

BELLINGHAM TOMORROW

a newsletter for citizens who want to know about tomorrow today

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Special Interest Articles:

- The Future of Strip Malls
- Home Design Trends
- Commuter Rail Shuttle Bus Service

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Bellingham Awarded Safe Routes to School Mini-Grant!

Through a combined effort of the Hockomock Area YMCA, Joe Gonfrade a Stall Brook parent, Stall Brook Staff and the Planning Board staff, Bellingham's Stall Brook School has been awarded a spring 2011 Safe Routes to School (SRTS) mini-grant (\$1,000). The National Center for Safe Routes to School received 304 eligible applications for 25 available mini-grants. Stall Brook parents and staff are currently looking into installing new signs and painted crosswalks along the route.

Stall Brook was one of 25 schools across the country to be awarded this grant to increase safety and involvement in their Walk to School program that began over a year ago. The Annual MA Walks to School event provides youth, parents, and community volunteers the opportunity to participate in a healthy, environmentally friendly travel option to and from school.

The judges were impressed with the selected mini-grant recipients' creativity of activities, ability to involve students, and overall commitment to increasing safety and/or increasing the numbers of students walking and bicycling to school.

The Stall Brook Middle School has worked extremely hard to coordinate a walking school bus over the past year. They

participated in Massachusetts Walk to School Day on May 4, 2011.

With over 100 elementary and middle schools around the commonwealth taking part in MA Walks to School Day, the Hockomock area YMCA was excited to provide volunteers to support safe, successful events. St. Brendan's church also played a hand by allowing the walkers to assemble in their parking lot prior to the walks.

Programs such as SRTS help make the healthy choice the easy choice for our communities as part of our Healthy Futures Initiative where the top priority is reducing youth inactivity and poor nutrition.

About the National Center for Safe Routes to School

Established in May 2006, the National Center for Safe Routes to School assists states and communities in enabling and encouraging children to safely walk and bicycle to school. The organization also provides technical support, resources, and online registration for U.S. Walk to School Day, and facilitates worldwide promotion of and participation in International Walk to School Day.

The Safe Routes To School Spring Kick Off on April 5. A number of Stall Brook Students brave the cold spring morning temperatures.



Meet the Members – Roger Oakley, Associate Member

In May 2010, the Planning Board gained a new Associate Member, Roger Oakley. Roger has been active in Bellingham Town government in the past and has several years experience in the construction and planning business. Below are some questions and answers to help you get to know one of our newest members.

Roger Oakley



Roger Oakley

Q. What made apply for the alternate's position?

A. I was asked by leaders in the Community to apply. I have worked for land planners and developers for over 30 years.

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

A. Common sense and to always question reality. Be open minded – to see each project benefits ALL residents in the community.

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

A. Controlling growth, so it does not overwhelm our infrastructure.

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

A. Controlling growth.

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

A. Stick to the rules we presently have

Proposed May Town Meeting Zoning Amendments

At the April 14th Planning Board Meeting, the Board voted to recommend the following articles at Town Meeting scheduled for May 25, 2011 at 7:30 at the Bellingham High School.

Article 21: This article is being proposed by the Department of Public Works to protect the Town's #12 well. The article asks voters to amend the Water Resource District Map, established under Section 4950 of the Zoning Bylaws, by adding the expanded area of the Drinking Water Supply Well #12 Zone II shown on the map titled "Bellingham Water Resource District Map

Addition Proposed May 25, 2011".

Article 22: This article is proposed by the Planning Board as clarification for the existing confusing bylaw.

The article asks the voters to amend Section 2130(b) of the Town's Zoning Bylaws by deleting it in its entirety and replacing it with the following: *(b) Lots split by district boundary line. Where a lot is transected by a zoning district boundary line, the regulations of these Zoning By-laws applicable to the lesser restricted district may, at the option of the owner, be deemed to govern in the more*

restricted district, up to a distance of not more than thirty (30) feet.

The intent of the original article was to allow a less restrictive district 30 feet into a more restrictive zone. However, the wording was extremely confusing and the attempt with this amendment is to clarify the intent. This bylaw allows a lot split by two zones to bring the less restrictive zone 30 feet into a more restrictive zone, of course maintaining all required setbacks and other zoning. The most common application of this would allow a business zone to go 30 feet into a residential zone (keeping all other zoning in place).

Free drop off babysitting is available for attendees of the May 25, 2011 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. Healthy, peanut free snacks and drinks will be available. Children's personal items should be clearly labeled. Security bracelets (donated by the Hockomock YMCA) will be provided to all children.

The Future of the Strip Mall

For more than 50 years, retailers have favored the commercial strip: a linear pattern of retail businesses strung along major roadways characterized by massive parking lots, big signs, box-like buildings, and a total dependence on automobiles for access and circulation.

For years, planners have tried to contain and improve the strip. Now they are getting help from consumers and the marketplace. The era of strip development is slowly coming to an end. Evolving consumer behavior, changing demographics, shopping, high-priced gasoline, internet and the

urbanization of the suburbs are all pointing to a new paradigm for commercial development.

Commercial strips are not going to disappear overnight, but it is becoming increasingly clear that strip retail is retail for the last century. The future belongs to town centers, main streets, and mixed-use development.

We're overbuilt

From 1960 to 2000 there was an almost tenfold increase in U.S. retail space, from four to 38 square feet per person. For many years, retail space was growing five to six times faster than retail sales. Most of this space

came in the form of discount superstores on the suburban strip.

The recession proved that we have too much retail. Strip centers are now littered with vacant stores. By some estimates, there is currently more than 1 billion square feet of vacant retail space, much of which has to be repurposed or demolished. One retail analyst estimates that we need to demolish 300 million square feet of retail space.

Walkability and places with character

Walking for pleasure is, by far, America's number-one form of outdoor recreation.

If you combine walking with shopping, you have a winning combination. Time-constrained lifestyles and boredom with the dull sameness of most strip centers have meant a slow but steady decline in the number and length of stays at strip malls. People go to get what they want and they leave.

A pleasant (i.e., "cool") atmosphere is particularly important to the GenY generation. A mixed-use town center with street life, outdoor dining, and places to hang out, walk, and window-shop are much more likely to get the affection and the dollars of young shoppers than an auto-dependent strip.

Top Trends in Home Design

Tomorrow's homes are on the drawing board and they are nothing like the places you may recall from your childhood. New technologies and materials are reshaping the way we build. Floor plans are also changing to accommodate the changing patterns of our lives. And yet, many architects and designers are also drawing upon ancient materials and building techniques. Watch for these important home design trends:

Earth-Friendly Design

New designs have an

increased sensitivity to the environment. Architects and engineers looking at ancient building techniques that used simple, bio-degradable materials. Far from primitive, today's "earth houses" are proving comfortable, economical, and rustically beautiful.

Adaptive Reuse Design

New buildings aren't always entirely new. A desire to protect the environment and to preserve historic architecture is inspiring architects to repurpose, or re-use, older structures.

Trend-setting homes of the future may be constructed from the shell of an outdated factory, an empty warehouse, or an abandoned church.

Storm-Resistant Design

Every shelter should be built to withstand the elements, and engineers are making steady progress in developing storm-ready home designs such as wall panels constructed of sturdy concrete. Forget the spiral staircases-- in areas where hurricanes are prevalent, more and more builders are relying on insulated sunken living rooms and high

cabinets.

Accessible Design

The homes of tomorrow will be easy to move around in, even if you or members of your family have physical limitations. Architects often use the phrase "universal design" to describe these homes because they are comfortable for people of all ages and abilities. Special features such as wide hallways blend seamlessly into the design so that the home does not have the clinical appearance of a hospital or nursing facility.

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

Congratulations to Peter Morelli for winning another term as a member of the Planning Board. Peter's background in the construction industry has proved invaluable over the past year. The Board looks forward to three more years of his expertise.

Bellingham's Commuter Rail Shuttle Service Update

The Bellingham Commuter Rail Shuttle Bus service has been successfully operating since October 2010. There is a small, but steady group of riders that use the service regularly.

What the riders are saying:

Paul Parker, a Network Engineer who commutes to Boston says "I have been taking the shuttle since its inception back in October of last year and it's been great! The other riders are nice and the drivers are very polite. We even laugh and share news with one another". He goes on to say "The shuttle benefits me in ways that I'm not only saving money on gas and parking, but I'm reducing my carbon footprint as well! In my interest to reduce my contribution to carbon dioxide emissions, I learned that 1 gallon of gasoline is equivalent 19.3 lbs. of CO2 per

year! So, taking the shuttle is helping me reduce ozone pollution as well! In addition to saving on gas and parking, by taking the shuttle, the savings go even further... I'm saving by reducing my vehicle maintenance cost (less oil and air filter changes as well as less tire wear), and my insurance company even said by taking the shuttle, they will reduce my car insurance rate. Taking the shuttle allows me to spend more time with my family because I'm able to leave work on-time because I have to go catch the shuttle."

Jacie Lavallee "I am a big fan of the commuter shuttle, especially so now during these trying days of high gas prices!!! The drivers are so professional and personable, not to mention accommodating. Those of us currently using the service have bonded and keep each other informed of train

news or other current event topics. It is such a nice way to build community."

How can the Town afford this Service?

The Town is able to offer this service at no extra cost to residents because it is being run through GATRA (Greater Attleboro-Taunton Regional Transit Authority).

We will be offering the service free for the near future. After that the fee will be 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.

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