

**TOWN OF BELMONT
PLANNING BOARD**

**MEETING MINUTES
November 15, 2016**

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2016 DEC -2 PM 2:20

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

Absent: Karl Haglund

Staff: Jeffrey Wheeler, Office of Community Development Liaison

1. 7:05 PM - Meeting Called to Order

2. Vote on General Residence District Guidelines

The Board concurred with the edits and voted to adopt the General Residence District Guidelines. These Guidelines will be provided to Applicants seeking a Special Permit in the General Residence District.

3. Continued Public Hearings:

a. 10 Anis Road – Two-Story Addition (SR-C)

The Applicant was not present at the hearing. Mr. Wheeler stated that the working group met and discussed making various changes; however, revised plans were not submitted in time.

Ms. Allison asked that the notes from the Working Group session be distributed to the Board. Mr. Wheeler noted that they had been provided to the Applicant. Mr. DeStefano asked that the plot plan be updated to reflect the Applicant's current plans, noting that plans alone would not show the impact on abutters. Mr. Wheeler stated that he will follow-up with the Applicant.

**MOTION made by Mr. Clark to continue the public hearing to December 1, 2016.
Seconded by Mr. Manjikian. Motion passed.**

b. 60 Hull Street – Two Dormers (GR)

Ms. Allison distributed a one-page summary of what was discussed at the November 1 meeting.

Mr. Montenegro, Applicant, stated that he would like to add dormers in order to have a master bedroom, nursery and office space. Adam Glassman, Architect, stated that it was unclear to him that he was supposed to submit revised plans. Ms. Allison reviewed the statistical analysis and noted that the proposed additions would make the home one of the largest homes on one of the smallest lots in the neighborhood. She added that it is also currently non-conforming on numerous dimensions and that an addition that increases density by every measure does not seem consistent with Town Meeting's intent in passing

the GR zoning amendments. Mr. Glassman asked for more feedback from the PB. The PB agreed that they were not comfortable with the overall size of the dormers and noted that there were also significant nonconforming dimensions. Mr. Manjikian expressed concerns with the use of the structure in the future and that the property will not be able to accommodate more parking. The PB recommended reducing the size of the dormers to make them more proportional and attractive. The PB and the Architect discussed design elements and possible design modifications to reduce the size and mass. Mr. Glassman agreed to revise the plans and return to the PB on December 20, 2016.

MOTION made by Ms. Fiacco to continue the public hearing to December 20, 2016. Seconded by Mr. Clark. Motion passed.

c. 54 Sycamore Street – Three Level Deck (GR)

[Mr. Manjikian recused himself from the discussion of 54 Sycamore Street]

Connor O'Mahony, Applicant, presented his application. He stated that he would like to repair the existing decks and to add a third-floor deck. He also proposed an exterior staircase to provide access to the third floor. He noted that the proposed deck conforms to setbacks and is supported by neighbors. He also noted that his neighbor agreed that the deck would improve his property value, that his home backs up to an apartment building and the property is surrounded by trees. He assured the PB that the third floor would not become a third unit, noting that they had incorporated features such as single electrical panels to make it harder to convert to a three-family. He also inquired whether enforcement of existing By-Laws would not be a suitable remedy.

Ms. Fiacco stated that the PB has been consistently denying third story decks. She added that she also has concerns with the exterior stairs. Mr. Manjikian noted that with the extra bedrooms an opportunity exists for an Airbnb or for many tenants to rent out the apartment. Mr. DeStefano stated that a precedent has been set by not allowing third floor-decks.

Mr. O'Mahony asked the PB to explain its decision. Ms. Allison stated that the Town no longer permits three-family homes and with the addition of the third-floor deck and exterior stairs, the next purchaser of the property would likely convert or use it as a short-term rental. She noted that it was a combination of issues - noise, density, privacy and parking - that Town Meeting does not want to see.

The PB encouraged the Applicant to withdraw his application.

MOTION made by Ms. Fiacco to close the public hearing. Seconded by Mr. Clark. Motion passed.

MOTION made by Ms. Fiacco to accept the withdrawal of 54 Sycamore Street. Seconded by Mr. DeStefano. Motion passed.

4. Neighborhood Determinations:

[Mr. Manjikian rejoined to the meeting]

Mr. Wheeler displayed the neighborhoods for 72 Chilton and 24-26 Walnut Streets. The PB reviewed and agreed with the proposed neighborhoods.

5. Review of Study Plan for Commercial Districts

Ms. Allison suggested that the PB take a look at the revitalization of the commercial districts. She noted that the last plan that she proposed raised some concerns and she suggested a new approach. Ms. Allison distributed a list of all commercial property owners in Belmont and suggested inviting all of them to a public discussion and to ask them what the PB can do to help increase the value of commercial properties. She suggested that the meeting be held in mid-January, 2017. Mr. Clark suggested that initial discussions be held with smaller groups and stated that it may be a good idea to talk to some people soon to get an idea of how to structure future meetings. Mr. DeStefano asked about the information that the PB was trying to get. He suggested that the PB focus on business districts other than Belmont Center or Cushing Square since both had recently been the subject of considerable study and discussion. There was general agreement amongst the PB with this approach and further discussion ensued regarding the commercial areas that should be included in the study.

6. Discussion of Signage for Potential By-Law Change

Ms. Allison noted that another issue on the PB list of possible zoning by-law changes was commercial signage. Mr. DeStefano stated that he would like to solidify a much more cohesive signage by-law that would incorporate attractive signage standards. Ms. Allison noted that Massachusetts has put together a database of all zoning by-laws and said that she will collect the signage by-law data of eighteen nearby communities to share with the Working Group. Mr. Clark stated that there were an enormous number of temporary signs that have become permanent signs that have been up for five years or so and that this is in violation of our by-law. He noted that the PB needs to consider signage enforcement as well as regulations. Mr. Wheeler suggested reaching out to Mr. Clancy to discuss enforcement. Mr. DeStefano stated that Concord, Lexington and Wellesley could be used as models for signage guidelines. Mr. Wheeler also suggested reaching out to George Hall to talk about non-conforming preexisting signs. Ms. Fiacco agreed to be part of the working group.

7. Updates on Potential Cases and Planning Board Projects, and Committee Reports

a. Report of Airbnb Sub-Committee

Mr. Manjikian distributed a draft report to the PB. He stated that the Airbnb Sub-Committee began in March 2016 and held 5 meetings. He stated that the committee looked at 25 communities and learned that none of them have regulations in place for Airbnbs. He mentioned that the PB can choose to put together some kind of guidance as to how to approach this issue and it can take a look at it. He distributed the recently adopted Winthrop

guidelines that were accepted by the Attorney General. Ms. Allison asked whether it was appropriate to turn residential neighborhoods into commercial districts. Mr. Wheeler stated that Bed and Breakfasts are currently allowed in every residential neighborhood by Special Permit. Mr. Manjikian noted that there were 45 Airbnbs in the GR district along the 73 bus route in Belmont. He suggested making changes to some of the existing definitions in the current Zoning By-Laws. Ms. Allison noted that if the PB wanted to bring this matter to the Town Meeting that they will have to get started soon.

b. Complete Appointments to other committees

Ms. Allison stated that a PB liaison to the Historic District Commission would be helpful since the HDC may submit a revised Demolition Delay Bylaw to Annual Town Meeting now that the historic property inventory was done. Mr. Clark agreed to be the liaison to the HDC.

To summarize, Ms. Fiacco was appointed to the Traffic Advisory Committee, Ms. Allison was appointed to the Housing Trust, Mr. Haglund was appointed to the Community Preservation Committee, Mr. Manjikian was appointed to the Capital Budget Committee, and Mr. DeStefano was appointed to the High School Building Committee

8. Preview agenda for Thursday, December 1, 2016

It was noted the 75 Oliver and 10 Anis Road will be heard.

9. Project Update

Mr. Wheeler noted that the ballot question to legalize marijuana passed and that it will have to be addressed in the Zoning By-Law. He added that Town Counsel is looking for information from the State.

Mr. Manjikian stated that at the last Capital Budget Meeting, it was noted that the library is in the SR-C zone and may require a Special Permit from the Planning Board.

Mr. DeStefano stated that the High School Building Committee just submitted an application to the State and that they were moving onto the feasibility study phase.

10. Approval of meeting minutes; two sets of meeting minutes.

**MOTION made by Mr. DeStefano to approve meeting minutes of October 27, 2016.
Second by Mr. DeStefano. Motion passed.**

**MOTION made by Ms. Fiacco to approve the meeting minutes of November 1, 2016.
Seconded by Mr. DeStefano. Motion passed.**

8:45 PM ADJOURN