

OFFICE OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
FULL TIME PERSONNEL

Glenn R. Clancy, P.E., Director
Jay Szklut, Planning & Economic Development Manager
Jeffrey A. Wheeler, Planning Coordinator
George W. Mahnke, Inspection/Enforcement Officer
Ara Yogurtian, Inspection/Enforcement Officer (through 11/30/2007)
Ara Yogurtian, Resident Engineer (promoted 12/3/2007)
Valerie Doerrer, Resident Engineer (through 11/9/2007)

Pauline M. Daniels, Administrative Assistant III
Jeannine Rogan, Administrative Assistant I (through 9/12/2007)
Karren Lee, Administrative Assistant I (promoted 10/29/2007)

PART TIME PERSONNEL

John D. MacDonald, Plumbing and Gas Inspector
Mary Trudeau, Conservation Commission Agent

Susan Lourie, Administrative Secretary (through 2/2/2007)
Karren Lee, Administrative Secretary (hired 4/30/2007)
Geraldine Cummings, Permanent Volunteer
Franco Villarroel, Student Intern

ENGINEERING DIVISION

Atlas

In 2007 The Office of Community Development began to update the Assessor's Atlas and to make it available through the Towns Geographic Information system (GIS). In the future the atlas will be available electronically to anyone looking for lot and owner information.

Board of Assessors

Along with the preparation of the Atlas, the Department provided other information at the request of the Assessors including computing the areas of parcels of land, supplying Atlas prints for tax abatement cases and consulting with the Assessors' Department staff.

Conservation Commission

During 2007 the Engineering Division provided copies of various Wetland area maps as requested and assisted the Commission with various questions concerning proposed projects in the wetlands.

In 2006 the Town of Belmont hired its first Conservation Agent, Mary Trudeau. This position has been successful in fully supporting the commission while bringing in much needed grant money to help revitalize the Rock Meadow conservation land. In 2007 Mary was successful at convincing local contractors to donate time and materials to repair the parking lot at Rock Meadow.

Electric Light

As in previous years when requested, various plans were prepared showing all underground utilities to assist the Electric Light Department with the layout of utilities.

Pavement Management

In 2006 the Board of Selectmen convened a Pavement Management Committee. The committee was asked to evaluate the current Pavement Management Program and make recommendations on how to better achieve the goals of the program. Final recommendations were adopted by the Selectmen in May of 2007.

The Office of Community Development continues to coordinate utility repairs and roadway reconstruction. Several meetings are held with the Department of Public Works – Water Division and other utilities during the development of a project. The Office of Community Development also continues to evaluate and repair sanitary sewers and storm drains in roadways scheduled for reconstruction.

In 2007 Washington Street and Cross Street, from Brighton Street to Broad Street, were reconstructed.

Health Department

The Office of Community Development continued to work very closely with the Health Department in 2007. Many of the public safety issues that are addressed by the Building Inspector also involve the Health Department. Additionally, the Director of Community Development works very closely with the Health Department assisting with the review of proposed septic systems under the Title V Regulations. The Department also works closely with the Health Department to review plans for new restaurants.

Plan Work

Numerous plans and sketches were made for various town departments, boards and commissions.

Police Department

The Department worked closely with the Traffic Division in 2007 on several projects such as traffic pattern realignments and crosswalk locations as requested by different neighborhoods in Town. The Department also worked closely with the Police Department during numerous reviews of proposed developments that would impact traffic in Town. In addition, the Department prepared maps of the Town and provided court testimony to assist in court hearings.

Sanitary Sewers

During 2007 private contractors made 36 connections to the sanitary sewer. The Department continued to provide various information as requested.

Storm Sewers

Private contractors made 7 connections to residential properties and the Department took measurements and locations of the sewers for permanent records.

Town Clerk

Restriction lines, 150 feet from election polling places, were marked out at each of the eight precincts at the request of the Town Clerk.

The Department also assisted the Town Clerk in selecting the proper house number for new or converted dwellings by providing technical assistance and plot plans of the property.

Traffic Advisory Committee

In 2007 the Director of Community Development attended monthly meetings as staff liaison to the Traffic Advisory Committee. Truck traffic, intersection redesign, Trapelo Road redesign as well as many other concerns was discussed at these meetings. Information and support was given to the Committee by this department as needed.

Water Department

The Engineering Division performed various functions for the Water Department including locating sanitary sewers and storm drains for repair and/or replacement of domestic water lines and main lines.

Notifications of new sanitary sewer house connections were sent to the Water Department to update the sewer use master list for billing purposes. Additionally, all phases of the Water Department's 30-Year Plan are closely coordinated with the Engineering Division in order to ensure coordination of utility replacements or upgrades as well as pavement restoration.

BUILDING DIVISION

During 2007, this division processed 797 building permits, received 80 possible zoning violation complaints, 5 possible building code complaints and 15 general bylaw violation complaints. Estimated total building construction value was \$31,020,078. All alleged zoning and building code violation complaints received during the year were investigated and notifications were sent to the parties involved. Through the cooperation of the Fire Department, the Building Division is notified of every fire in which possible structural damage is evident. Immediate inspections are made and recommendations given to the owners or builders.

Income for the calendar year 2007 from Building Permits totaled \$596,975 and income from Plumbing, Gas, Board of Appeal, Certificate of Inspections, Home Occupation, Signs, etc. totaled \$50,255.00. Total income received by this division was \$647,230. During 2007, 524 plumbing permits were issued to properly licensed persons. Inspections were made on all work for which permits were issued and other inspections were made at the request of the property owner. Total income received was \$26,521.

During 2007, 336 gas permits were issued for which all necessary inspection and re-inspections were made. Total income received was \$9,279.

PLANNING DIVISION

Zoning Board of Appeal/Planning Board

Liaisons for these Boards were the Planning and Economic Development Manager and the Planning Coordinator.

During 2007, the Zoning Board of Appeals heard 35 applications for Special Permit and/or Variances with the following results:

- Special Permits 32
- Variances 8
- Withdrawn 2
- Denied 4
- Granted 25

Four cases were still pending.

The Planning Board heard 6 applications for Design and Site Plan Review approval. These cases included installing cellular antennae, waiving parking requirements, and reviewing commercial developments.

Total application fees for both the Zoning Board of Appeals and Planning Board were \$9,600.

State Building Code

During 2007, as part of the duties required by the Massachusetts State Building Code, this division inspected 94 public buildings and spaces, (schools, hospitals, restaurants, public halls, day care centers etc.) for compliance with safe egress, emergency lighting and

maximum capacity. The Code requires on-site inspections. Mandatory fees collected during 2007 totaled \$4,927.00. As a means of keeping informed with the State Building Code and its ongoing changes and amendments, representatives from this division attended several state sponsored workshops during 2007.

Respectfully submitted,
Glenn R. Clancy, P.E.
Director of Community Development

PLANNING DIVISION

Following up on the passage of the Cushing Square Overlay Zone in 2006, the year 2007 saw the Planning Division promote zoning changes and development projects targeted at revitalizing areas of the Town facing redevelopment pressure. The major zoning change undertaken by the Planning Division was development of a Chapter 40R Smart Growth Zoning District encompassing the former Our Lady of Mercy properties owned by the Archdiocese of Boston. The division applied for and received funding through the State's Priority Development Fund to hire a consultant to assist in drafting the zoning language. Staff met with the consultant and residents numerous times during the year to put forward a zoning change sensitive to residents concerns while still meeting the goals of M.G.L. Chapter 40R to increase density and affordable housing units. The final proposal brought to Town Meeting allows up to 18 units to be built on the former church property which under existing zoning would have only allowed 5 units. Additionally, the proposed bylaw incorporated specific design guidelines controlling, appearance and scale of buildings, protection of natural site features, landscaping and open space on-site, and lighting and buffering. The proposal was wholeheartedly supported by the neighborhood and as a result, Town Meeting unanimously supported the zoning change. The zoning change and process were nominated for and awarded the Massachusetts Chapter of the American Planning Association 2007 Outstanding Planning Award/Planning Project.

Planning Division staff worked with property owners and developers on several building projects during 2007. Staff provided recommendations and guided two restaurateurs through the site plan review process resulting in the opening of two restaurants in Cushing Square. Both of these projects are in line with the goals of the 2006 Cushing Square Overlay Zone. Staff also met with representatives of the Murray Sandler Skate Shop on Concord Avenue, a building that has been vacant for several years. Staff was informed of a proposal by a bakery to renovate the facility and open a retail baked goods facility at the site. Staff arranged a meeting and attended a meeting with neighborhood residents and the interested bakery owner. Residents voiced support of the bakery and staff encouraged continued negotiations with the property owner. At the close of the year, the Division was informed that several legal issues had arisen endangering the project. Staff continues to monitor the situation and is attempting to work with both parties to resolve the outstanding issues.

The Planning Division continues to administer and monitor the McLean Hospital development. Northland Development Corporation has completed construction and sold approximately 30 units. American Retirement Community, now Brookdale Senior Living Inc., continues its pre-sale program. They have also lowered the number of independent and assisted living units in their development from 494 to 292. The construction of Olmsted Drive, the driveway accessing the Retirement Community and the Research & Development complex, continues. The Division coordinated the hiring of a consulting/engineering firm to monitor the driveway and associated storm water management facilities construction.

2007 also marked the official transfer of land from McLean Hospital to the Town for the development of Affordable Housing. Planning Staff working with the Belmont Housing Trust issued a Request for Proposals for development of affordable housing on the land. The selected proposal by Affirmative Investments Inc., Waverley Woods, includes 40 units of housing on the site, which will be affordable to families with a median household income at or below 80% of the area median income. Staff coordinated the review process and final approvals and building permits were issued in time for a late fall construction start. The development will include 10 one bedroom units, 20 two bedroom units, and 10 three bedroom units. The site has been designed to mirror the residential development on the opposite side of Trapelo Road and to become an integral part of the Waverley Square community. The development is expected to be complete by December 2008. This is a significant development in Belmont and the first affordable rental family housing in more than 30 years.

Planners continued to focus on implementing the recommendations within the Belmont Economic Development Plan, commonly referred to as the "Corridor Study". Staff developed several reports and studies examining the "transitional commercial districts" along Trapelo Road (those small commercial districts between Cushing and Waverley Square and on East Belmont Street). Several potential zoning changes were discussed including the concept of form based zoning. However, the Planning Board decided to focus on revitalization of Waverley Square prior to submitting zoning changes for transitional areas for Town Meeting consideration. Planners also met with the Traffic Advisory Board and the Planning Board to review proposed changes to Trapelo Road in and around Cushing Square to make sure that the reconstruction of Trapelo Road supports the recommendations of the Corridor Study. The current design calls for a more pedestrian friendly square complementing the changes envisioned in the overlay zone.

Planners were involved in the planning for the re-use of the Belmont Center and Harvard Lawn Fire Stations. Staff assisted in drafting the Request for Proposals for both properties. Planners attended Belmont Center Planning Group meetings reviewing the responses to the RFP and provided information to the BCPG as requested to assist in their review. For the Harvard Law Fire Station, planners were instrumental in guiding the selected developer through the process of submitting a zoning change article to Town Meeting. The zoning change increased the allowable number of residential units on the property and was passed by Town Meeting. The change led to the issuance of a new RFP and a subsequent proposal increasing the bid offer to the Town for the property. Staff continues to work with the Planning Board, the Zoning Board of Appeals, the Belmont Center Planning Group, and the Historic District Commission on the review of the proposed redevelopment of the Belmont Center Fire Station.

An ongoing responsibility of the Planning Division is to provide staff support to the Planning Board and the Zoning Board of Appeals. Staff provides administrative support including recording of minutes; posting of meetings, maintaining files, and drafting of decisions. The Planning Board convened 25 times during the year while the Zoning Board met 16 times. Staff also provided research support when requested. During 2007, the ZBA requested the Planning Board to review the Town's policies regulating residential parking. Staff reviewed both the Town's Zoning By-Laws and General By-Laws and drafted a memorandum for the Planning Board. The memorandum was discussed by the Planning Board and submitted to the Board of Selectmen for action.

Staff support was also provided to the Belmont Center Planning Group and the Capital Projects Overview Committee. The Division is also responsible for the documentation required as part of the Town's membership in the WestMetro HOME Consortium. Through this federally funded affordable housing program, the Town receives approximately \$100,000 each year. Currently, the money is being used for the Waverley Woods Affordable Housing Development. Staff also represents the Town at various meetings with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC). MAPC is the regional planning agency responsible for guiding transportation funding and planning and holding regional planning forums.

A significant ongoing responsibility of the Planning Division is assisting the public on all land-use related questions, reviewing development proposals, acting as liaisons to other departments and committees, attending meetings of other boards and committees, and being available to respond to other planning/zoning related issues. Staff includes Planning and Economic Development Manager Jay Szklut and Planning Coordinator Jeffrey Wheeler.

The Planning Division commits to providing a high level of service to the public in 2008. The Division is part of the Office of Community Development which is located on the second floor of Homer Building within the Town Offices complex. Office hours remain Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Residents are also urged to visit the OCD web page at www.town.belmont.ma.us for current information on active projects and for a copy of the Belmont Zoning By-Laws.

Respectfully submitted,
Jay Szklut, Planning and Economic Development Manager
Jeffrey Wheeler, Planning Coordinator