyles said that the fence should follow the slope of the bridge.

Mr. Schonewald said that the stairway in the area goes up and there is not a legal crossing for pedestrians to cross the tracks yet they do. Mr. Stanton said that there is a plan to remove granite stairs and replace them with concrete. The area is not a historic district. Ms. Moyles said that granite should be used whenever possible and she told Holly this. If there are no stairs, any available granite might be used in the retaining wall for the ramp from Concord Avenue to Belmont Center. Ms. Moyles asked if, in the 75 percent design, there are details that visually describe the proposed fencing like in elevation form or section that give details, including product information, that HDC could respond to. Mr. Stanton responded that on April 7, 2024, there MASS DOT 25 percent hearing took place and that the 75 percent design process was just getting underway. Mr. Stanton added that this project is three and a half years behind as delays were experienced with the MBTA. Mr. Stanton said that the June 30, 2024 deadline has now slipped to the end of summer. Mr. Stanton added that a

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question for tomorrow is the degree to which input to the 75 percent design will still be useful.

Ms. Moyles asked the HDC to provide her with bullet points to share at tomorrow's meeting and said that she intends to keep a high-level discussion. Ms. Moyles, upon receiving the bullet points, will review them with Mr. Solander. Ms. Moyles inquired when she would weigh in at the meeting. Mr. Stanton said that she was on the agenda, to be confirmed with Holly. Mr. Stanton sees this meeting as an opportunity to negotiate with Mr. Michalak. Ms. Moyles said that the proposed materials are discordant in that they are too modern for the Belmont Center atmosphere and do not relate to the rest of the environment. Mr. Solander stated that he is in agreement with Ms. Moyles.

There was a discussion about the event signs hanging from the Belmont Center bridge and questions around who is responsible for approving and ultimately removing them. Many have been left long after events have taken place and are visually unpleasant when abandoned. It was said that one sign dates to 2020. Mr. Stanton suggested that allowing these signs also hinders the sightline of the historic atmosphere of Belmont Center. Mr. Nealon suggested that the signs could be hung lower. Mr. Stanton cautioned that a truck could drive under the bridge and pull such signs down. As it was unclear how signs are approved and who is responsible for their timely removal, Mr. Solander agreed to inquire of Glenn Clancy.

b. HDC Applicant Review and Approval: John Beaty, Henry Ogilby, Yael Getz Schoen

Mr. Solander stated that Ms. Moyles drafted a letter in support of three applicants to the HDC which they had reviewed together. Three new members are currently needed. One to replace Mr. Chesson when he steps down. Mr. Solander plans to share this letter with the Select Board on behalf of the HDC in order to seek new appointments. Ms. Moyles agreed to correct a formatting issue with the last paragraph.

MOTION to endorse the three applicants, those being John Beaty, Henry Ogilby and Yael Getz Schoen, made by Mr. Schonewald. SECONDED by Ms. Moyles. With all in favor, the motion passes.

It was then discussed that the Select Board meets on Thursday. Ms. Ferguson agreed to provide the Select Board with a copy of the letter in hopes of having it added to the Select Board agenda for this week under 'Other business not anticipated by the chair' if needed. If not included in this week's agenda, it can be included on the agenda of the Select Board's next meeting. Mr. Solander said that one more person would be needed for the HDC and asked membership to be receptive to interest.

c. Updates to the Demolition Bylaw – skipped

d. Propose HDC schedule changes

- i. Changing HDC meeting date to accommodate a Minutes Taker

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Mr. Solander raised the topic of moving HDC meetings to the fourth Tuesday of the month to accommodate a minutes taker.

MOTION to move HDC meetings to the fourth Tuesday of the month by Mr. Solander. SECONDED by Matt Schonewald. With all in favor, motion passes.

Ms. Ferguson agreed to update the Town of Belmont website to reflect this change which takes effect in May, 2024. Mr. Solander reminded the HDC that rules and regulations are all documented on the Town of Belmont website adding that a Certificate of Appropriateness cannot be given unless abutters have been notified two weeks in advance per state law.

- ii. Set April 2024 meeting date – N/A
- e. Review MBTA Community Zoning proposals and discuss HDC recommendations – already done
- f. Updates from the 1/10/24 CPC meeting – Handled at the time of the last meeting
- g. Design Guidelines Discussion – no movement since last meeting
- h. Demolition Delay Properties Update

Christie joined the meeting online. Christie and her husband are contemplating making an offer on 200 Clifton Street and expressed an interest in gaining an understanding of any restrictions that would apply to anticipated renovations. Christie said that the property has water damage and old windows. Christie stated that she does not plan to demolish anything rather she would like to replace windows and make changes to the interior. In addition, the roof and its underlayment need attention. It was shared with Christie that these types of changes would not be restricted. Mr. Solander added that substantial changes would raise issues with the Demolition Delay bylaw. Engagement with the Commission before moving forward with a permit is always recommended. Mr. Solander clarified that a Certificate of Appropriateness was not required for Demolition Delay properties. Mr. Nealon recommended that Christie consider viewing old HDC meeting recordings to gain an understanding of how decisions are generally made. Christie asked if the first step is to go through the Building Department and then follow up with the Commission if necessary. This was confirmed.

It was said that updates to the Demolition Delay law should be kept on the HDC agenda. This may be considered at Town Meeting in 2025 so the HDC may need to work on it over the summer. To be added to the agenda for next month's meeting.

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i. Work Plan

i. 2024 Work Plan Review

Ms. Moyles said that the work plan had been distributed. Mr. Solander added that it needs updating. Perhaps the best time to update it would be next month with three new HDC members onboarding. Ms. Moyles said that nothing had changed and that the work plan should be issued monthly. Ms. Moyles referenced onboarding materials that Lauren Meyer had assembled and agreed to coordinate with Delia on distribution of these materials. Ms. Ferguson agreed to coordinate having the list with new members updated on the Town of Belmont website. Ms. Ferguson confirms attendance in advance of meetings.

Ms. Moyles said that she plans to step down from her role effective June, 2024. Mr. Solander asked if anyone on the HDC were interested in being a co-chair and suggested he may only act as chair for another year. Mr. Solander suggested that the HDC members consider their roles and discuss at the time of the next meeting. A vote will be taken at the time of the June, 2024 meeting. A letter will be written to inform the Select Board of changes in HDC roles with the intention of naming new members as well. Ms. Moyles said that she would step away gradually to ensure a smooth transition. For those HDC members who wish to renew their role, this information will be included in the letter. The role of co-chairs was said to primarily include email correspondence and agenda setting. In addition, co-chairs issue Certificate of Appropriateness from templates using information provided in applications. Mr. Schonewald said that creating a bulleted job description of the co-chair role would be helpful and Mr. Solander and Ms. Moyles agreed to create one. Managing communications with other Town of Belmont boards is one of the items that will be included.

ii. MBTA Community Zoning Update

Mr. Nealon said that the recommendation for the MBTA Community Zoning project is currently with the Planning Board and that historical issues were handled well. Town Meeting will take place in the Fall. It was thought that Town Meeting would either approve the information once presented or reject it and return it to the Planning Board. The Planning Board is now reviewing the map, table and report that was provided to them.

iii. HDC Website Update – N/A

iv. CPC Update

Ms. Appel updated the HDC on the recent CPC meeting. A review of all funds approved for CPC funding will take place. A five-year forecast will be performed in order to project what expenses will be. It is expected that the CPC fund will go into deficit within the next five years. Elizabeth

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Dionne indicated that funding can be expected to decrease. Mr. Solander inquired if CPC funds were replenished each year. Ms. Appel stated that the funds are typically spent before they are collected which has resulted in revenue shortfalls. Mr. Solander raised the question of completing the Historic Resources Survey stating that the last one was not complete. Grant funds would be needed for this. Sometimes matching funds are available from the State of Massachusetts. Mr. Solander suggested that this topic be raised another time.

7. General Housekeeping

- a. Community Development Administrative Updates – N/A

8. Adjourned

MOTION was made by Mr. Solander to adjourn the meeting at approximately 9:03pm.
SECONDED by
Mr. Schonewald. With all in favor, the meeting was then promptly adjourned.

The next meeting of the HDC is Tuesday, May 28, 2024.