

Public Meeting

Monday, March 21, 2005, 6:00 p.m.

Corner Meeting House

Select Board Chairman Brian Watterson called the joint meeting of the Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, Zoning Board, Conservation Commission and other interested parties to order at 6:00 p.m. Those present at the meeting were as follows:

Selectman Brian Watterson	Planning Board Vice-Chair Jon Pike
Selectman Reginald Caldwell	Ward Peterson, Member
Selectman Ronald Cormier, Jr.	Clayton Shibles, Member
Zoning Board Chair John Olmstead	Claude Patten, Member
Norma Patten, Member	Gary Flack, Member
Brenda Paquette, Member	Conservation Chair Ken Knowlton
Bruce Arey, Member (also Sewer Comm.)	Ginger Wells-Kay, Alt. Member
Ed Hawkins, Alternate Member	Pleasant Oberhausen, ZBA Alt.
School Board member Preston Tuthill	Denise Naiva, Member
School Superintendent Mike Cozort	Mark Lewandoski, Member
State Representative John Thomas	Magnus McLetchie, Alt. Member
Town Planner Candace Daigle	Land Use Technician Rick Ball
Land Use A.A. Elaine Murphy	Town Admin. Donald McLelland
Admin. Assessor Jeanne Beaudin	Library Trustee David Morse
Members of the general public	

Those present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Select Board Chairman Brian Watterson expressed a thank you to those present, noting the uniqueness of the meeting and briefly outlining the history of recent events, which had prompted the Boards to organize a mutual meeting. He explained that the Planning Board had requested that the Board of Selectmen take a more active role in assisting the Planning Board to find a vision for the community. He noted that the meeting should have a positive demeanor and no personal animosity. He then outlined several items for consideration by those present.

1. A vision committee composed of 5 members; 1 Selectman, 1 Planning Board member, 1 Community member at-large, 1 Business owner, and a member of Land Use staff. Chairman Watterson noted that the committee needs to be

- small enough to be effective and would work with both boards as well as the Capital Improvements Committee.
2. The Town would hire an independent consultant to perform a Housing Study, which would take approximately 4-6 months to complete.
 3. Concentration on economic development utilizing a 5-year plan to look at the expansion of water and sewer service, which would promote businesses to locate here.
 4. Prioritization of the projects outlined in the CIP program; what are the projects and what does the community feel it needs.
 5. The Boards need to work closely with school officials to look at their future needs.

At this time Chairman Watterson invited other elected officials to comment on the items he outlined.

Conservation Commission Chairman Ken Knowlton explained that his intention in coming to the meeting tonight had been to clarify misinformation from the meeting last week. He noted that based on the comments he had heard relative to last week's meeting that growth management had died, and he felt that it was an ignorant way to proceed. He briefly outlined what he perceived to be a similar problem in the 1970's when zoning was implemented. He went on to explain the Open Space Concept presented as a proposed amendment to the Zoning Ordinance noting that it had been meant to dovetail with the wildlife buffers and corridors approved on last year's Town Meeting ballot. He further explained the other misconceptions regarding the amendment. He asked that the Board of Selectmen keep the Conservation Commission included in their future meetings and discussions of vision for the Town of Belmont.

Planning Board Vice Chairman Jon Pike read a statement prepared by Planning Board Chairman Peter Harris, who was unable to be in attendance at tonight's meeting. The statement highlighted Peter's support of some form of growth control, noting the impact of the tax rate on attracting businesses to Belmont. He stated that he feels Belmont has done a magnificent job in recent years to work together in providing its people a respectful and affordable place to live. Jon then went on to add his comments regarding the last Planning Board meeting and how he perceived the amendments proposed at Town Meeting. He felt that they were too large a concept and too cumbersome to be presented as they were. He felt the ballot was confusing. He noted that most of the time the only people that attend Planning Board meetings are those directly impacted by the application before the Board at that particular meeting. We need the people of Belmont to talk to the Planning Board.

Chairman Brian Watterson stated to Ken Knowlton that growth management was not off the table. Ken stated that he had heard the vote needed to be a landslide in order for the ordinance to be viable. He gave an analogy using a traffic signal at a 5-way intersection. He asked Mr. Pike what the number of proposed units to come before the Planning Board is estimated to be over the next 5 years. Mr. Pike stated that he believed the number to be approximately 300. Jon noted that Belmont has location, location, location and an excellent school system, "who would not want to live here".

Jon noted that Mark Mooney had been quoted at the last meeting as stating, that the problem of growth may handle itself due to increasing interest rates.

Ginger Wells-Kay asked who is going to choose the vision committee. Chairman Watterson noted that the Board would work closely with the Planning Board to recommend members of the committee.

Planning Board member Ward Peterson stated that if the Board of Selectmen is looking to change the vision of the Town, are they suggesting perhaps they need to step back to the process of 3-years ago when the Master Plan update was initiated. He felt that there was not enough information provided to educate the voters on the proposed amendments this year.

Chairman Watterson noted that there is no perfect way to address everyone's desires.

Selectman Ronald Cormier stated that he has taken the opportunity to review the Master Plan this past weekend, and he does feel that it lacks vision, he feels it is not right to just have the vision of 100 people. He suggested focus groups and a survey being sent out. Linda Frawley noted that the Master Plan Committee had distributed a questionnaire and had only had about a 10% response.

Conservation Commission Alternate member Magnus McLetchie stated that the Zoning Ordinance follows the Master Plan and the Boards could go through the Master Plan for a more concise vision.

Denise Navia feels the Master Plan does articulate the Town's vision, but she does feel the ordinance changes were not articulated well and that fear and sensationalism drew attention. She feels the changes need to be redefined and brought to the voters next year.

Linda Frawley noted that Selectman Cormier had been quoted at the last meeting as saying that communication was a challenge. She went on to highlight previous plans used by the Town to formulate a vision. She recommended that the Town utilized UNH to facilitate a community profile. She feels that 5 individuals are not enough to go forward. She stated that a lot of volunteers contributed numerous hours while working on the Master Plan.

School Board member Preston Tuthill spoke on the demographic study performed by the School District. He noted that there is some skepticism regarding the results. He stated that the study is based on live birth analysis and it shows a decline in enrollment at the elementary school level. School District Superintendent Mike Cozort noted that the same group that had done it ten year's prior completed the study and it had been right on, but it does not really take into consideration an influx of large housing developments. Superintendent Cozort noted that he had attended most of the meetings held on growth and CIP and had provided information on enrollment to the committees. He stated that the demographic study is being updated annually.

Selectman Cormier noted that he wished to comment on his earlier statement relative to the Master Plan; he feels that the document is not balanced and is heavily weighted towards conservation. He stated that it is a nice document but it could be better. He feels the 5 individuals serving on the committee will be able to draw opinions from numerous resources. He noted that the Vision Committee is not going to create the vision for Belmont. He stated that he is very much in favor of economic development.

Conservation Commission Chair Ken Knowlton stated that the median tax bill in Belmont is \$2,700+/-, which does not cover the cost to educate a child in the Belmont school system. He asked if Belmont should remain a town or become a city, stating that NH is a tourist oriented state, and that those moving here come for the rural character.

Selectman Cormier reviewed RSA 674:2 relative to the Master Plan, and noted that there are many sections that need to be completed in the present document. He stated that there is a list of items included in the document but no plan as to how to complete and implement the items. He stated that the Planning Board and Board of Selectmen need to know how to get there. Discussion followed regarding protecting personal property rights; Ken Knowlton stated that he feels increases to tax rates infringe on everyone's rights.

Chairman Brian Watterson noted that all growth is not the same, and that the addition of \$350,000 homes in Belmont is not necessarily negative growth.

Bob Reed spoke regarding the federal mandates of the "No Child Left Behind Act", and how this impacts our school and the tax rate. He feels that many of the problems we face are being created outside our boundaries, but yet we must deal with them within our boundaries.

Selectman Caldwell stressed the importance of obtaining the Housing Study. Ken Knowlton asked what the study would entail. Town Administrator McLelland responded that the depth of the study would be based on the criteria established by the Boards. He noted that it is proposed to take 4-6 months to complete. Ken asked what it would show us that we don't already know. Discussion of the study performed by the Lakes Region Planning Commission was briefly mentioned. Chairman Watterson pointed that we want a study that is specifically to Belmont.

Ray Carbone, resident and reporter for the Daily Sun, asked if the Planning Board was going to consider expanding water and sewer service up Route 106 to bring in commercial development. Chairman Watterson noted that this type of project would be the initiative of the Board of Selectmen in conjunction with the Sewer Commission. He noted that Commissioner Bruce Arey was present and asked him if the Commission would support plans to expand up 106 and along 140. Mr. Arey stated that they would need a reason to run the lines, and that it is not the sewer user's responsibility to pay for the expansion. Chairman Watterson asked if the Town were to investigate grant and bonding options would the Commission be willing to consider a proposal. Bruce agreed that the sewer will need to grow but is unsure how it would be paid for. Tykie Akerstrom stated that he has been listening for 20 years to the discussion relative to

expanding water and sewer, and feels if it will benefit the community as a whole, then the Town should foot the bill. Selectman Cormier stated that a bond issue could be paid for through user fees from the proposed business. Ken Ellis spoke to the water/sewer expansion that took place south on 106 and encompassed the properties on Higgins Drive. He noted that the Town had bonded the project and it was paid for through user fees, but it also increased the Town's tax base.

Dave Guyer is concerned that more commercial growth is going to create a need for more residential growth. Selectman Cormier feels that new commercial growth may offer an opportunity for those that already live in the community to work here, and it will help shift the tax burden.

Ken Knowlton is concerned that every action causes a reaction.

Linda Frawley asked that as the Board's move forward that the look at further innovative land use controls.

Chairman Watterson thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Brian Watterson, Chairman

Reginald Caldwell

Ronald Cormier, Jr.