

PLANNING BOARD

Monday, August 1, 2005
Belmont Corner Meeting House
Belmont, New Hampshire

Members Present: Chairman P. Harris; J. Pike, G. Flack, C. Patten and J. Marden.
Members Absent: W. Peterson.
Alternates Absent: C. Gilbert and C. Shibles.
Staff: C. Daigle and E. Murphy.
Board of Selectmen: B. Watterson, R. Caldwell (also PB ex officio member) and R. Cormier.
Staff: Town Administrator D. McLelland and Town Administrator J. Beaudin.

The Board of Selectmen chairman opened the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

B. Watterson thanked the Planning Board for coming and keeping the line of communication open. He also thanked Mr. Russ Thibeault, Applied Economic Resources (AER) for coming.

C. Daigle explained that they are here tonight to discuss impact fees. While doing the housing study, Mr. Thibeault felt it was his obligation to present to the Boards information that he gathered that may trigger a need for impact fees for Belmont.

Mr. Thibeault explained that he has just formally begun doing work on the housing study by reviewing individual applications and information that he has received from C. Daigle. Currently the Planning Board has 200 lots going through the process. At the current rate of growth of 50 units per year it would take four years for build out. His concern is what if in nine months, when the housing study is complete, the Town decides that impact fees are needed 200 lots would have gone through the process. He is not saying the impact fees are right for Belmont but thinks Belmont should look into them. He recommended that they check with Mr. Bruce Mayberry who specializes in impact fee studies. C. Daigle stated that the impact fees have to be applied at the time of approval and cannot be applied to lots already approved. Mr. Thibeault stated that zoning is in place to apply impact fees they just have to set up a fee schedule. With the development coming in now they should check into it because at \$5,000 to \$7,000 per single family house there is a potential for losing a lot of revenue. The State's statute for impact fees defines it as a financing device for the expansion of town facilities where the need occurs as a result of new development. A careful study has to be done so the fees are proportionate to the cost of expansion.

Mr. Thibeault explained that the study needs to show how fast the town is growing. The schools are near or at capacity now. If more units are added at .75 kids per unit it would put them over or above capacity. Impact fees are the norm from Concord south because they have been where Belmont is now. A point to

consider is that impact fees are a revenue device not growth control. It is a way to help pay for extra facilities needed as a result of development. A feasibility study is necessary because impact fees may be over turned if not well substantiated. Impact fees not used in six years have to be returned to the applicant. The next step would be to commission an impact fee feasibility study. D. McLelland wanted to know what that entails. C. Daigle explained that Mr. Bruce Mayberry came to a meeting in September 2003 and told the Board that the cost could be between \$5,000 and \$9,000 but probably not on the high end. The fees vary from study to study depending on what needs to be done. Mr. Thibeault explained that he has some of the data from that housing study that he is willing to share with Mr. Mayberry.

P. Harris gave examples of uses for impact fees as new structures for police and fire departments, recreation facility, library and roads Mr. Thibeault stated that calculation for road impact fees are complicated and would have to be applied to single family homes and industrial buildings. Road impact fees are less common than those applied towards schools, police, fire and library. Some typical fees are \$300 for a new police or fire department, \$200 for a library and under \$200 for a recreational facility. B. Watterson wanted to know if an age restricted development would be subject to the same fees for schools. Mr. Thibeault stated that towns typically reduce or exempt those fees on 55 and over developments but that is at the discretion of the Planning Board. B. Watterson wanted to know if the money is earmarked to a specific area does it have to be used for a specific use such as money earmarked for the fire department could it be used to buy new fire equipment. J. Pike stated that Mr. Mayberry explained that the money has to be used for the structure only not equipment. G. Flack stated that it can not be used for personnel or administrative cost. Mr. Carbone wanted to know how long it would take to complete the study. Mr. Thibeault stated that the consultant would have to determine that based on his schedule but he thinks it should take under a year. Mr. Carbone wanted to know what Mr. Thibeault saw that made him see a need for impact fees. Mr. Thibeault stated that the middle and elementary schools are near or at capacity and with the current rate of development they could exceed capacity. R. Cormier wanted to know if the funds could be used for bond issues for a structure. Mr. Thibeault stated that the fees can be used for bonds and credit it to borrow less. It can then go to reduce the debt.

Mr. Thibeault stated that the main thing to do is to determine if the town wants to pursue impact fees. The State statue allows for a town to collect only the money reasonably related to development project. He stated that staff could work up fees per lot and the calculation is best done by an impact fee study. He is willing to talk to Mr. Mayberry and fit as much data as he can into the existing contract. Fees vary according to different types of housing.

J. Marden stated that they should have Mr. Mayberry do the study.

MOTION: J. Marden made a motion to hire Mr. Bruce Mayberry do an Impact Feasibility Study.

P. Harris stated that they looked at the expense to administer impact fees and it does not restrict growth. They brought a Growth Control Ordinance to the voters and that failed. It would be easier to know what the affect of growth would be before stepping into impact fees. They are in the process of having a Housing Study done. J. Marden stated that there is no methology in place. P. Harris stated that they do not have the money to do both. P. Harris stated with impact fees they would have to bring additional staff on board to manage them. J. Pike stated that they had that discussion about the need for another employee but he sees the need for impact

fees. He stated that they told the Town that they had a growth problem but they don't believe we have a growth problem. There will be 200 houses built in the next 18 months. They have lost a lot of money gone already. Developers will pay the fees. A growth control ordinance is the legal way to slow down growth. J. Marden stated that if they wait until the study is complete it will be after town meeting then they would have to have a special meeting to adopt a growth ordinance and they would lose a lot of income. P. Harris asked if it would take a year to complete the study. C. Daigle stated that she is not sure it would take a year to do. J. Pike stated that the lots they looked at will probably be approved in 90 days. C. Daigle stated that they have to move them through the process and cannot slow them down. She can contact Mr. Mayberry to find out what the time frame is.

B. Watterson wanted to know how it would play out if they hired a new employee. J. Marden stated that the town accountant could put the funds in an account that is earmarked for a specific project. B. Watterson stated that everyone is working to capacity already. He is leery of giving anyone more responsibility when they are already working at capacity. He wanted to know what the cost would be on a yearly bases. If they collect impact fees then they have to be prepared to spend them. Those who support impact fees have to be ready to support new buildings, such as the school, because if they don't then it defeats the purpose. J. Marden stated that they don't have to go back to voters to determine methodology. During the study they could find out the cost of administration.

Mr. Thibeault stated that they can't pick numbers out of the air but they must be determined through a study. He just doesn't know how long it will take. B. Watterson wanted to make it clear that those who support impact fees will have to support the expansions. If we take money in for recreation, fire, police and school, then we planning to build those structures. R. Cormier wanted to know if impact fees can be changed and prioritized so the money goes toward building only 2 buildings at a time. Mr. Thibeault stated that they can adjust the schedule based on the structures needed.

D. McLelland stated that the driving force is the school and they need to know what the school is planning to do. They need to talk to the school to determine what their plans are. J. Pike stated that it is hard to do because their studies are based on past enrollment history and that changes monthly. It does not take into consideration the projected growth Belmont is experiencing.

Mr. Carbone, speaking as a resident, stated that everyone agrees that growth is coming. He feels that the money could be a good thing. The departments are stressed and he would like to see impact fees. B. Watterson wanted to know if they vote to have impact fees and money is put aside for building a school and it is voted down does the money get returned. Mr. Thibeault stated that the money gets returned to the original applicant.

J. Pike stated that the money can be used to pay a bond issue and then can go to debt services. G. Flack stated that it is used for buildings not the personal to man them. R. Cormier stated they could build up the money instead of going to tax payer for the full amount. P. Harris stated that developers will come with or without impact fees.

J. Marden stated that Mr. Mayberry had stated that with a joint town school district impact fees can be applied only to a certain levels because student only come to certain grade levels and don't use all of the

schools. Mr. Thibeault stated impact fees are able to straddle districts. Hudson and Concord have multidistrict schools and it is not a problem. J. Marden stated that a lot of towns have growth management and impact fees.

Mr. Elson Moody stated that they should find out what the people want. They should have meetings and vote once a month. P. Harris stated that the citizens have elected the Board to represent them. J. Pike stated that they have had several meetings and the same people come, that being the Board members and no one else show up.

B. Watterson wanted to know what is in the Planning budget. C. Daigle stated \$15,000 and part of that is being used for traffic study being done by Mr. Steve Pernaw. The developers are paying for some of that study. The Planning Board is also paying their part of the housing study. The Planning Board has funds available but part of it is committed to the Board of Selectmen for the housing study. J. Beaudin stated it would be easier if they knew the cost of the study. C. Daigle stated that she would need to know how the Board wants to proceed and then contact Mr. Mayberry. R. Cormier wanted to know how it would be administered internally and what the set up fees would be. B. Watterson stated that they need to know what the schools plans are. C. Daigle explained that the school's study is based on birth rate and not on growth associated with development. They are cautious about making statement. In the CIP statement they said if we have the growth then they will have to respond with some kind of facility. She explained that the housing study and the impact feasibility study will give them an indication when they will be at or overcapacity at the school. The impact fees will be returned at the end of each six years if the funds are not used. Mr. Thibeault suggested meeting with the School Board to analyze the data as it is a close call. With the pace of activity coming down the pike now it may exceed capacity because for every 50 units you have the potential of adding 35 kids to the system. The school is close to capacity now without extra development and it looks like Belmont is getting extra development.

B. Watterson wanted to know if the Planning Board would like the Board of Selectmen to move forward.

J. Marden stated that he has a motion on the table to hire Mr. Mayberry to do an Impact Feasibility Study. J. Pike stated that they need the study. P. Harris stated that it is good insurance to have Mr. Mayberry do the study.

G. Flack seconded the motion. Carried (5-0).

C. Daigle stated that staff is busy now trying to keep up with the increase work load but imposing impact fees would not be the driving force in having to hire additional personnel; there are other reasons.

The Board of Selectmen authorized C. Daigle to contact Mr. Mayberry to get the cost of the study. Mr. Thibeault stated that Mr. Mayberry and him use the same techniques and they can work together to get the studies done faster.

The Planning Board left the joint meeting at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Elaine M Murphy
Administrative Assistant