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The State Senate 2 candidates answer voters questions tonight at Meredith Community Center at 7

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Belmont dog park proposal clears hurdle before zoning board

By GAIL OBER
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BELMONT — After considerable discussion, the Zoning Board of Adjustment agreed last night, with one exception, to

grant Lisa Cutters a special exception to build a dog park off Route 106.

The property is owned by The Ace Land Trust and is directly across Route 106 from the former used car dealership known as

Bert and Ernie's.

"This is an industrial zone. Do you intend to have this removed from the tax roles," asked Marshall Ford who initially seemed see **HAPPY TAILS** page 6

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lukewarm to the idea but ultimately supported it when it came time to vote.

For zoning purposes, a dog park is defined as an outdoor recreational facility and is allowed in a commercial industrial zone by special exception.

Clutters, who advocated for a similar dog park two

years ago and had hoped to secure a piece of unused town land for the purpose, said the area under consideration is privately owned and will remain on the tax roles.

She said the idea is to fence in about a square mile area where dogs, accompanied by their owners, can frolic and play without the confines of a leash.

She told the ZBA that the intent is to have the

park manned by volunteers during the times it is open and the only additions to the now vacant, partially wooded property would be a chain-link fence, some rubbish containers for dog owners to put dog waste, and a portable toilet for her human guests.

Dead set against the park was Pleasant Obenhausen who said Belmont is a rural community and if people have dogs they should, like he does, walk them on a leash.

"How many people do you think are going to flock to a dog park," he asked Cutters.

"Fortunately, Mr Obenhausen, regulations don't require you to be a patron," said Town Planner Candace Daigle.

Cutters said she thought the location for a dog park would be a good one because people do travel to bring their dogs to places where they can safely run without leashes and that maybe some of those people would patronize Belmont businesses, like Jordan's ice cream, as part of their trip.

Chair Peter Harris said the only discussion permitted by the Zoning Board was whether or not to grant the exception and, as far as he was concerned, the potential disruption to the property — a fence and a garbage can — would be insignificant should the not-for-profit dog venture fail or if the land is sold and used commercially or industrially in the future.

Clutters next step is to take her special exception to the Planning Board for site plan approval.