

Town of Needham, Massachusetts
Housing Needham Advisory Group (HONE)
Meeting Minutes
January 4, 2024

Place: Charles River Room, 500 Dedham Ave, Needham and Virtual Meeting via Zoom
Present: Co-Chair, Heidi Frail; Co-Chair, Natasha Espada; Michael Diener, Joshua Levy, William Lovett, Jeanne McKnight, Ronald Ruth
Remote: Kevin Keane
Absent: Liz Kaponya
Staff: Katie King, Deputy Town Manager; Lee Newman, Director of Planning & Community Development; Alexandra Clee, Assistant Town Planner
Guest: Eric Halvorsen, RKG Associates

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

I. Welcome and Meeting Goals, Heidi Frail and Natasha Espada, Co-Chairs

The HONE Advisory Group goals for this meeting include planning for the 1/18/24 Public Workshop; review small, medium and large draft Scenario compliance models to present to the Town; and discuss ways to engage the public for feedback and answer questions.

II. Review of Updated Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) Compliance Modeling Results for Studied Scenarios, Eric Halvorsen, RKG Associates; Emily Innes, Innes Associates

E. Halvorsen described modeling results for three Scenarios selected by the HONE Advisory:

- Scenario 1 (minimum) - no changes to modeling results
- Scenario 3 (middle), modified Housing Plan without General Residence - no changes
- Scenario 6 (maximum) with General Residence, modeling results were changed to intensify/upzone Commercial Districts

Scenario 1 – request that the maps be adjusted so it does not appear that conservation land will be developed. Clarification that it cannot be developed but it can be rezoned.

Changes to Scenario 6 include:

- Maximum of 50 dwelling units per acre in the Commercial Business Districts
- Maximum heights of 4-5 stories with the exception of General Residence at 2.5 stories
- Change General Residence from 4 dwelling units per acre to 4 dwelling units per parcel or lot

Unit Capacity are the maximum, potential allowable number of units that could be built if everything was rezoned and then fully built out under the new zoning.

Existing Housing Units represent the Assessor data for existing units on every parcel that overlaps with proposed MBTA Districts.

Net New Units = unit capacity – existing housing units

The presentation is available in the Meeting Packet at: <https://www.needhamma.gov/Archive.aspx>

III. Review of Presentation Materials and Engagement Strategies for Community Meeting of January 18, 2024, Eric Halvorsen, RKG Associates; Emily Innes, Innes Associates

Members discussed adding diagrams to the maps showing current and future number of unit capacities according to building heights in each of the Scenarios for the Public Workshop. Members clarified the current number of units existing today is below the unit capacity (total possible units) allowed under the town's existing zoning.

E. Halvorsen reviewed the suggested agenda, presentation and survey questions for the Public Meeting with updated Scenario modeling results. The presentation outline includes: Recap feedback from Public Meeting #1; Describe 3 Scenarios; Go through Key Questions/Survey.

The order of the agenda will include:

- Introduction by a HONE member who can answer MBTA 3A questions and discuss goals, process and decision timelines
- Consultant presentation of Scenarios with both paper and SurveyMonkey questions
- Public open comment and questions period moderated by a HONE member
- Designated HONE members to respond to questions
- Next steps and decision timelines defined by a HONE member

The survey will be left open for 6 days beyond the 1/18/24 Public meeting until 1/24/2024. Objective and clarifying questions will be answered at the meeting. Feedback questions (FAQs) will be provided in a separate document posted to the Town web site.

The 1/4/24 presentation, *Housing Needham (HONE) Town Visioning for Multi-Family Housing.ppt*, is available in the Meeting Packet at: <https://www.needhamma.gov/Archive.aspx>

Consultants will give an explanation of potential results when reading each survey question.

Members discussed using visioning questions instead of complex survey questions to determine what the public envisions for housing proposed by HONE. Should the proposed housing be introduced throughout the entire District or within a smaller portion of the District?

The focus of the public meeting is to understand the public's vision for Needham including preferences for standalone multi-family housing or first floor commercial units. Either preference can achieve MBTA compliance. Provide images of 3-4 story multi-family housing.

IV. Next Steps

- Consultants will finalize draft survey questions for the public meeting.
- SurveyMonkey will remain available 6 days after the 1/18/24 Public meeting.

- HONE members are invited to attend a listening session with CEA on 1/23/24 to hear from bankers and developers on their feedback to proposals.
- Before the 1/29/24 HONE meeting, Town Staff will check in with Police, Fire and DPW to learn what they believe the impacts of MBTA Communities Act zoning will be.
- Consultants will provide a running list of public comments from 1/18 meeting.

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

- Housing Needham Advisory Group (HONE) 1/4/24 Agenda
- Town Visioning for Multi-Family Housing, RKG Associates, Innes Associates
- December 17, 2023 e-mail memo from Jeffrey Kaufman to the Planning Board
- January 3, 2024 e-mail memo from Paula Dickerman to the Planning Board

MOTION: R. Ruth moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:46 pm.

SECONDED: J. McKnight

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

MOTION CARRIES: 8-0

Respectfully submitted,

Dale Michaud
Recording Secretary