

Town of Needham, Massachusetts
Housing Needham Advisory Group (HONE)
Meeting Minutes
December 11, 2023

Place: Virtual Meeting via Zoom
Remote: Co-Chair, Heidi Frail; Co-Chair, Natasha Espada; Michael Diener, Liz Kaponya, Joshua Levy, William Lovett, Jeanne McKnight, Ronald Ruth
Absent: Kevin Keane
Staff: Katie King, Deputy Town Manager; Lee Newman, Director of Planning & Community Development, Amy Haelsen, Director of Communications and Community Engagement; Alex Clee, Assistant Town Planner
Guest: Eric Halvorsen, RKG Associates; Emily Innes, Innes Associates

At 8:15 am., H. Frail called the meeting to order. The meeting is being video recorded.

I. Discussion on Modeling the Hersey Station area, Lee Newman, Director of Planning and Community Development

At the last HONE meeting, members discussed modeling the Hersey Station area assuming there were businesses currently located outside of the Neighborhood Business District that could meet the MBTA Communities Act contiguous parcel 5 acre minimum. A site assessment of existing land uses revealed this district almost entirely includes businesses within the Neighborhood Business District. The only other non-conforming use in this area is Hazel's bakery at the intersection of Great Plain Avenue and Hillcrest Road. Combining these parcels would total under two acres.

The Housing Plan had recommended that apartment level zoning be allowed in the Neighborhood Business District. After combining that with the Hazel's parcel, we would need to find 3 more acres of contiguous parcels to be compliant with the MBTA Communities Act. HONE Co-Chairs and L. Newman reviewed the matter in light of the site assessment and did not think there would be community support to identify an additional 3 acres of Single Residence A-zoned land and recommend single-family residences beyond the areas now zoned for 10,000 square foot lots be rezoned to a minimum of 3 units per parcel.

It was noted that rezoning just along Great Plain Ave from the current Neighborhood Business District to Hazel's bakery would still be well under 5 acres. It was further noted that while there are two MBTA parking lots and town-owned land on Great Plain Ave currently used for the golf course, none of these parcels could be counted in a compliant five acre district.

Members discussed whether to recommend the Planning Board rezone the Hersey Station area as it clearly would not meet the MBTA Communities Act without including single residence neighborhoods to meet the minimum acreage requirement for a compliant MBTA Communities district.

Ms. McKnight noted that zoning matters are usually not brought to Town Meeting in the Special Town Meeting, but the MBTA-compliant proposal would be because of the state deadline. Any

consideration of the Hersey area separate from the MBTA compliance would likely be targeted to the next annual town meeting in May.

Co-Chair Frail suggested there are two possibilities, either to recommend consultants model the Hersey Station area to include rezoning single-family residences as a part of Needham's MBTA communities district or recommend that the Planning Board make zoning changes around Hersey Station outside of the MBTA Communities requirements.

MOTION: J. Levy moved to instruct Consultants to include at least one 5-acre, contiguous district near Hersey that is compliant with the MBTA Communities Act in at least one of the scenarios for modeling.

SECONDED: R. Ruth

ROLL-CALL VOTE: M. Diener, no; N. Espada, no; H. Frail, no; L. Kaponya, aye; J. Levy, aye; W. Lovett, no; J. McKnight, no; R. Ruth, no.

MOTION REJECTED: 2-6

MOTION: J. McKnight moved to recommend that the Planning Board rezone the Hersey Station area, encompassing at least the area which is now commercially zoned which would not be an MBTA compliant district, for multi-family housing.

SECONDED: R. Ruth

ROLL-CALL VOTE: M. Diener, aye; N. Espada, aye; H. Frail, aye; L. Kaponya, no; J. Levy, aye; W. Lovett, aye; J. McKnight, aye; R. Ruth, aye.

MOTION CARRIES: 7-1

Co-Chair Frail recapped that the HONE Group will not recommend the Hersey area for modeling. We will recommend it to be rezoned by the Planning Board. When we finalize our actual modeling, we will also finalize recommendations to the Planning Board.

At 8:55 a.m., J. Levy left the meeting.

II. Review of Center Business District Boundaries to be Modeled - Eric Halvorsen, RKG Associates

E. Halvorsen shared a presentation slide "Proposed B-CTR District Changes." The presentation is available at: <https://www.needhamma.gov/Archive.aspx>

At the direction of the HONE Group, Consultants have worked with Town Staff to propose incorporating a portion of the Center Business District (referred to as the "cruller" for its shape) into the MBTA 3A District. They are working with Town Staff to recommend allowing multi-family as of right instead of mandatory mixed use. This would provide continuity between other zoning districts for MBTA 3A. Consultants aimed to choose parcels with connectivity but not areas that necessarily must be mixed use.

He used a colored map showing what the HONE Group proposed to include in the MBTA 3A District versus what would remain which is known today as the Center Business District.

Members agreed with K. King that the public will have opportunity to provide feedback on specific parcel choices at the January meeting. We will revisit the idea of using some of the Center (cruller).

Members discussed with the Consultant whether a right of way could be used to bridge a break in contiguity along May Street. Consultants have asked Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities for guidance and are awaiting a reply.

Members discussed incentives for commercial retail on Great Plain Avenue as well as a special permit process for allowing mixed use for Center Business overlay. One strategy mentioned for the Center area if zoned for housing as of right at the required underlying zoning of 35 feet and a FAR of 1, we are looking at mixed use in order to grab the extra density.

Co-Chair Frail took member consensus to move forward with these ideas. Everyone agreed on the Center District "cruller". The Consultants were commended for their work.

III. Update on What to Expect, December 20, 2023 HONE Meeting, *Eric Halvorsen, RKG Associates*

On December 20, updated compliance models and scenarios will be presented along with results of the economic feasibility analysis related to inclusionary zoning. A matrix will be presented assessing the potential for higher inclusionary zoning percentages. Fiscal impact analysis will also be conducted after final compliance model counts are obtained.

Co-Chairs requested the Consultants create a slide for the public showing why the Hersey Station area was not modeled because it is not an MBTA Communities compliant district and the reasons HONE decided not to move forward. HONE will make a recommendation to the Planning Board.

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

MOTION: N. Espada moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:08 am.

SECONDED: R. Ruth

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

MOTION CARRIES: 7-0

Respectfully submitted,

Dale Michaud
Recording Secretary