



*Office of the Board of Selectmen  
Town of Belmont Massachusetts*

[www.town.belmont.ma.us](http://www.town.belmont.ma.us)

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TOWN ADMINISTRATOR  
THOMAS G. YOUNGER

July 16, 2007

The Honorable Deval L. Patrick  
Governor  
Room 360  
State House  
Boston, Massachusetts 02133

RE: House Bill No. 21

Dear Governor Patrick:

The Belmont Board of Selectman unanimously urges you to support House Bill 21, an Act to Acquire the Silver Maple Forest for the Department of Conservation and Recreation upon Receipt of Sufficient Local Contributions Towards Said Acquisition.

The bill would appropriate \$6 million in state funds towards the acquisition of an approximately 15 acre property at the intersection of the Belmont, Cambridge and Arlington borders. It would direct the Division of Capital Asset Management to appraise the property and then would give Belmont, Cambridge and Arlington and private donors six months to raise and deliver the balance of necessary funding. The property would then be acquired for the Division of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) to append to the Alewife Reservation.

The property contains both wetlands and uplands and borders the Alewife Reservation. DCR's inherited master plan for the Reservation, specifically mentions the need to assess the potential value of acquiring this property (page 68 of The Metropolitan District Commission Alewife Reservation and Alewife Book Master Plan, dated June 2003).

A Town of Belmont study commission recommended the permanent preservation of the property in 1999. The owner of the property has sought rezoning of the property in several different ways, including commercial, luxury housing and affordable housing.

The property has been the subject of great controversy in Belmont over the past decade. Some have actively favored commercial development for tax revenue purposes. Some have favored housing development. Many have opposed all forms of development and some have held varying positions over time.

However, on one thing this board of Selectmen agrees: Belmont is an incredibly densely developed community and we treasure all of our open space. We would want to see new construction of any type on these sites only as a last resort. There are many other much more appropriate sites for both commercial and housing development in Belmont available through the redevelopment of underutilized properties. We all actively support housing development, including affordable housing development, in these areas of town.

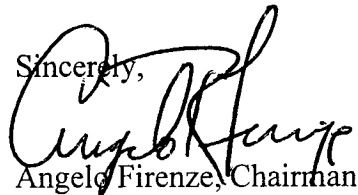
The town has made a strong commitment to affordable housing, insisting that the only other large development project in Belmont over the last decade (the McLean Hospital Property) add an affordable housing component, forming and obtaining funding for a housing trust to promote affordable housing development, passing a very aggressive inclusionary zoning by-law and donating three parcels that had long been unused for affordable development. Most recently, we have upzoned one of our commercial centers that lie on a transit corridor to permit larger mixed use development.

We appreciate that the state faces many competing funding demands, as do we. House 21 offers a partnership approach to acquire the property. Even if House Bill 21 is passed, it is not certain that the localities will be able to raise the necessary funds for our share. However, we are certain that this valuable potential addition to the Alewife Reservation will be permanently lost if it is not acquired at this time. We cannot save this property alone.

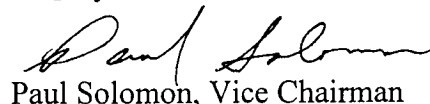
We feel that passage of House 21 would set the stage for the town to move forward with a discussion about its development options. It might allow us to reach a consensus that involved permitting development in some additional areas of town, such as South Pleasant Street, while preserving this property.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Angelo Firenze, Chairman



Paul Solomon, Vice Chairman



Daniel LeClerc

cc: W. Brownsberger