

BELLINGHAM TOMORROW

a newsletter for citizens who want to know about tomorrow today

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Special Interest Articles:

- Housing Production Plan
- Homes to Age In
- Commuter Rail Shuttle Bus Service

Inside:

Meet the Members 2

What it Means 4

"40B" ON THE BALLOT – HOUSING IN BELLINGHAM

Every November brings one or two controversial ballot questions for voters to decide. This year is no different, especially since Bellingham residents have had first-hand experience relative to one question—whether or not to repeal the Comprehensive Permit section of Mass General law (commonly known as “40B”).

40B zoning has been around since 1969 with the original purpose of providing relief from zoning practices that excluded low and moderate income housing. It streamlined the permitting process for a developer proposing affordable housing by allowing the Board of Appeals to override local regulations and requirements not “consistent with local needs.”

The 40B legislation requires at least 10% of a town’s housing stock be considered affordable (calculated every 10 years with the federal census). A proposed 40B project can only be denied if the town has met its 10% goal. 51 of the 351 towns in Massachusetts have met that 10%.

The ballot question is controversial because of the conflicting nature of the legislation itself. While providing more affordable housing (which can be any type of housing from single family homes to apartments) is important, over the years it has become a loophole for developers to push projects through without any consideration to the needs of the local community.

Both sides have valid points for repealing or retaining the legislation. The pro-repeal faction states that 40B projects end up burdening a town with more higher cost housing than is offset by the actual number of affordable units that come out of the project. This side also believes that there are ways other than 40B to provide affordable housing in a town.

The pro-retain side states that over 80% of affordable housing created in the state was through the 40B process. These types of housing (mostly apartments and some home ownership) meet the needs of those in a community that need it most: Seniors, working families and young professionals.

The question also divides people between urban and rural/suburban areas. Those in urban areas often support 40B projects because urban neighborhoods can support apartment housing that has more density. Residents in rural or suburban areas, like Bellingham, often oppose 40B because these projects tend to be single family homes, which take up more land and burden already maxed out infrastructure.

Bellingham has seen large and small, friendly and unfriendly 40B projects. We are close, but not at our 10% goal. We will drop even more with 2010 census data. Regardless of what happens on November 2nd, Bellingham will strive to provide housing that meets the needs of everyone in our community.

Meet the Members – Peter M. Morelli and Peter Pappas

In May 2010, the Planning Board gained two new full members, Peter Morelli and Peter Pappas. Both Peter Morelli has been active in Bellingham Town government in the past, while this is Peter Pappas' first foray into Bellingham politics. Below are some questions and answers to help you get to know our newest members.

Peter Morelli



“Having been involved on various boards and committees in the past, and attending many Planning Board hearings, I find the experience to be what I expected. The members have different backgrounds and fit together and work well together.”

Peter Pappas



“An informed and concerned Board must ensure the legacy of Bellingham – a great place to live – remains viable for our children.”

Peter M. Morelli

Peter Pappas

Q. What made you run for the Planning Board and how long have you been a member?

A. I ran because I felt I can use my construction experience and knowledge to determine the validity and worthiness of projects that are proposed to the Board.

A. Growth issues and environmental protection are concerns that I believe are paramount for the town as we plan for the future. While it is important that we continue to support and promote businesses and activities that care for people; we are stewards of the Town and must also protect our natural resources. We need to balance a “stop having this ‘not-in-my-backyard’ attitude” and focus on the preserving quality of life and property values as much as possible, even if that means amending proposals.

Q. Tell me about yourself and what you bring to the Planning Board.

A. I feel my past experience and fairness is a positive quality, but I'm not afraid to be assertive and ask pointed questions and make pointed comments when necessary. I also want to protect the Town and Bylaws that is my first priority.

A. I have 20 years experience as a real estate attorney/broker and lend well to the current and future development in Bellingham. They give me an edge in understanding the entire process.

I have my Bachelors Degree, Masters in Health Care Administration and am a Certified Project Manager Professional (PMP).

Q. What do you feel are the biggest challenges facing Bellingham in terms of development?

A. Traffic, quality of life, the infrastructure, natural resources, the environment and 40B housing.

In 1991, I started my own law firm, specializing in complex business, and real estate transactions. I have worked with many town planning boards on a variety of matters; and have seen first hand the impact unfettered development can make on a town.

A. What concerns me and other people I talk to is not development per se, but the residual fallout and impact on - traffic, safety, environment, and the school system. Improvements and projects all have a cost; and their implications must be monitored and chosen carefully. It has been postulated that the Board is “constrained” in its decision-making authority by the process. There are ways; however, to manage and mitigate the fallout while conforming to the Bylaws and Regulations.

Q. What do you think the priorities of the Board are at this time?

A. To protect the Town's assets and quality of life for its citizens and do this within the Town's Bylaws and in some situations use common sense. To work with State officials to amend or repeal 40B housing.

A. We need to continue our focus on affordable housing and becoming a Green Community. By developing ways to meet the standards set by the State we, as a Town, can reduce developments that negatively impact our quality of life. Becoming a “green” community will add additional revenue streams for our town while improving and preserving the environment.

Q. How do you think the Town can keep ahead of the impact of development?

A. By being vigilant with respect to creating open space, adapting or amending Bylaws and some cases making incentives to developers to make them from proposing projects high impact developments.

A. By continuing to be *proactive* not *reactive*. Town's that are reactive limit the resources available to their Board to curb the fallout. As a consequence, they end up with “an endless loop” going from the Zoning Board to the Planning Board to the Con Com, back to the Planning Board – resulting in overcrowded schools, shortages, and no open space

Boards in *proactive* Towns; however, do not end up in an “endless loop”. They control the process. The process does not control them. Developing a Master Plan balances future growth with open space provides a Town with the tools and resources to change the way the game is played; thereby avoiding the “endless loop.”

Housing in Bellingham – Housing Production Plan

This past summer, the Town of Bellingham formally adopted its first Housing Production Plan. This plan, which was accepted by the State, was developed with input from residents during a series of visioning workshops, focus group sessions and public meetings. The Plan itself was written with the help of professional staff at the Metropolitan Area Planning Council. The Plan provides recommendations and implementation strategies for dealing with our affordable housing needs.

In order to help determine the Town's current and future housing needs, the Plan looks at existing housing and projected population for Bellingham. Currently, about 80% of Bellingham's housing stock

is single family homes. However, it is estimated that while our population will remain relatively stable there will be a decline in families with children and an increase in the over 55 population.

Older residents generally have reduced household sizes and often prefer smaller housing units with lower associated costs and maintenance responsibilities. The Plan identifies the need for smaller units to accommodate this aging population.

In addition, the Plan indicates that Bellingham has one of the highest foreclosure rates in the area. The Plan recommends finding ways to reuse our existing

housing stock to help meet our 10% affordable housing requirement.

It also recommends diversifying our affordable housing stock, by adding smaller units, multi-family and apartments, to meet the needs of a variety of household types beyond the average family.

Having a Housing Production Plan also gives the Town a small respite from being required to approve all 40B's provided that the Town can show progress is being made toward providing affordable housing as outlined in the Plan.

For more information on what "affordable" means, see Page 4.

Building Homes to Age In

Over the next three decades, the number of Americans 65 and over will double. That means the nation will become one big retirement community. Most of us will want to grow old in our own homes but as people live longer than ever, those steep stairs or slippery showers can become dangerous and most homes are not wheelchair accessible. Making your existing home an accessible one can cost tens of thousands of dollars.

One solution: overhaul the way new homes are designed.

Imagine building a house when you're young that you can live in as you age: wide

doorways can accommodate both a stroller and a wheelchair; towel racks in the kitchen double as grab bars as balance grows unsteady; and entryways are smooth to prevent tripping. Builders incorporate these concepts of universal design to create homes that are barrier-free without looking purposely modified.

Keith Collins, the Director of Special Adapted Housing and New Millennial Homes explains that his company is using what's called "universal design".

If a home is built like this

right from the beginning, it would normally cost no more or very little compared in cost to any other conventional home.

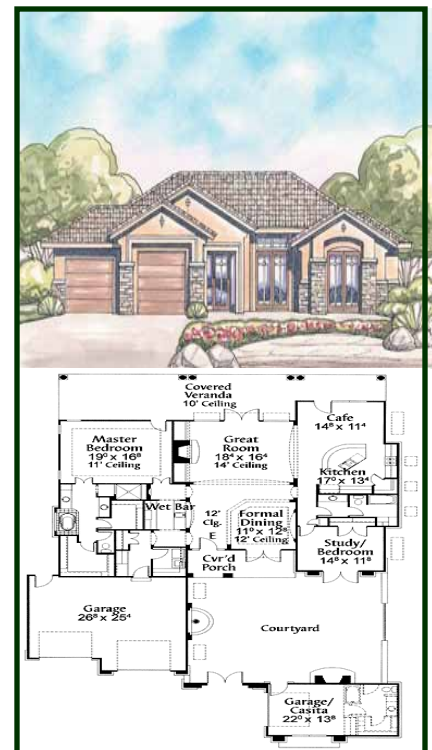
In recent years, dozens of states and localities have passed laws promoting aspects of universal design. In part, that's because a lot of money is at stake. Medicaid and Medicare pay for a huge chunk of nursing home costs.

Overall these designs are a win-win for all including those who are able to age in their homes and gives people a sense of freedom.

Free drop off babysitting is available for attendees of the October 13, 2010 Town Meeting.

To make it easier for busy parents to attend Town Meeting, babysitting is available for children of all ages (including babies) from 7:15pm-9:15pm in the High School cafeteria. Meeting begins at 7:30pm in the High School auditorium.

Bellingham's Girls Scout troops are providing both certified sitters and adults to supervise. Whole Foods market will donate healthy, peanut free snacks and drinks. Children's personal items should be clearly labeled. Security bracelets (donated by the Hockomock YMCA) will be provided to all children.



Bellingham Planning Board

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HOURS:
Tuesday and Thursday
8:30 AM – 3:30 PM
Friday
9 AM – 1 PM

Let us know what you think!

Send or email your thoughts and we may print your letter in the next issue.

Planning Board Meetings are held the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of every month.

Check meeting agendas and past minutes at our website:
www.bellinghamma.org/planning

Bellingham’s New Commuter Rail Shuttle Service

On October 18, 2010 Bellingham will begin to offer a new service for its residents—a weekday shuttle service that will take people from designated stops to the Franklin Forge Park MBTA train station.

Attleboro-Taunton Regional Transit Authority).

The service will be available weekdays for two morning and two afternoon routes, which correspond to the MBTA train times.

nominal—as little as \$1.00 per trip.

The intent of the service is to provide commuters into Boston with an economical option to driving their car and parking at the train station.

The Town is able to offer this service at no extra cost to residents because it is being run through GATRA (Greater

We will be offering the service free for at least the first six months. After that the fee will be

For more information contact the Bellingham Planning Board or check out our website.

Morning Commute to Forge Park MBTA

The Plaza at Bellingham Commons	Jefferson at Bellingham	Crossroads Center / Home Depot	Arriving Forge Park	INBOUND TRAIN
Parking Available	Pedestrian Only	Parking Available		
6:35 AM	6:37 AM	6:40 AM	6:50 AM	7:00 AM
7:20 AM	7:22 AM	7:25 AM	7:35 AM	7:45 AM

Evening Commute from Forge Park MBTA

OUTBOUND TRAIN from S.STA.	Leaving Forge Park	The Plaza at Bellingham Commons	Jefferson at Bellingham	Crossroads Center / Home Depot
4:20 PM	5:25 PM	5:35 PM	5:37 PM	5:40 PM
5:10 PM	6:19 PM	6:29 PM	6:31 PM	6:34 PM

What It Means...

“Affordable Housing” The price for the house is calculated so as to be affordable for a household with an income that does not exceed 80% of the median income of the area. The median area income is considered by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to be \$90,000. This means that a family of four in Bellingham has to have an average household income of \$66,150 to meet the affordability guidelines.

“Low-Income” Having a household income up to 50% of the median area income, while “very low-income” is considered to be up to 30% of the median income.

“Subsidized Housing” Any housing for which a Subsidizing Agency (like HUD at the federal level or the Department of Housing and Community Development at the state level) assist in the construction or purchase of the affordable units. However, it is not required that an affordable home be subsidized.

Goodbye to member Steve Bartha and Associate member John Sexton. Both served on the Board for the past three years. Thanks for all your hard work and good luck to you both in the future.