

RESIDENTIAL DISTRICTS PARKING REGULATIONS: TIME FOR CHANGE?

When your college aged child returned home for the holidays and parked his or her vehicle in your driveway, did you know that you may have been in violation of a Town parking regulation? Existing regulations, applicable to residential districts, allow no more than three vehicles to be parked in a driveway. So, if you and your spouse both have your own vehicle and your two older kids are still living at home and also have their own vehicles, and all of you park in your driveway, you are in violation of the Zoning By-Laws. Of course, one of you could park your vehicle on the street in front of your home. At least, you could park there except between the hours of 1:00 AM to 7:00 AM when parking on the Town's streets is prohibited.

During the 16 month period, July 2006 to October 2007, the Town's Office of Community Development issued 254 zoning violation notices. Forty eight or 19 % of the violations were issued for too many vehicles parked in driveways. Another 48 violations cited illegal front yard parking; the Belmont Zoning By-Laws prohibit parking on the front yard of one's home. Additionally, nearly 2/3 of the total number of parking violations occurred in the General Residence Zoning District, the areas on either side of Trapelo Road and Belmont Street. The GR district has the smallest average lot size of the Town's residentially zoned districts and is the primary location of two-family residential structures. However, the Town's parking regulations treat all residential districts the same.

The Belmont Planning Board was requested by the Board of Selectmen to gather public comment and opinion on the Town's parking regulations applicable to the Town's residentially zoned areas. This request was prompted by an influx of special permit applications by residents that had received citations for illegal parking during a recent Office of Community Development enforcement action. As a first step in this process, the Board reviewed the regulations and identified several issues and concerns. Some of these include:

1. Allowing three vehicles to park on a 12,000 square foot lot has very different visual and aesthetic impacts than allowing the same three vehicles to park on a 5,000 square foot lot, yet parking regulations do not consider lot size.
2. A five bedroom single family home generating more vehicles than a two bedroom home and potentially more vehicles than two 2-bedroom units in a two family home are all subject to the same regulatory standard.
3. On-street parking regulations place a burden on certain properties that may not be placed on others; all properties on a street are treated equally despite differing lot sizes, differing building sizes, etc.
4. Twenty-two self-identified properties have no driveways. In some cases, if not all, these properties are on small lots where no side yards exist. In effect, the current regulations prohibit these home owners from parking on their properties unless a special permit is granted.

The Board, through the Office of Community Development is now seeking input from Belmont residents on these and other concerns related to parking in the Town's residential districts. OCD will be sponsoring 2 public forums and conducting a survey to help guide the Planning Board in

determining what if any changes are appropriate to the current regulations. The first forum will be held at the **Chenery School Community Room on Thursday, January 22, 2009, at 7:00 PM**. We look forward to your participation and comments.