

Making Belmont environmentally sustainable

By **Melody Hanatani**/ Staff Writer

Thursday, July 28, 2005

Sustainable Belmont, a Vision 21 Implementation Committee subcommittee, was formed to help improve the town's environment.

Members of the committee met with the Board of Selectmen Monday night to discuss ways in which the town can become more environmentally-sustainable.

During its first meeting in February, the committee generated a list of desirable projects to pursue. At the top of that list was a climate action plan, said Co-chairman Heather Tuttle.

The plan is a way to look at how the town can produce fewer pollutants, and reduce energy use, she said.

Reducing emissions leads to a healthier environment for Belmont and neighboring towns, Tuttle said.

"Several towns in Greater Boston area have implemented climate action plans or are in the process of drafting them," she added.

The committee is currently thinking of joining the Massachusetts Climate Action Network, which is a coalition of 19 communities dedicated to tackling environmental issues such as global warming and emission of greenhouse gases.

If Belmont joins the coalition, it would have the opportunity to receive grants, Tuttle said.

The Board of Selectmen voted to support membership in the action network.

Another goal is to ensure the town adopts these environmental plans, possibly in a new bylaw. The purpose is for the town to make a commitment in theory and practice to environmental issues, said Co-Chairman Jan Kruse.

To meet these goals, public education and outreach will be important, Kruse said.

Sustainable Belmont is planning to host an educational forum with the Municipal Light Department about simple actions residents and businesses can take to conserve energy.

"We realize these are far-reaching priorities, but we think they are manageable," said Kruse.

The committee would also like to look into ways to make new buildings more environmentally safe, or "green." Kruse said green buildings drew the most interest at the group's first meeting.

The selectmen voted to support the general goals outlined by Tuttle and Kruse.

Currently, there are 60 people signed up as members of Sustainable Belmont. Of those, 20 are active members, Tuttle said.

Sustainable Belmont holds meetings on the first Wednesday of every month in the Belmont Public Library.