



MOTIONS
2026 SPECIAL TOWN MEETING
MARCH 4, 2026
Draft as of December 15, 2025
(Subject to Change)

PRELIMINARY MOTION

ORDER OF THE ARTICLES

MOVED: That the Town Meeting hear the motions in the following order: 1, 2, 3

(Majority vote.)

ARTICLE 1

REPORTS

MOVED: That the report of the Select Board and other Town Officers, any Committee heretofore appointed be accepted.

MOVED: That Article 1 be laid on the table.

(Majority vote.)

Submitted by the Select Board

Reporting: The Select Board will report on this Article.

ARTICLE 2

AMEND ZONING BYLAW: BELMONT CENTER OVERLAY DISTRICT

MOVED: That the Town vote to amend the Zoning By-Law and the Zoning Map by adding the "Belmont Center Overlay District" as described in the March 4, 2026 STM Warrant, Appendix 1.

(Majority vote.)

Submitted by the Planning Board

Town Counsel Statement on Quantum of the Vote, Presented February 9, 2026

The quantum of the vote for any Town Meeting action is determined by state, rather than local law, and is not subject to amendment by Town Meeting.

Blomquist v. Town of Arlington, 338 Mass. 594, 598-99 (1959) (“The legal effect of any given number of votes upon any subject considered is one of substantive law.”); See also *Town Meeting Time*, 4th Ed., § 5.1 (2025).

With respect to zoning articles like March 4 Special Town Meeting Articles 2 and 3, the relevant substantive law is G.L. c. 40A, § 5. Under that section, most amendments to the Zoning Bylaw require a 2/3 majority to pass, except for a set of zoning changes which the Legislature has provided, “**shall** be adopted by a vote of a simple majority.” These include amendments to zoning bylaws that allow a “mixed-use development in an eligible location” by right, or subject to a special permit. Both “mixed use development” and “eligible location” are defined terms in G.L. c. 40A § 1A. Importantly, a mixed-use development must include both residential and non-residential components. See the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities’ (EOHLC’s) Guidance <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/voting-threshold-guidance#mixed-use-development>

Special Town Meeting Article 2 allows for mixed-use zoning by right in parts of Belmont Center (an eligible location under the statute) and requires any project thereunder to include a residential component. Thus, Article 2 requires a simple majority vote.

Special Town Meeting Article 3, by contrast, does not *require* a residential component for development thereunder. It is therefore subject to the traditional 2/3 quantum of vote.



Mina S. Makarios (he/him)

Reporting: The Select Board and Planning Board will report on this Article.

Select Board Report

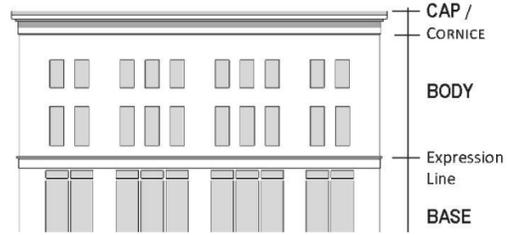
Vote: Favorable action (3 – 0)

Article 2 and Article 3 use form-based zoning that reflects the **transit-oriented, walkable neighborhood plan** from **the 2008 Planning Vision for Belmont Center**. Town Meeting’s approval of Article 2 as submitted by the Planning Board will add a **by-right mixed-use zoning option to the retail, dining, and services business district of Belmont Center**. It requires at least two stories of commercial use.

Town Meeting’s approval of Article 2 is necessary for Article 3 because Section 10A (Center Gateway) relies on and references Section 10 (Belmont Center).

What you see in the code is what could be built.

A modern approach to zoning, form-based code gives clear definitions of the shape, scale and exterior requirements. The scale and façade requirements (visual at right, from Section 10.5.D) ensure that projects honor the charm and small-town feeling of Belmont Center. These façade standards and helpful visuals are accompanied by requirements common to all zoning code, such as tables specifying uses, heights, property-line setbacks, and minimum parking requirements.



Article 2 Belmont Center Overlay District map (below).

Each color-coded subdistrict is annotated with form visuals from the zoning code and the maximum number of stories allowed.



Vibrancy helps Belmont face modern opportunities and regional factors

The overlay zoning would allow property owners to build additional commercial space and complementary, smaller-format housing. In town centers, these are typically studios and 1-bedroom apartments. Growth would **incentivize investment in vacant storefronts and increase foot traffic at local shops and restaurants**. A healthy mix of commercial space alongside housing boosts local businesses that want a nearby customer base, and gives cut-through drivers more reasons to stop, shop, and dine in Belmont Center. By restricting new curb cuts, the zoning limits vehicles crossing sidewalks and encourages walking access to restaurants, cafes, local shops, and amenities.

Article 2 is one financial pillar for supporting Belmont’s future

Zoning for growth is the foundation for sustainably increasing municipal revenue and supporting services for residents. The Fiscal Impact Report from the Warrant Committee considers a risk-averse range of scenarios and estimates full buildout would **generate \$230K to \$940K in recurring positive revenue for Belmont (above and beyond costs)**.¹ The models developed by the Multi-Year Budget Advisory Committee (MYBAC) show **\$100K to \$200K per year in additional new growth** (the “optimistic revenue” scenario), **which would reduce the size of future overrides by millions of dollars.**



Scenario	Managed Expense Growth (Base Case)	Fixed Expense Rate Growth	Optimistic Revenue	Enhanced School Funding	Smaller Override with Reductions to Services
Revenue Growth Rate Range (FY27-FY31)	2.8 – 3.3%	2.8 – 3.3%	3.2 – 3.4%	2.8 – 3.3%	2.8 – 3.3%
Expense Growth Rate Range (FY27-FY31)	4.0 – 4.6%	4.6 – 4.7%	4.0 – 4.6%	4.0 – 6.2%	2.6 – 4.6%
Anticipated Override Timing	FY29 (April 2028)	FY29 (April 2028)	FY29 (April 2028)	FY28 (April 2027) of \$4-5 M	FY29 (April 2028)
Anticipated Override Size	\$7 – 9 M	\$9.5 – 11.5 M + \$500K FC in FY28	\$5 – 7 M	FY29 (April 2028) of \$5-6 M	\$3 – 5 M
Service Levels	Typical	Typical	Typical	Expanded School Services	Substantial Reduction
FY31 Revenue Growth Rate	2.8%	2.8%	3.1%	2.8%	2.8%
FY31 Expense Growth Rate	4.0%	4.7%	4.0%	4.1%	3.1%

A 95% residential tax base with limited new growth diminishes services for residents, or, requires successful overrides to sustain services. The costs of healthcare, construction, education, and significant maintenance to preserve facilities are rapidly increasing. National and regional pressures are accelerating the financial and structural challenges faced every budget season.

¹ Belmont Center Overlay Fiscal Impact Analysis, Warrant Committee Report <https://www.belmont-ma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/13139/Belmont-Center-Overlay---Warrant-Committee-Report---Final>

Belmont is not immune to changes and growth in happening in neighboring communities and the region. **Growth in nearby communities will affect Belmont's local vibrancy and traffic, without the economic and community benefits to our town.**

By-right development is vital to ensure Belmont can compete for private investment. The Planning Board has begun enhancing the Site Plan Review framework for your consideration at Annual Town Meeting. Even for by-right development, the code and procedures ensure compliance across numerous areas, including (from page 44 of the zoning code in Appendix 1).

1. Form-Based Overlay Districts
2. Building Standards
3. Frontage Types, as applicable
4. Required Open Space
5. Parking Standards
6. Landscape Standards
7. Stormwater Management Standards
8. Fencing & Screening
9. Mechanical Equipment
10. Design Standards for Structured Parking
11. Lighting Standards
12. Service Areas & Waste Enclosures

The zoning process and result balanced many perspectives and community goals

After a year-long public process of deliberating the vision, plans, studies, drafts, models, and edits, **this zoning reflects significant input and an economically positive opportunity that balances many perspectives, needs, and goals.**

Traffic² and parking³ were studied again. **A new improvement is underway: a pair of coordinated traffic lights** are being designed for either side of the railroad tracks, with pedestrian crossing cycles that will improve pedestrian access and safety. At half buildout, traffic simulations show drivers would wait an additional 15 seconds at peak cut-through-traffic times.

Allowed building sizes were reduced and parcels were removed during the public process. Sizes were further reduced where adjacent to residences outside the overlay. New buildings would need to meet modern energy codes. The plan and code reflect resident needs and economic realities, designed to help Belmont Center increase its appeal to young professionals⁴, and seniors looking to downsize⁵ in town. **Allowing property owners to build up rather than out would preserve open space in Belmont.**

Complementary housing, if built, could give Belmont control of our own zoning. Today, developers can use Chapter 40B to ignore Belmont's zoning code where the Town might prefer mixed-use or commercial development because Belmont lacks sufficient affordable housing supply to meet state requirements. Through the Inclusionary Zoning By-law, mixed-use

² 2025 Belmont Center Parking Study by DESMAN Design Management https://www.belmont-ma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/11227/Revised-Final-Parking-Report_Belmont-Center_17November2025

³ 2025 Transportation Impact Assessment by BSC Group <https://www.belmont-ma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/13077/Belmont-Downtown-Zoning-Change---Traffic-Impact-Study>

⁴ 2024 Market Analysis Summary Report by RKG Associates <https://www.belmont-ma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/7491/RKG-Market-Analysis-Report-2024>

⁵ Belmont Council on Aging: Planning for the Future (Senior needs assessment, 2025) by UMASS Boston, Center for Social and Demographic Research on Aging <https://www.belmont-ma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/11030/BCOA-Needs-Assessment-Report-11325-1>

development can increase Belmont's Subsidized Housing Inventory, provide needed housing, and give the Town safe harbor from Chapter 40B projects.

ARTICLE 3 AMEND ZONING BYLAW: CENTER GATEWAY OVERLAY DISTRICT

MOVED: That the Town vote to amend the Zoning By-Law and the Zoning Map by adding the "Center Gateway Overlay District" as described in the March 4, 2026 STM Warrant, Appendix 2.

(Two-thirds vote.)

Submitted by the Planning Board

Reporting: The Select Board and Planning Board will report on this Article.

Select Board Report

Vote: Favorable action (3 – 0)

Note: The vote threshold is 2/3 for Article 3. In addition to the statement from Town Counsel included with Article 2, the cited guidance from EOHLC⁶ states mixed-use development is required for all future uses to trigger a simple majority vote (emphasis added):

If a zoning amendment is drafted to permit a mixture of uses in a new zone, and also requires that all future uses in that zone include a residential component, then the amendment allows "mixed-use development" as defined in the statute, and qualifies for the simple majority, as long as the affected land area is an "eligible location." **Municipalities that want to approve a mixed-use overlay district by simple majority should take care to draft the article so that individual projects must include a residential use.** (May 20, 2021)

Article 3, the Center Gateway Overlay District, references and relies upon the Section 10 zoning code in Article 2. If Town Meeting does not approve Article 2, then Article 3, including the Hotel Use Regulations, fails as well. The 2024 Market Analysis Summary Report⁷ highlighted the need and opportunity for a hotel in Belmont. Given the regional need and financial benefits to the Town, the Select Board strongly believes Belmont should allow hotels in Belmont beginning in 2026.

A hotel is a key economic opportunity that would also be a financial win for Belmont

⁶ MA Executive Office of Economic Development *Voting Threshold Guidance*: [...] When a zoning amendment permits housing and other uses, how do I know which threshold applies? <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/voting-threshold-guidance#mixed-use-development>

⁷ 2024 Market Analysis Summary Report by RKG Associates <https://www.belmont-ma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/7491/RKG-Market-Analysis-Report-2024>

Even a risk-averse fiscal impact analysis shows a hotel would be a highly valuable amenity for our community and generate positive recurring revenue. The Warrant Committee evaluated “plausible worst-case scenarios” and found **the smallest Boutique hotel (26 rooms) would generate an estimated \$150K every year for the Town**, and a **Business Class hotel (150 rooms) would be a \$780K yearly net positive**. These estimates do not include other sources of revenue from accessory uses, such as meals tax. Hotel guests may also provide additional foot traffic to Belmont Center businesses.

To give Belmont the chance for a hotel to be built, Article 3 also includes **Section 6.15, Hotel Use Regulations**, to regulate hotels specifically. It is written for use in future overlay proposals. Offering the market additional viable development options would increase the town’s chance that a hotel will be built.

The Center Gateway allows complementary amenities and economic opportunities

The use table emphasizes a new use in Belmont: a Boutique (26-100 rooms) or Business Class (101-150 rooms) hotel with possible accessories like restaurants, retail, meeting and event space. The Center Gateway is 1.1 miles from the Route 2 exit ramp and adjacent to the shops and restaurants in Belmont Center. **These uses reflect resident feedback, financial benefits for the town, and commercial opportunities that fit Belmont and Belmont Center.**

By-Right Uses	Accessory Uses (allowed as part of a primary use)
<p>Commercial</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business Services Food Service Establishment⁸ Hotel, Class 2 or 3 Health and Wellness Services Office, General Place of Assembly, Amusement, or Exercise Retail Sales 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bank (Financial Services) Bar or Tavern⁸ Car Sharing or Rental Bicycle or Scooter Rental Car Charging Station Craft Beverage Establishment⁸ Food Service Establishment, Formula Based Open Air Business Rooftop dining, bar, or event space⁸
<p>Civic / Institutional</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Day Care Center Religious & Educational Uses⁹ Research & Development or Laboratory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arts Exhibition Art Gallery or Museum Arts Education Theatre or Performance Space

⁸ Required to be a restaurant in order to obtain a liquor license

⁹ Protected by M.G.L. 40A. § 3

Business Class hotels must include at least one additional accessory amenity, such as a social lounge or patio open to the public, a Food Service Establishment, or fitness/wellness facilities. Site and building layouts must demonstrate safe, accessible, and attractive pedestrian pathways.

A Senior Active-Living Residential building would be allowed by Special Permit only, and would require mixed-use with at least two stories of commercial space. For the full use table, see Section 10A.4 C on page 7 of Appendix 2.

Like Article 2, **what you see in the code is what can be built**. It uses a form-based code to clearly define the shape, scale, and exterior requirements for a project, and includes tables to define uses, setbacks, minimum parking, and other common zoning requirements.

Article 3 Center Gateway Overlay District map (below). The district is annotated with the form visual from the zoning code and the maximum number of stories allowed.



Amendments to Article 2: Select Board Report

The six amendments for Article 2 have similar amendments for Article 3. These amendments would defeat the zoning, undermine transit-oriented planning, and/or discourage development. **The Select Board recommends unfavorable action, 3-0.**

Amendment	Select Board Report	SB Vote
Article 2 (McGaw): Replace the zoning code with the word “(Reserved)”	This amendment is akin to a motion to refer to committee and a “no” vote on the compromise zoning after more than a year of public engagement, studying, planning, revising. If town meeting approves this amendment, both Article 2 and Article 3 are defeated because the Center Gateway refers to the Belmont Center Overlay in Article 2.	Unfavorable action (3 – 0)
Article 2 (McGaw): Ban Overnight Parking on Streets	Ruled out of scope. This amendment attempts to regulate overnight street parking within the Zoning By-laws. It does not belong in the zoning code. Overnight parking is already banned by <u>General Bylaw § 60-805 B (7) Vehicles and Parking</u> . Only Town Meeting can modify the existing overnight parking ban. Of course, any parking management plan would comply with the General Bylaws, including the overnight parking ban.	Unfavorable action (3 – 0)
Two amendments to increase parking minimums will be presented and debated together.		
Article 2 (McGaw): More than triple residential minimum parking requirements (2 spaces / Unit if more than 1 bedroom, 1 space / Unit otherwise)	This amendment rejects transit-oriented planning by more than tripling minimum parking requirements, forcing developers to build residential parking that is not demanded by the market. Developers will build the parking they need to make a project viable. There is no parking maximum. If approved, this amendment would limit the financial benefits for Belmont, increase costs to developers, reduce commercial space for restaurants and shops, and reject evidence-based planning for shared-use parking.	Unfavorable action (3 – 0)
Article 2 (McGaw): More than triple residential minimum parking requirements (1 space / Unit)	This amendment also rejects transit-oriented planning, in this case by increasing parking requirements to 1 space per Unit (about triple the current minimums). All the points against more than tripling the parking requirements (above) also apply to this amendment.	Unfavorable action (3 – 0)

Amendment	Select Board Report	SB Vote
<p>Article 3 (McGaw): No Overnight Parking on Streets</p>	<p>Ruled out of scope. This amendment attempts to regulate overnight street parking within the Zoning By-laws. It does not belong in the zoning code. Overnight parking is already prohibited in Belmont by <u>General Bylaw § 60-805 B (7) Vehicles and Parking</u>. Modifying the existing overnight parking ban already requires Town Meeting approval. Any parking management plan would need to comply with the General Bylaws, including the overnight parking ban.</p>	<p>Unfavorable action (3 – 0)</p>
<p>Two amendments to increase parking minimums will be presented and debated together.</p>		
<p>Article 3 (McGaw): More than triple residential minimum parking requirements (2 spaces / Unit if more than 1 bedroom, 1 space / Unit otherwise)</p>	<p>Senior Active-Living Residential (with two stories of commercial) is allowed by Special Permit. As with the similar amendment to Article 2, this motion rejects transit-oriented planning by more than tripling the parking minimum of 0.3 spaces / Unit. This will force developers to build residential parking that is not demanded by the market in addition to navigating the discretionary Special Permit process. Developers will build the parking they need to make a project viable. There is no parking maximum. If approved, this amendment would limit the financial benefits for Belmont, increase costs to developers, reduce commercial space for restaurants and shops, and reject evidence-based planning for shared-use parking.</p>	<p>Unfavorable action (3 – 0)</p>
<p>Article 3 (McGaw): More than triple residential minimum parking requirements (1 space / Unit)</p>	<p>This amendment also rejects transit-oriented planning, in this case by increasing parking requirements to 1 space per Unit (about triple the current minimums). All the same points against more than tripling the parking requirements (above) for Senior Active-Living Residential also apply to this amendment.</p>	<p>Unfavorable action (3 – 0)</p>
<p>Article 3 (McGaw): Prohibit reducing required residential parking requirements</p>	<p>This amendment removes evidence-based adjustment to required parking minimums for the only allowed (by Special Permit) residential use: a Senior Active-Living building. Special Permits follow a discretionary process and can be denied without stated justification.</p>	<p>Unfavorable action (3 – 0)</p>

Amendment	Select Board Report	SB Vote
<p>Article 3 (McGaw): Prohibit overnight parking on streets for shared parking</p>	<p>This amendment attempts to regulate overnight street parking within the Zoning By-laws. It does not belong in the zoning code. Overnight parking is already banned by <u>General Bylaw § 60-805 B (7) Vehicles and Parking</u> Only Town Meeting can modify the existing overnight parking ban. Of course, any parking management plan (to prevent double counting spaces among agreements) would comply with the General Bylaws, including the overnight parking ban.</p>	<p>Unfavorable action (3 – 0)</p>
<p>Article 3 (McGaw): Define Guest Room under Section 6.15 Hotel Use Regulations</p>	<p>Appendix 2 was updated by the Planning Board to add and use the definition of Guest Room. This amendment adds a definition of Guest Room to clarify Hotel Use Regulations refer to rentable rooms and suites, and not literal room or bedroom counts within the hotel. A Guest Room must contain at least one bedroom and one bathroom. It also updates the definitions of the hotel classes to specify Guest Room.</p>	<p>No position taken as of 2/23/2026.</p>
<p>Article 3 (McGaw): Delegate allowing Hotels within a zone to each district or subdistrict rather than centralized list in Section 6.15</p>	<p>This amendment offers another approach to generalize the language for Hotel Use Regulations. It removes the list of zones that allow hotels from Section 6.15, and instead delegates allowing hotels to each specific zone. There is a benefit and trade-off to this approach. The current approach has a centralized list of all zones allowing hotels contained within Section 6.15. If the Zoning By-law is being amended to allow (or stop allowing) hotels in a district, the list in 6.15.4 would also need to be updated.</p> <p>The proposed amendment would remove the need to update a centralized list. Instead, each zoning district or subdistrict would specify via its use table. It could become more difficult to determine where hotels are allowed in Belmont, if a developer were considering Belmont for a project.</p>	<p>No position taken as of 2/23/2026.</p>