

## PLANNING BOARD

Monday, December 10, 2007  
Belmont Corner Meeting House  
Belmont, New Hampshire

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

The chairman opened the meeting at 7p.m.and appointed R. Davis as a voting member for tonight's meeting.

### **RUSS THIBEAULT – HOUSING REPORT:**

Mr. Russ Thibeault, Applied Economic Research, presented the housing report parts three and four, *Projected Housing Demand and Policy Implications*. He reviewed the study by explaining that the goal was to provide guiding principles and strategies for managing present and future housing needs and creating a range of housing opportunities and choices. The study is important because housing is the town's largest source of property tax revenue and generates demand for the majority of town services. Housing is the largest investment of most households and consumes the largest portion of developed land. Its affordability affects the town and regional economy and labor force. The range of housing available affects the town's economic composition.

Housing demand is created because Belmont is strategically located with good transportation links to service the Lakes Region and Concord regional housing needs. These regional economies are healthy with low unemployment and job growth. Belmont has invested in its school facilities and faculty and is a region favored for its retirement setting. It is attracting immigration of the older population. It has an ample supply of buildable land. Belmont's development regulations are not overly burdensome for developers. Housing is more affordable in Belmont than in other nearby communities. The long term trends and projection show Belmont to be a growing community. Belmont's current population is a little over 7,000 and the projections show substantial and significant growth that is consistent decade by decade for the next several decades. The State anticipates Belmont getting a rising share of the county's population growth. Even though there will be significant growth it will not be like the 70's or 80's but it will still be strong. Belmont is the second fastest growing community in Belknap County by a significant amount. Belmont will add 1,200 new units between 2005 and 2030. There is a significant growth in year round residences but not in seasonal residences. Owner occupied units will dominate the market.

Occupied units will increase by 1,170 between 2005 and 2030. Owner occupied units will increase by 950 and renter occupied units by 220 units. Belmont will remain primarily a single family community with expanded mobile home inventory. The projected increase between 2005 and 2030 in single family homes will be 690, 170 for multi-family units and 330 mobile homes units.

P. Harris wanted know how Belmont's rising share of the county's population compares to other communities. Mr. Thibeault stated that Belmont's growth is similar to Gilford. Tilton's growth is minimal probably due to all the commercial development. Mr. Alfred Beliveau wanted to know if it is beneficial for Belmont to have mobile homes. Mr. Thibeault stated that they need more middle and upper value housing to balance the tax rate. Mr. Ken Knowlton wanted to know if Laconia is built out. Mr. Thibeault stated that it is heavily built out around the river but there is a lot of forest land and available area that is not all built out. There is still room for more growth but they have a higher density and have sewer and water throughout the city. How receptive a community is for development determine growth. C. Daigle stated that only manufactured home parks created in the last several years were primarily older residence and the quality of the unit's construction is better. The service requirements are different for parks that are age restricted.

Mr. Thibeault continued with part four of the housing study *Policy Implications*. He stated that the bottom line is that Belmont's tax rate is \$2.00 above the State's average, costing the owner of a \$200,000 home \$400 more per year. This is the highest tax rate in the county. There is a link between the tax rate and the pace of residential growth. The pace of residential growth in Belmont will be the second fastest in Belknap County. Public services are strained with schools essentially at capacity and other facilities in need of expansion. Belmont's tax rate is higher than other Belknap communities and could rise by 50% +/- in coming years based on the CIP. The policy options could be to limit the pace of development to avoid excessive development in any one year. They could include impact fees so that new development pays its way. They could invoke other ordinance provisions such as large lot zoning where appropriate. They can coordinate minimum lot size requirement with environmental considerations. Or Belmont can continue current policies with the possible impact of higher taxes reduced services to existing residents.

He explained that Belmont has a disproportionate share of low and moderate valued housing which restricts the tax base without reducing service demands. Achieving balanced residential inventory call for more middle and upper value housing. They are encouraging higher valued residential development, and new units are improving this picture There is a need to insure that the town's development standards are comparable to other area communities and are adhered to. They can encourage age restricted housing with density bonuses and flexible cluster development standards as they tend to be higher value and require fewer services. They can pursue community development block grants for neighborhood improvement. Enforce building codes especially in existing older multi family units. They need to recognize that town is already meeting its fair share burden of subsidized affordable housing. They can be choosy about encouraging more subsidized housing. They should examine the mobile home ordinances to allow but not encourage concentration of these units. Be aware of quality standards for parks. Continue to invest in schools, parks, conservation land and other amenities that support middle and upper income housing inventory. Mr. Knowlton suggested increasing the number of acres required

per lot. Belmont does already encourage cluster development and when unfragment land abuts other conservation land it is an added benefit. He wanted to know how hard it is to impose the larger lots requirements. Mr. Thibeault stated that it would be similar to Dover. They had a lot of increased regional development and then required larger lot size to encourage premium housing. He explained that if the lots are larger the developer gets their money quicker because it is easier to sell five lots instead of trying to sell 20 lots.

Mr. Thibeault stated that the analysis has demonstrated that continuation of current policies will have a detrimental affect on the town's tax rate which is already a burden to residents. Recent history shows that residents are sensitive to the tax burden yet residents may not recognize the relationship between the town's development guidance system and future tax rates. They see them as separate rather than connected. He stated that growth controls were rejected. Impact fees have been set-aside and open space acquisition is difficult. He suggested forming a Tax Base Enhancement Task Force bringing together diverse elements of the community. The goal is to improve quality of residential tax base and enhance nonresidential tax base. This six month effort would be appropriately staffed with membership from concerned citizens, town staff, Planning Board members, Selectmen, developers, business community, growth control advocates and growth control opponents. Their goal would be to product a three year recommended action plan with ordinances and initiatives spelled out. A concise report would be mailed to all voters with public briefings to communicate findings and recommendations. Mr. Thibeault noted the school district should also be included in the Task Force.

Mr. Kevin Sturgeon agreed that a task force has potential. Mr. Thibeault stated that it informs tax payers on what the challenges are. Mr. Knowlton wanted to know if Mr. Thibeault had any examples of how other towns do this. Mr. Thibeault stated that is something they can discuss when the task force is formed. He stated that open space land is an investment and improves the quality of life. This is a good time to do this. The time to plan is before the next development crunch. Mr. Beliveau stated it is up to Town Officials to follow up on the task force recommendation and present it to the public. Mr. Thibeault stated that a common reason growth control ordinances fail is that there is not enough education because new housing creates a need for more education and services and these are big ticket items.

Mr. Thibeault offered to give the presentation to the Selectmen if request. He will follow up with a final written report to the Board.

### **BOARD'S ACTION-MINUTES:**

**MOTION:** On a motion by C. Patten, seconded by W. Peterson, it was voted to approve the minutes of the November 26, 2007, meeting as submitted. (5-0-1) G. Flack abstained.

### **STAFF REPORT:**

#### **WINNISQUAM MARINE YATCH CLUB TAX LOT 104-062;**

C. Daigle explained that she received a building permit from Winnisquam Marine Yatch Club. They have a large storage building on Sunset Drive that was constructed prior to zoning. The building was for

cold storage. They are proposing to partition off part of the existing building for a boat repair workshop. P. Harris stated that a concern is the hazardous material associated with a boat repair business and its close proximity to the water. The Board wanted to know what the process would be for having a boat repair shop, would they need more parking, would more employees be needed, would there be a different customer base, what types of material would be used. These are just some of their concerns and they would like to have the applicant present to answer their concerns and to update what is currently on site and the type of work they do there now. It was the consensus of the Board that a site plan is needed.

**PROPOSED AMENDMENTS:**

C. Daigle explained that the Zoning Board had an application before them that had them reviewing the square footage of signs. Currently 100 square foot signs are allowed in the residential multi-family zone and 300 square feet are allowed in the commercial zone. The amendment would reduce the square footage in the residential multi-family zone to 49 square feet. The Board discussed the size of signs and agreed to post the amendment for public hearing. They also acknowledged that electronic signs have unique issues associated with them.

It was the consensus of the Board to post for a public hearing the amendments to the Flood Plain Ordinance as recommended by NH OEP.

Mr. Knowlton on behalf of the Conservation Commission wanted to commend the Planning Board for bringing forth the Aquifer Ordinance. He stated that the public didn't understand why the Planning Board didn't support the last two proposals. The Conservation Commission has reviewed the proposal and is happy with what the Planning Board is proposing and has volunteered to help with educating the people about this proposed ordinance. He suggested putting together a question and answer handout on what an aquifer is. They also need a map to show where the aquifer is to let people know if they will be affected by this ordinance. He explained that he has researched other aquifer ordinances including one from Casper, Wyoming that explains how many people are affected by aquifer. The ordinance from Cap Cod list the uses that are prohibited. They are also concerned about what goes into the aquifer as well as how much water is drawn out. R Ball explained that the State doesn't allow towns in New Hampshire to regulate large water withdrawal. Mr. Knowlton stated that junkyards and salvage yards are prohibited uses but what about auto service and repair businesses. If you have a business with a fleet of trucks they tend to do automotive work on their trucks, will this be an allowable use and could it be expanded at any time? P. Harris stated that he recognizes the potential sources that could containment the aquifer but things have changed in the last 20-30 years when there used to be a convenience store with gas pumps and a service station on every street corner. Belmont had very few contaminated sites through those times. Now there are Best Management Practices for hazardous materials. There are fewer garages in the area and they are more educated on how to help prevent contamination. Best Management packets should be available for contractors through the permitting process. C. Daigle stated that there is a list of possible contaminant on source sites. All junk yards are now monitored and have to pass DES requirements. Mr. Knowlton stated that his concern is that you don't bring tractor trailers to Jiffy Lubes for oil changes but do them on site. Are there any protections that can be put into place that would require that maintenance be done on pads. P. Harris stated that the State gets involved and puts a lot of safeguards in place to protect the environment. Mr. Knowlton reiterated the fact that education is a major

concern and if the Planning Board needs any help the Conservation Commission will help. P. Harris thanked the Conservation Commission for all their work and support.

C. Daigle stated that there are two types of businesses that are regulated by this draft the new ones that you can regulate during the approval process and the existing ones that you will have to inspect every few years. New expansions to existing sites will be regulated by the new regulations. She explained that R. Ball did work on existing uses and has come up with 245 lots that have some part of the commercial/industrial lot partially in the aquifer district. That does not mean the use is in the aquifer district or that the business uses regulated substances only that part of the property is subject to the regulation. C. Daigle stated that part of the education process is training for the recurring inspection to ensure that the site is in conformance with Best Management Practices. This could include current staff, or new staff or hired consultants that will do the inspections. Belmont is at a cross road they provide services similar to that of a larger community and now there is an expectation that it continues to provide those services. There is an initial cost and burden to put these ordinances in place but they have significant benefit to the community. The public needs to be aware that there is a cost for these services. She explained that existing businesses are subject to these regulations by DES but DES doesn't have time to do these inspections so if we adopt this amendment then Belmont will have to do inspection. W. Peterson stated that the regulated substances list is huge. G. Flack stated that you have to be a scientist to understand all of them. C. Daigle stated that DES will provide training for an inspector. Mr. Sturgeon stated that to police the ordinance you would have to hire another inspector, the public needs to be educated on that. C. Daigle explained that new businesses will be paying for the inspections as part of the process. Existing businesses inspection may be done by an internal inspector that may be someone in house or hired. The Board of Selectmen can also adopt a fee schedule to cover the cost.

W. Peterson stated that looking at the chart for hazardous material there are different categories and are regulated differently. C. Daigle explained that they are regulated through Best Management Practices for handling of material. W. Peterson stated that the biggest issue is the existing uses and regulating them. Mr. Beliveau wanted to know how the ordinance will affect Rte 140. C. Daigle stated that it doesn't prohibit the development of property except for a few non permitted uses. It requires that safe guards are used for containment of regulated material. P. Harris stated that the way the State has done the job its narrowed down the possible contaminates and how they have to be handled so why would the Town want to put the burden on the Town when the State takes care of it. C. Daigle stated that the State can't be everywhere and are doing everything they can but by adopting the Aquifer Ordinance it gives the Town the authority to make sure the safeguards are followed. DES will follow up on complaints. If the Town wants the water quality protected this is the avenue that can be explored. The Board discussed the fact that most of the businesses would do their homework by answering a questionnaire. The State's efforts are in place, is the Town taking on more than we can afford? G. Flack stated that having to do the inspections is costly and can be paid by the new businesses needing them but if the State does the inspections why do we have to do the same inspection. He compared it to when the State used to do septic inspections and the Town also did them they eventually did away with the Town inspections because it was a waste. C. Daigle stated that it is Belmont's water and the State isn't going to protect it as much as Belmont would. The State's regulations may not be as strong as the community wants. It is up to the community to decide at what level they want to protect their water. W. Peterson stated that any

new business picks up the tab but it is different for existing businesses, the tax payer has the burden. Mr. Sturgeon stated that they may look at it differently if they rezoned some areas in town differently, for instance allowing multifamily residential pr elderly development on his lot. .

**ADJOURNMENT:**

**MOTION:** On a motion by W. Peterson, seconded by G. Flack, it was voted unanimously to adjourn at 9: 26p.m. (6-0)

Respectfully submitted,

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Elaine M Murphy  
Administrative Assistant