

PLANNING BOARD

Monday, April 14, 2008
Belmont Corner Meeting House
Belmont, New Hampshire

Members Present: Chairman P. Harris; C. Long and R. Davis.
Members Absent: G. Flack, C. Patten, W. Peterson and R. Caldwell.
Alternates Present: W. Otto.
Alternates Absent: W. Rollins.
Staff: C. Daigle, R. Ball, S. Dalton and E. Murphy.

The Planning Board chairman opened the meeting at 7p.m. and thanked the Board of Selectmen, Conservation Commission, Zoning Board of Adjustment, School Superintendent, School Board and the public for attending. He stated that tonight's meeting is to strengthen communication between the Boards and make everyone aware of the different Boards' goals so they can work together to better serve the public.

Those Board members present were:

Board of Selectmen: R. Cormier and J. Pike and Town Administrator J. Beaudin.
Conservation Commission: K. Knowlton, M. McLetchie, G. Wells-Kay, N. Wederski, S. Rolfe, D. Naiva.
Zoning Board of Adjustment: E. Hawkins, L. Couture and P. Palombo.
School Board: P. Tuthill, B. Hart, S. Dole, R. Roberts and T. Goulette and Superintendent M. Cozort.

CODE ENFORCEMENT:

S. Dalton introduced himself as the new Code Enforcement Officer and stated that he is very impressed to see how many volunteers were here tonight for this joint meeting. He explained that he has a short presentation on the new policies he has implemented. His code enforcement team consists of himself and Field Inspector, R. Strocsher. R. Strocsher investigates possible violations and takes the necessary action to bring them into compliance. They are working to create better communication between staff and customers. He considers customers to be home owners, business owners and State and Town agencies. When he does inspections he wants the home owner present so he can explain what he is looking for during the inspection and what codes apply. When he first came to the Town his office was using the wrong building codes. He has since implemented the following codes to bring the Town into compliance with State regulations. The codes are IBC 2006, IRC 2006, IPC 2006, IMC 2006, IECC 2006, NEC 2005 and NFPA 2006. They no longer enforce CABO w/92 or BOCA NFP 1999 as they are outdated.

S. Dalton explained that his office enforces the conditions of existing structures that pose danger to the public, building code violations, plumbing, electrical and mechanical, Zoning Ordinances and signs that seem to appear whenever customers feel like putting one up. They also enforce inoperable vehicles on private property many which R. Strocsher finds while out on field inspections. He also enforces cleaning up blight (white goods) left or dumped on private and public properties. Public Health is another issue that his office handles. Many of those issues deal with tenant and landlord disputes. He has to address the concerns while not getting in the middle of a dispute between the two parties.

His Mission Statement is: *To work with current and future residents and business owners of the Town of Belmont to promote and maintain a safe and desirable living and working environment.* He delivers the mission statement by administering a fair and unbiased enforcement program to correct violations of Codes and land use requirements. There was no process in place prior to him coming to Belmont and he developed a system and process to provide answers or means of obtaining information for customers. Customer service is Job One and he is an advocate for them. He now has the code book in loose leaf binders so that contractors and individuals can have access to the codes and can get copies if needed. Communication is the key. Clear, concise and consistent communication eliminates duplication of information and work. Information is passed on to the agency the customer needs to work with.

Follow through is an important step in the process. He provides timely inspections and documented feedback on issues. He formally closes out building permits and land use violations in a timely manner. He maintains documentation on applications and issues. He developed and implemented a legal action procedure and policy using the three-strike system. The first deficiency letter outlines the procedure, the second the fines that can be imposed if they do not come into compliance. If they do not respond to the letters they are turned over to the Board of Selectmen for legal action.

He has implemented the use of an electronic calendar to schedule appointments. This allows other staff members to schedule his appointments. He calls into the office after he completes each inspection to see if anything new has come in so he can do them while he is still out in the field. This saves on time and gas. He developed a process for closing out old permits because there never was a process to close out electrical, plumbing and mechanical permits. He is in the process of closing old permits as there are some dating back a number of years. Any permits older than 2005 can't be inspected so he makes a notation on those closing them out. The staff is in the process of implementing a new BMSI program that would be able to track all the land use and building files for all the properties in town.

His goals for future code enforcement are the further development of the BMSI program and community outreach programs. He is working on the town website so that it includes weekly bullet updates on what the town departments are doing. He wants to develop a resource program for citizens where code information is available to them. He will be networking with other agencies to streamline the process and eliminate duplicate steps. He is working with the Aquifer Protection Program to develop a voluntary compliance program which would benefit the aquifer and the business owners.

M. McLetchie wanted to know who enforces ADA and can the town make it more stringent. S. Dalton stated that he enforces the State standards and towns have to meet those standard but they can adopt more stringent one. M. McLetchie stated that site plans need more information for two family homes that would make them a more pleasant place to live. He stated that multi-family units tend to be built with windows looking into the side of hills or onto a parking lot. They need to develop units that would treat the tenants better. He suggested having units with solar power. S. Dalton stated he inspects rental properties to State standards.

D. Naïva wanted to know how often S. Dalton plans on inspecting new businesses that are on the aquifer. S. Dalton stated that he will do an initial inspection on every one of them to get a base line and to establish a relationship with industries. He will make them aware of any environmental concerns and explain the process for storing hazardous material correctly. Once that has been established some will be doing self inspections and he will visit all sites on a rotating schedule.

P. Harris thanked S. Dalton for the presentation and asked if anyone had any other concerns that they would like to discuss.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

R. Cormier, Chairman of the Board of Selectmen, stated that since Town Meeting the Board has been asked to look at Economic Development and expanding the tax base in the commercial zone. They have spoken to business owners who may be interested in being on a committee. They are proposing having a meeting in mid may to form an Economic Development committee to look at the process that business owners have to go through to start up or reorganize a business in Belmont. They hope to streamline the process and make it user friendly. They will also address the issue of how to bring businesses to Belmont and where they have to look to find those businesses. Ms. Linda Frawley stated that she worked on the Master Plan and did the preliminary work on Economic Development. There are grants available and should be looked into. LRPC did a survey but a comprehensive survey has not been done since 1992. There are some two tier regional grants available through BCED that may be better received if submitted by the Town.

P. Harris stated that the Planning Board has discussed growth and how to increase commercial development. Mr. Russ Thibeault has done studies and stated that water and sewer is not as important to commercial development as location is. Water and sewer is part of doing business. C. Daigle stated that the grant the Conservation Commission was proposing focused and encouraging affordable housing for which Belmont has met than their legal fair share and many of the proposed studies land mapping have already been done.

J. Pike stated that the towns people want a lower tax bill and don't want to spend money on infrastructure and services to provide for commercial growth. They have to sell the idea to the public. The public doesn't want to spend money even though Belmont has the property and State roads needed for commercial development. Infrastructure is how to achieve balance. Belmont's population is aging and Belknap County is losing good paying jobs. Other towns are experiencing building growth, how

does Belmont get it? K. Knowlton stated that Belmont should be cautious about business growth. Tilton has growth over the aquifer and it is not doing them any good. Bringing in economic development has to be done cautiously. He suggested a Conservation overlay for large pieces of property. Another possibility to lower taxes would be to have larger tracts of land with high end homes. They have less impact on infrastructure. P Tuthill cautioned that in Vermont they ran utilities in anticipation of commercial development but when it didn't come they ended up using the commercial area for residential development. D. Naiva stated that when Mr. Thibeault did his study he stated that water and sewer is not important for that type of business. She stated that they need to have start up businesses that are unique and innovative and do not count on tourists to help them survive in the future.

R. Cormier stated that they are looking for a better tax base, commercial growth and high end residential housing. They need to discuss what is the benefit or consequence of putting in sewer. There is a need to create a joint process to create a plan so there are no unexpected consequences. They would like to include all the Boards when they set up the committee

M. McLetchie stated that when planning for economic development they should consider self-employed small businesses and home occupations. Maine has many small businesses that are doing well. Those economies are based on self employed people doing well because they don't have to provide subsidized housing that may be needed when you have low paying manufacturing jobs. Manufacturing businesses are leaving this country and we have to think of the future and the need to attract young people. We are lacking infrastructure and high technology jobs. Belmont has to decide what kinds of jobs they want for the future.

P. Harris stated that twenty years ago there was no Master Plan and six years ago there was no CIP. They have come a long way. The Conservation Commission has also taken an active role in the town. The Planning Board has had Mr. Thibeault do studies to help with future planning. This year the Planning Board will be working with pit owners to determine their status and make sure they are abiding by the law.

L. Frawley stated that the school district has updated their plans and the town should follow their lead. Belmont is on their third Master Plan. The last one had about fifty volunteers and the Board could tap into those people. It is time for the Planning Board to look at the Master Plan goals and objectives and report back to everyone as to where they are. Since 2002 nothing has been reported back to the public. It would be helpful to reinvolve the volunteers.

K. Knowlton suggested a conservation overlay district. It wouldn't have to be just the Planning Board but may include the Conservation Commission helping with educating the public and putting together an action plan like they did with the Aquifer Protection Ordinance. An overlay district would not require much infrastructure and would be beneficial for the tax base and land owners. Large land parcels with larger houses bring in large tax dollars. R. Cormier stated that towns like Peterborough and Antrim require larger lots. D. Naiva wanted to know how the Planning Board feels about requiring larger lots. P. Harris stated the purpose of tonight's meeting is to get input from other Boards to help determine what everyone wants and to work towards the same goals. Meeting with the School Board has been

helpful in keeping the communication open. It used to be the School Board against the Town and now we are working together. We don't have to wait for the School District Meeting to find out what their goals are and the School Board doesn't have to wait until Town Meeting to find out what the town's goals are. Communication is the key to assure that everyone is on the same page.

R Roberts stated that funding is looked at differently due to economic issues. When federal money gets reduced each year the school has to look to the community for funding to educate the children. Belmont has one of the best school systems in the area and that contributes to growth. Belmont may want to look at regionalization for the police, fire and highway departments like the school has.

GALE SCHOOL:

S. Dole stated that he wants to update the Boards on the Gale School. The school hasn't been used for ten years except for storage. At the District meeting they were able to put \$5,000 in a trust fund to save the school. The Board developed a CIP and part of it includes moving the Gale School to Concord Street. This would allow for the redesign of the driveway into a loop and would increase the space for expansion of the middle school. If the Gale School was left on site and converted for other uses such as offices it would allow people other than school personnel or students on the campus and that is not a safe environment. There are no plans as to what is going to happen to the school once it is moved. They are still brainstorming ideas. It is going to take both public and private help to save the building. It is never a good time to spend money but the Gale School is an interesting and valuable building. It is a Belmont icon. You have to invest in it and it will give you a return. Time is against it and it has to be saved before it is too late. It is an old building in need of repairs. R. Cormier stated that they have the same problem as any other new proposed building. If it is not in the operational budget it will not pass. They have to educate the voters as only a small percentage of them understand the process and reasoning. K. Knowlton stated that the only way the Gale School is going to be saved is if it has the consensus of everyone on the School Board and the Town Fathers. It has a core support group. The Gale School needs a vision. It can represent classrooms when schools are overcrowded. It can be used for Special Ed, the band or extra curricular activities but it needs the consensus that it is worth saving. The School Board explained that it can't effectively be used as extra classrooms because the time it would take to transport the students to and from the school would reduce their class time by 16% and it is not a viable alternative. R. Roberts stated that the School has committed \$100,000 to either move or demolish the building and that could be used if the Town found a purpose for the building. Ms. Frawley stated that the Gale School could be the gateway to Belmont and suggested that the school and municipality apply for a Charrette from Plan NH. M. Magnus stated that it would take a consensus to move it to Concord Street and funding is an issue. Due to the economy people are less willing to donate. It would be an excellent gateway to Belmont. It can be converted for office space or with an addition on it it could be used for the Town Hall.

The Planning Board chairman thanked everyone for coming and convened a recess at 8:30.

The Planning Board reconvened at 8:45 and the chairman appointed W. Otto as a voting member for tonight's meeting.

BOARD'S ACTION-MINUTES:

MOTION: On a motion by C. Long, seconded by P. Harris, it was voted to approve the minutes of the March 24, 2008, meeting as submitted. (3-0-1) R. Davis abstained.

STAFF REPORT:

HANDOUTS:

The Board received copies of the new Zoning Ordinance and the Floodplain Ordinance. They also received copies of the budget.

NEW FORMS:

C. Daigle stated that a membership application form has been developed for anyone interested in being a member on any of the Land Use Boards. This is to make it easier for anyone wishing to join the Board.

The Land Use customer survey is in place and being distributed to anyone going through any land use process. It is also available on the web, at Town Hall and at the Corner Meeting House. Surveys can be mailed to the Land Use office or dropped off at the Land Use drop box.

ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION: On a motion by R. Davis, seconded by W. Otto, it was voted unanimously to adjourn at 8:54 p.m. (4-0)

Respectfully submitted,

Elaine M Murphy
Administrative Assistant