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**TOWN OF BELMONT
PLANNING BOARD**

MEETING MINUTES

June 21, 2016

Present: Elisabeth Allison, Chair; Charles Clark; Barbara Fiacco, Vice Chair; Joseph DeStefano; Barbara Fiacco, Vice Chair; Karl Haglund; Raffi Manjikian

Staff: Jeffrey Wheeler, Senior Town Planner and Office of Community Development Liaison

7:05 p.m. Meeting called to order

1. Debrief on Town Meeting

Ms. Allison reviewed Town Meeting and reported that the Since Residence C amendments were passed by a wide margin. She summarized the “takeaways” as follows:

- “Mega Mansions” will not be allowed since there was a clear mandate to prohibit them;
- Design should be part of the Board’s review; and
- Every district is different; residents from SR-B and SR-A should come forward if they want to change their zoning.

Mr. DeStefano heard concerns about the loss of property rights but wanted to reiterate that the role of the Planning Board was to enhance a neighborhood. Mr. Haglund stated that it was a balance between individual rights and those of the community. Mr. Manjikian thought the process was collaborative and that a middle ground was found in the process.

2. Implementing the SR-C Zoning By-Law Amendments

Ms. Allison suggested that what the Board learned from the GR process will help inform the SR-C process. She reviewed the tools that would be available to the Board to review an application, such as quartile analysis, design and architectural guidelines and the 13 Birch Street application as a model. She added that the Board must have courage of its convictions when reviewing the applications. She raised concerns that GR uses total living area (TLA) where the SR-C uses gross floor area (GFA) and noted that the Board should approach the applications with this distinction in mind. She also raised concern about the meaning of “consideration of abutting properties” and how the Board should take this into account. She noted that this is a work in progress and that the framework of the process is very important. Ms. Fiacco stated that the GR framework will be useful. She also noted that the Board will need GFA and height for abutting properties. Mr. DeStefano stated that this will be quite a challenge when looking at ranch houses. He noted that the Town is evolving and the small homes are being expanded. He added that the Board has to be thoughtful in its review and suggested that the size of a structure should be tied to what the lot coverage allows. Mr. Haglund stated that he appreciated that confidence of Town Meeting and the guidelines will be important for subsequent applications. Ms. Allison stated that the Board will have to consider consistency when applying the principles of the by-

law.

3. Summer Calendar for July and August

The Board agreed that its July meetings will be held on July 5 and 19.

4. Continued Public Hearings

a. 48 Middlecot Street

Nune Khachatrian, the Applicant, reviewed the revised plans and noted that she looked at the neighborhood concerns, met with the Board's representatives and made a compromise by reducing the size of the home by 21 percent. Ms. Allison reviewed the quartile analysis with revised plans and noted that the planned structure would remain one of the largest homes in the neighborhood. Members of the Working Group (Mr. Manjikian and Mr. Stefano) stated that the process to respond to the neighborhoods concerns and reduce the size of the home was going in the right direction. Ms. Fiacco stated that she could see improvements.

Comments from the Audience:

1. Vincent Beaudoin, 53 Middlecot Street, expressed concerns about height. He also noted that this was practically doubling the size of the house and wondered what precedent this would set.
2. Jim Garber, 30 Cowdin Street, stated that the Applicant wanted to stuff an oversized structure on a neighborhood without regard for that neighborhood.
3. Abhay Mujumdar, 38 Cowdin Street, expressed concern about precedent. He added that this was not a house that he wanted in his neighborhood and that it will affect his sense of privacy.
4. Anne Beaudoin, 53 Middlecot Street, stated that the house was too big. She expressed concerns of mass and height and noted that it will loom over other houses in the neighborhood.
5. Bill Osterhaus, 35 Cowdin Street, felt the ridge should be lowered. He noted that that height has a great impact on the neighborhood and the apparent mass of the house.
6. Joe Magno, 11 Cowdin Street, expressed concerns of setting a bad precedent. He added that this house is too big and does not fit in the neighborhood.
7. Anne Beaudoin, 53 Middlecot Street, stated that two-stories was quite massive.
8. Barbara Garber, 30 Cowdin Street, expressed concern about the impact on her house.
9. Joe Magno, 11 Cowdin Street, questioned why this home could not be built to conform to the by-laws. Mr. DeStefano stated that the building lot was nonconforming but that the house conformed to the dimensional regulations.

Ms. Allison stated that she appreciated the efforts to reduce the size of the house. She noted that Town Meeting wants the Board to control the pace at which homes are made larger. She added that this home pushes all of the boundaries and questioned what was acceptable. She also raised concern about a full bathroom and separate entrance into the basement since this single-family could easily turn into a two-family home. Mr. Manjikian stated that this home pushed the limits but was wrestling with the 20 percent reduction. Norman Kehrlop, architect for the project, stated that the existing basement is finished and that a second kitchen was removed from the plans. He noted that the Building Code requires stairs to a basement and that the basement would be for recreational purposes only. He provided additional information to clarify other issues. Mr. DeStefano requested that the architect make the building look smaller and noted that the height and mass is much less than originally proposed. He added that the reality is that there is going to be some change to the property. Ms. Allison agreed but added that the second story could be smaller. She asked Mr. Wheeler to describe the Fire Department's rule re basement egress. Ms. Fiacco stated that using the existing first floor dictates mass, height and size of building. Mr. Haglund suggesting looking at the landscape plan since that can soften the impact of the house.

MOTION made by Ms. Fiacco to continue the public hearing to July 5. Seconded by Mr. Manjikian. The motion passed.

b. 9 Westlund Road

Norman Kehrlop, architect for the project, reviewed the revised plans and noted that the roof was lowered by a little more than 2 feet.

Ms. Allison reviewed the quartile analysis using the revised plans. Esmail Mahdavi, the Applicant, stated that he appreciated working with the working group (Mr. Manjikian and Mr. DeStefano). Ms. Fiacco stated that she saw improvements and made suggestions about the windows. Mr. Haglund requested that the front gable be removed since it is atypical of homes in Belmont. Mr. Mahdavi stated that he will remove the front gable. Ms. Allison questioned whether the Board was satisfied with the size of the house in relation to adjacent homes. Mr. DeStefano stated that the house was modest and that the neighborhood consisted of extremely small homes.

MOTION made by Mr. Clark to continue the public hearing to July 5. Seconded by Ms. Fiacco. Motion passed.

5. Neighborhood Determinations

a. 42 Pine Street

Mr. Wheeler distributed a draft neighborhood map for the Board to review. Mr. DeStefano's suggestion for extending the boundaries of the neighborhood was accepted.

b. 175 Brighton Street

Mr. Wheeler distributed a draft neighborhood map for the Board to review. He explained that

Little Pond impacted the shape of the neighborhood. The Board discussed revisions to the map.

6. Updates on Potential Cases and Planning Board Projects, and Committee Reports
a. State Zoning Legislation

Ms. Allison reported that the State Senate passed the legislation that Senator Brownsberger spoke about at the Board's last meeting, but it had not passed in the House yet. She reviewed several provisions of the bill that raised concerns:

1. 5 percent of housing units to be developed as accessory apartments by-right,
2. Multi-family housing must be allowed by-right,
3. Planning requirements, and
4. Change vote on zoning amendments to majority instead of 2/3s.

Mr. Manjikian requested bringing the state legislator and the Board of Selectmen together to discuss to legislation. Ms. Allison agreed and added that the financial impacts of the legislation must be understood.

b. Changes to 122 Waverly Street – minor vs. major

The Board discussed the process to determine minor vs. major. Ms. Allison stated that enforcement is with the Building Inspector and questioned when an issue should be brought to the Board. She noted the importance of working closely with the Building Inspectors to distinguish between them merely making "judgment calls" or making significant changes to design plans. She suggested several issues for the Board to discuss further:

1. Density,
2. Conversion of Single-family to a two-family and a two-family to a three,
3. When the issue cannot be corrected, it must come back to the Board,
4. Differences between Design and Site Plan Review and Special Permit, and
5. Discretion to the Building Inspector.

Mr. Manjikian stated that he was more comfortable with a clear trigger. Ms. Fiacco stated that anything that impacts density should come back before the Board. Mr. Clark stated that if the Applicant does not want to comply with the conditions then it should be brought to the Board. Mr. Manjikian suggested creating a list of issues that need to be reviewed by the Board. Mr. Haglund stated that the Board should look at whether the proposed change increases density. Mr. Clark stated that the Board should care about those things that it spent time on reviewing. Ms. Allison stated that the Board does not want to review everything and that too detailed a level of intervention is undesirable. She suggested that the Board needs a policy in place by the end of the summer.

Mr. Manjikian recused himself from the specific discussion on 122 Waverley Street.

Don Cusano, Applicant, noted that the mass, the square footage, and the foot print have not been altered as a result of these changes. Mr. Cusano reviewed the changes to each of the buildings and explained why they were done.

Mr. Haglund stated that it was hard to judge the wrought iron without seeing specifications on it. Mr. Cusano replied that the wrought iron will be the same as that used on the Hamilton and Merrill Street homes. Mr. Clark clarified that only half baths are being requested.

Comments from the Audience:

1. Judith Ananian Sarno, Waverley Terrace, questioned the process and why this wasn't a public hearing. She added that the decision is very explicit and does not mention a half bath in the basement. She also stated that this review does not fall under Section 7.3.6 and wondered if this issue should go before the Zoning Board of Appeals. Mr. Wheeler indicated that the Planning Board was the appropriate body.
2. Stephanie Woerner, 14 Waverly Terrace, felt that adding a half bath was not a minor change. She also expressed concern about the maple trees being used as street trees. Mr. Cusano stated that the Board specified Red Maple trees.

The Board agreed to continue the discussion to July 5, 2016.

Adjourn: 9:30 p.m.