

Town of Belmont, Massachusetts
MBTA COMMUNITIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES

March 20, 2024

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TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA

DATE: April 18, 2024

TIME: 8:43 AM

Present: Thayer Donham, Roy Epstein, Rachel Heller, Patrick Murphy, Drew Nealon,
Julie Wu

Absent: Paul Joy

Town Staff: Christopher Ryan

The meeting was called to order at 7:34 pm. The meeting was held virtually via Zoom and in person in Belmont Town Hall Annex.

1) Review of the New Maps

Roy Epstein started the meeting by saying that the goal of the meeting is converge on a map scenario. He had created two maps based on comments expressed in the last meeting. One map was similar to what the committee has discussed last week with the two parcels at Belmont Village, the 9 Brighton Street parcel and Wheelworks added back in. The second map included all of the above plus a stretch of Trapelo Road from Waverley Square to the Pequotsette Park on both sides of the street. Map #1 has 1791 units and Map #2 has 2041 units.

Rachel Heller asked that we consider the option of adding the gas station on Concord Ave to the map. Patrick Murphy agreed that it could be combined with other parcels. Also he thought the Trapelo Road properties should be MMU in order to maintain the commercial uses. Julie Wu wondered about having MMU next to residential because the commercial buildings might be too bulky. Rachel Heller reminded the committee that the Trapelo Road corridor was included in the HPP. Drew Nealon noted that the Trapelo corridor abuts three family buildings so the scale is similar to what we are suggesting.

Rachel Heller noted that the current GR zoning incentivizes singles families rather than multifamily. Patrick Murphy suggested that Trapelo be MMU but not all the way to Pequotsette Park. Rachel Heller liked the MMU suggestion since it will be consistent with the character along the street and bring foot traffic to the businesses. Chris Ryan reminded everyone that MMU will not substantially bring up the unit count and makes the contiguity area larger.

After some discussion, the committee agreed to terminate the MMU at Hull Street and 350 Trapelo.

Rachel Heller asked again about the gas station on Concord Ave. Roy Epstein responded that he was trying to reduce the number of parcels per the comments from the Planning Board. Chris Ryan indicated that the parcel is limited in terms of the ability to redevelop since it is a small parcel, probably a brownfield site and likely not financially attractive for redevelopment. Members of the committee noted that they did not feel strongly about the parcel either way.

Roy reminded everyone that 3A is for residential development and is not a good commercial zoning tool. He does not think that MMU is a good zoning overlay for Belmont Center. Patrick Murphy agreed that we needed to maintain the commercial in Belmont Center especially the second floor commercial.

Rachel Heller asked if Moraine Street could go to 4 stories. Roy Epstein responded no, not under the current typologies. Chris Ryan noted that the 2A typology needs to be modified or replaced with an alternative. Perhaps as Subdistrict 5 with a density bonus for affordable housing that would allow the 4th story. Julie Wu asked if Arlington had done that? Chris Ryan suggested that Utile needs to study that for us.

2) Discussion of Zoning Bylaw

Chris Ryan indicated Utile has provided a final scope of work that is being reviewed by Patrice Garvin. Either the committee or the Planning Board will need to select properties to model.

3) Meeting minutes

The March 14th 2024 meeting minutes were approved as amended.

4) Public Comments

Linn Hobbs was disappointed that we would include properties on the demo delay list within the 3A zoning. He noted that the Historic District Commission reviews projects outside the Historic District including the Fire Stations when those were being redeveloped. Thayer Donham noted while it may have sounded as though historic properties were not valued when she suggested putting the properties on the demo delay list back in the map, demolition delay is great tool to look at alternatives to demolition and consider the design of what will replace it. She also noted that the Fire Stations were under the purview of the Historic District Commission because the town required that as part of the RFP process when the town was selling the properties.

Roy Epstein noted that the Wheelworks property is the only building on the demolition delay list.

Rena Fonseca indicated that she support the version of Roy’s map that has 1632 units plus a 10% buffer. She also noted that at the last public forum people had “voted”.

John Beatty, Pleasant Street said that he supports the map with Trapelo Road and has fewer units. He also noted that this is much more difficult that he originally thought it was going to be.

Mary Lewis said she appreciated the conversation and she likes the Trapelo Road extension. She also noted that at the public forum, individual people put multiple dots on the boards so there was no real voting.

Bob Sarno was disappointed that the committee appeared to be taking a U-turn and adding properties back into the Waverley area. There is too much concentration in Waverley while Belmont Center and Brighton got reduced which is not consistent with what the committee had discussed at previous meetings. He hopes the committee will reconsider.

Sheila Flewelling echoes Bob Sarno’s comments and would like the Trapelo Road extension removed from the map.

Roy Epstein responded that there had not been a decision but a menu of two options for the Planning Board to discuss.

Judith Ananian Sarno supports 1632 units and no more. She would like to see the units split between the two commuter rail stations. She indicated that developers should not be allowed to decide their own parking requirements.

5) Next Meetings:

- ***Tentative: Wednesday, March 27 from 7:30-9:30 in a Hybrid Format at the Town Hall Annex.***
- **Friday March 29th from 8:30 – 9:30 pm for Committee to vote on map and narrative.**

Meeting adjourned at 9:45 pm.

Minutes recorded by Thayer Donham.