

Town of Needham, Massachusetts
Housing Needham (HONE) Advisory Group
Meeting Minutes
March 7, 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, Kevin Keane, Joshua Levy, William Lovett, Jeanne McKnight, Ronald Ruth
Absent: Liz Kaponya
Staff: Alexandra Clee, Assistant Town Planner; Amy Haelsen, Director of Communications and Community Engagement; Katie King, Deputy Town Administrator; Lee Newman, Director of Planning & Community Development
Guests: Bob Dermody, Design Review Board; Mark Gluesing, Chair, Design Review Board; Eric Halvorsen, RKG Associates

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

I. Welcome and Meeting Goals, Heidi Frail and Natasha Espada, Co-Chairs
Co-Chair Frail reviewed the agenda and purpose of the meeting.

II. Approval of HONE Meeting Minutes from 12/20/23, 1/18/24, and 1/29/24

MOTION: J. McKnight moved to approve the meeting minutes of 12/20/23, 1/18/24 and 1/29/24.
SECONDED: J. Levy
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.
MOTION CARRIES: 8-0

III. Presentation of Final Maps and Zoning Parameters for the Base and Add-on Scenarios for MBTA Communities Compliance, Eric Halvorsen, RKG Associates

The Consultant reviewed **Updated Scenario Modeling Results** from [Housing Needham \(HONE\) Town Visioning for Multi-Family Housing](https://www.needhamma.gov/Archive.aspx) available at: <https://www.needhamma.gov/Archive.aspx>

The Consultant reviewed the Base Scenario zoning metrics for various districts with potential for a 1,868 unit capacity at 18.6 dwelling units per acre. Bonus Scenario zoning metrics for various districts have potential for a 3,339 unit capacity at 36.1 dwelling units per acre.

Members discussed the absence from the Bonus Scenario map of Webster Green apartments (recently re-named Hamilton Highlands) and Avery School Condominium, which are already multi-family housing within one half mile of the Needham Heights commuter rail station. At the last meeting, the compliant map was whittled down to reduce unit capacity below 4,000 units. This, as well as 100 West St., will be clarified for residents.

Members discussed ways to write Articles for compliance and about conferring with the Town Moderator so it is clear how each article works together and their impact on compliance.

Members will hold Precinct meetings with Town Meeting members to inform about the proposals. They will be addressed at Community Meeting #3. Town zoning changes have thus far not led to the desired housing changes. One goal for these proposals is that they will produce development.

The Base and Bonus Scenarios were compared with existing units built (775 units) and existing zoning capacity (1,636 units).

IV. Presentation of Susceptibility to Change Analysis for Base and Add-on Scenarios for MBTA Communities Compliance, *Eric Halvorsen, RKG Associates*

The Consultant presented **Propensity for Change Models** from Housing Needham (HONE) Town Visioning for Multi-Family Housing available at: <https://www.needhamma.gov/Archive.aspx>

This model identifies parcels in districts more likely to change based on economic conditions and zoning changes. The Consultant, Town Staff and Departments are collaborating together to ensure that departments have a chance to review the models and fiscal analysis before the Community Meeting. The fiscal impact analysis shows that, on a per unit basis, a multi-family housing unit would generate more in tax revenue than operating costs for the Town.

The Consultant described the Rate of Change Analysis using a Financial Feasibility Model for Multifamily Development that derives land value utilizing market return metrics, asking rents, and construction costs.

Maps were reviewed for Base and Bonus Scenarios indicating the rate of change for parcels most or least likely to be developed. Members discussed underdeveloped or underutilized parcels and potential benefits for sellers to know a buyer's potential use.

V. Presentation of Fiscal Impact Analysis for Base and Add-on Scenarios for MBTA Communities Compliance, *Eric Halvorsen, RKG Associates*

The Consultant reviewed **Fiscal Impact Models** from Housing Needham (HONE) Town Visioning for Multi-Family Housing available at: <https://www.needhamma.gov/Archive.aspx>

Members clarified that the existing zoning unit capacity includes units allowed by Special Permit as part of mixed use. Existing zoning allows for 1,636 units. If the MBTA Communities Law went away today, we would have that unit capacity under our existing zoning.

ACTION: Add a column for Existing Zoning by Right and Existing Zoning by Special Permit.

The Base Scenario Propensity of Units is a likely build out of 222 units; the full build out is a maximum of 1,868 units. The Bonus Scenario Propensity of Units is a likely build out of 1,099 units; the full build out is a maximum of 3,339 units.

The propensity measures potential future changes and does not account for replacing existing units. These are units we think might turn over or replace existing units or add housing to lots with no existing buildings, like parking lots-.

Non-conformity is counted for lots under the minimum square feet required in each district.

The Consultant reviewed the Net Fiscal Impact for the Base Propensity Model versus the Base Full Build Propensity Model and the Bonus Propensity Model versus the Bonus Propensity Full Build Model. The presentation shows how to calculate the estimated Net Fiscal Impact for each district under each Scenario/Model:

Gross Property Tax Review - Municipal Costs - Education Costs = Net Fiscal Impact

Whatever is to be built, the Net Fiscal Impact shows a net positive across all districts. The presentation of this fiscal analysis needs simplification for the community meeting. The Town will need to show how this will impact capital needs.

The Consultant assessed the net absorption of multifamily units over a 10-year period and found that Needham has had an absorption rate of 100 units per year for large multi-family projects. At that rate, it could take 19 years to absorb the Base Scenario Full Build and 34 years to absorb the Bonus Full Build.

HONE should consider recommendations to the Finance Committee. We could track new units under this zoning from the Building Inspector and the Assessor and designate funds for the Capital Stabilization Fund in anticipation of future capital demands from new construction to prevent overspending the additional revenue.

VI. Review of Format for Community Meeting of 3/28/24, Eric Halvorsen, RKG Associates

The Consultant reviewed **Public Meeting #3 Outline** from Housing Needham (HONE) Town Visioning for Multi-Family Housing available at: <https://www.needhamma.gov/Archive.aspx>

Please feel free to email HONE at planning@needhamma.gov.

The agenda was reviewed. Members discussed sharing the Parking Study.

ACTION:

- The Consultant will prepare the presentation one week prior to the Community meeting to make available to the public by the usual means of communication and posting.
- The maps will be simplified and pertinent numerical data added.
- Consultants will visually model 3 districts for the Base Compliance Plan and for the Neighborhood Housing Plan (formerly referred to as the Bonus Scenario).
 - Model the district generically and not with specific parcels
 - These are not projects. This is about zoning.
 - Visualize envelope scale, not building details; show current zoning versus proposed zoning.

Members renamed the Scenarios: Base Compliance Plan and Neighborhood Housing Plan.

The April 4 meeting will be the last HONE working meeting which will synthesize public comment from those in attendance at the Community Meeting. Then zoning will be written. The last meeting will be to discuss recommendations to the boards that appointed HONE members.

VII. Overview of Design Guidelines Options for MBTA Communities Compliance, Mark Gluesing, Chair, Design Review Board

The Design Review Board (DRB) was contacted to assist HONE. They were asked to review existing design guidelines for potential modifications and extension to other districts. The guidelines are currently available for Chestnut St. and Needham Center, but may not be applicable to Avery Square, Hillside Ave. Business, and the Business district.

Because it's as of right and will have limited Site Plan Review, we want to make sure what is in the zoning will protect and fit into every district.

M. Gluesing proposed forming a HONE subcommittee to meet with the DRB to discuss design guidelines, HONE concepts, and expectations. The DRB will review regulations such as when HONE is referencing guidelines, how they are enforceable. It is possible to tweak existing Chestnut St. regulations.

MOTION: R. Ruth moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:37 pm.
SECONDED: E. Espada
VOTE: Unanimously approved
MOTION CARRIES: 8-0

Respectfully submitted,

Dale Michaud
Recording Secretary

Informational

To subscribe to the multi-family zoning initiative in Needham, **visit the project page on the Town's website.** The Meeting Packet is available at <https://www.needhamma.gov/Archive.aspx>
The public is welcome to watch HONE meetings: <https://www.youtube.com/user/TownofNeedhamMA>