

Town of Needham, Massachusetts
Housing Needham Advisory Group (HONE)
Meeting Minutes
October 18, 2023

Place: Virtual Meeting via Zoom. The public may attend via Zoom or telephone.
Present: Co-Chair, Heidi Frail; Co-Chair, Natasha Espada; Michael Diener, Liz Kaponya, Kevin Keane, William Lovett, Jeanne McKnight; Ronald Ruth
Absent: Joshua Levy
Staff: Amy Haelsen, Director of Communications and Community Engagement; Katie King, Deputy Town Manager; Lee Newman, Director of Planning & Community Development; Alexandra Clee, Assistant Town Planner; Karen Sunnarborg, Community Housing Specialist
Guests: Eric Halvorsen, RKG Associates; Emily Innes, Innes Associates

Call to Order

At 7:00 pm., H. Frail called the meeting to order disclosing the meeting is being video recorded.

I. Welcome and Meeting Goals, Heidi Frail, Co-Chair

H. Frail reviewed the meeting agenda.

II. Review of revised/updated Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) Compliance Modeling Results, *Eric Halvorsen, RKG Associates; Emily Innes, Innes Associates*

The General Residence District in all of the modeling is inaccurate and will be corrected.

Members discussed whether EOHLC modeling is absolute or whether the State would consider modifications. District deductions from MBTA acreage such as wetlands, setbacks and surface parking were discussed, as well as publicly-owned land.

III. Review of Presentation Materials and Engagement Strategies for Community Meeting of November 9, 2023, *Eric Halvorsen, RKG Associates; Emily Innes, Innes Associates*

E. Halvorsen reviewed the Run of Show Outline for Public Meeting #1 including tasks assigned to 8 willing volunteers. The outline included the purpose of each participatory station. Stations include: MBTA Q&A Station, Zoning Map Station, Center Business Station, General Residence, Industrial, Apartment A1 and Business District Stations. The purpose of the Public Meeting #1 is to secure feedback from residents on crafting zoning districts to comply with the MBTA Communities Act.

A hybrid meeting option for collecting community feedback was described. A summary of community feedback and graphics will be available on the Town website within one week.

An presentation outline stating the purpose and process for the Public Meeting was discussed.

Emily Innes reviewed each district's Board Design for Public Meeting #1. The Boards include lot size, lot coverage, height, and dwelling units per acre for each district.

IV. Review of Community Meeting Outreach Strategy, Amy Haelsen, Director of Communications and Community Engagement

Residents have received postcard notification of the November 9th Public Meeting.

As stated in the HONE Working Group meeting of September 7, A. Haelsen will share information with the public in the following manner:

2 Postcard mailings	Boston Globe	Community meetings Nov/Jan/Mar
FAQs	Instructions to share input	Needham Channel
Hometown Weekly	Needham Local	Needham Observer
NotifyMe list	On-line Survey	Town Social Media page
Town web site	Weekly Newsletter	

- In-person engagement opportunities, community events, Harvest Fair 10/1/23, Farmer's Market
- Opportunities for HONE to attend board/committee meetings, and civic groups
- Partners identified to spread the word: Board of Health, Commission on Disabilities, Council on Aging, Council of Economic Advisors, Town Boards, faith-based organizations, Interfaith Clergy Association, identity network groups such as the Indian Community of Needham, Chinese Friends of Needham, League of Women Voters
- Populations difficult to reach: renters in apartment buildings (place posters in the lobby); owners of complexes; ask the business community to inform their customer base
- A. Haelsen will reach out to school PTC heads to funnel information to their networks as well as an email to Town Meeting members.
- H. Frail will connect with Cathy regarding notifying high schoolers of the Public Meeting.

HONE is a community engagement visioning process. Information on MBTA Communities can be found on the Town web site **NeedhamMA.gov/** Search **MBTA Communities** or scroll down to **Hot Topics** then **MBTA Communities**. Sign up for the **NotifyMe** group so you receive emails only about this work. Email HONE until April at: **planning@needhamma.gov**

V. Questions and Comments

In the proposed scenarios for modeling with maps, the Housing Plan called for rezoning some additional sites for the Apartment A-1 district which were not shown. These are already developed for multi-family dwellings and include Avery Condominiums and Steven Palmer, a former school converted to apartments. We should add those to our numbers. It is restricted in an odd way. It doesn't count on the subsidized housing inventory. The Town can write a compelling argument for inclusion.

Why not rezone the condominium development on Denmark Lane as multi-family condos?

The consultants are in the process of creating the zoning maps and encouraged members to submit suggested changes as soon as possible.

How will members respond to process questions? How will resident input be processed?

The presentation will be an overview of requirements under the MBTA Communities Law and the stations in the room so the community understands how the zoning can be manipulated to achieve the right outcomes for what can be achieved.

Members discussed handing out a QR code and web link to the Town web site for the presentation, maps, and recorded meeting.

Needham's responsibility with the MBTA Communities Act is to come up with 1,784 or more multi-family dwelling units. Why were 5,183 units proposed? Why was three times the required amount of multi-family dwelling units proposed when residents may be concerned about height of the buildings and/or density?

Prior to the compliance modeling introduced by consultants, the Housing Needham Working Group (HONE) took existing zoning and added to it in a way they thought was reasonable. The compliance modeling gives HONE a way to check the outcome and tweak the plan depending on our objective. Do we want to comply? Do we want to do more?

Members discussed the General Residence district was considered in the large unit number. HONE never thought we could use General Residence as a multi-family factor. When you deduct the column for General Residence, you get fewer units. We have what is existing and what is proposed. Needham will decide what we want these areas to be for the community.

Members agreed actual photographs would be more useful than presentation slides in presenting the Center Business district.

A Question and Answer station will be prepared, but consultants and the HONE Working Group will not be taking questions from the public during the presentation.

Members discussed whether they should use FAR rather than lot coverage. FAR is the requirement in three of the districts; stay with the standard.

Will there be guidance for the public about restrictions?

In the presentation, an example will be used to describe the building footprint deducting for levers, open space, and parking requirements.

The overall objective is the minimum number of units per acre. Each district will not have the same rules (one story in one district, four stories in another).

VI. Next Steps

Public Meeting #1, Powers Hall, November 9, 2023, 7:00 pm

MOTION: R. Ruth moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 pm.

SECONDED: J. McKnight

VOTE: H. Frail, aye; N. Espada, aye; M. Diener, aye; L. Kaponya, aye; K. Keane, aye;
W. Lovett, aye; J. McKnight, aye; R. Ruth, aye. Unanimous.

MOTION CARRIES: 8-0

Informational - The Meeting Packet is available at: <https://www.needhamma.gov/Archive.aspx>

- HONE Agenda 10-18-23
- Needham MBTA Meeting 1 Run of Show (RKG Associates, Innes Associates)
- Needham MBTA Communities Process (RKG Associates, Innes Associates)

Respectfully submitted,

Dale Michaud
Recording Secretary