

Town of Needham, Massachusetts
Housing Needham Advisory Group (HONE)
Powers Hall, Town Hall, 1471 Highland Ave.
TOWN-WIDE COMMUNITY WORKSHOP
Minutes
March 28, 2024

Place: In-person at Powers Hall or on-line registration to participate via Zoom
Present: Co-Chair, Heidi Frail; Michael Diener, Liz Kaponya, Kevin Keane, Joshua Levy, William Lovett, Ronald Ruth, Jeanne McKnight
Absent: Natasha Espada
Staff: Katie King, Deputy Town Manager; Lee Newman, Director of Planning & Community Development; Alexandra Clee, Assistant Town Planner
Guests: Eric Halvorsen, RKG Associates; Emily Innes, Innes Associates; See Public Comment, pages 5-12

Call to Order

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

Sign-in and Welcome

Attendees were welcomed to the third public forum of the plan for MBTA Communities compliance.

Introductory Remarks

H. Frail expressed gratitude for public participation acknowledging Town Staff, HONE Committee volunteers, the amazing work accomplished by Consultants, the Needham Channel and volunteer groups for keeping the community informed. H. Frail described next steps of the process.

The Needham Housing Coalition and Oscar Mertz assisted by creating street and aerial views. The Base Plan aims to establish compliance with MBTA Communities Law using existing zoning; the Neighborhood Housing Plan focuses on housing development. Both plans will be sent to the State for compliance.

HONE supports the Neighborhood Housing Plan as it will unlock numerous benefits beyond housing such as its potential to revive economic vitality by redeveloping older commercial buildings with modern stormwater management standards, encourage public transportation, reduce single passenger auto travel, increase the tax base and customers for local businesses, and create energy efficient multifamily homes.

The most significant change to many districts is to allow by-right what was previously only allowed by Special Permit. HONE strove to keep heights standard at 3 to 4 stories with one exception on Chestnut St. West where the tallest building could be 4 1/2 stories as long as there is first floor commercial which is allowed under existing zoning. Apartment A1 districts including Rosemary Ridge complex are built to the maximum allowed under zoning. The Neighborhood Housing Plan aims to make access to all zoning easier by shortening the permit process, considering neighborhood needs, amenities, walkability, and potential shading based on heights.

Misinformation exists regarding Plan unit counts. The meaning of net new units was clarified. All zoning is potential. To understand the outcome of different zoning, pretend nothing exists and the map is wiped clean. Then look at the number that the zoning allows. Or, you can subtract the number of existing real-life buildings from the total potential number of units. The map includes this information in a table of existing versus potential unit counts. *Note that adding existing real-life housing to the bottom line number results in more than the zoning would allow.*

This zoning applies to private property which is based on basic rules for development, but the government is not mandating you to change or redevelop your property. MBTA rules prohibit age restrictions in the zoning, but developers can place restrictions on real-life buildings and studios. The zoning cannot restrict the size of apartments or condos so the real-life build could be more varied than HONE maps which use 1,000 square feet as the standard size dwelling.

Consultants will present a fiscal analysis from Town departments including DPW and the potential impacts of buildings. School, Police and Fire have assessed the data. The final report will be available on April 30. The presentation analyzes likely development versus allowed development, highlighting the slow pace of development despite the Neighborhood Housing Plan. Needham Housing Authority and Planning Board are alternate tools available besides MBTA Communities.

The HONE Committee will refer areas for future consideration to the Planning Board due to the need for more investigation or public scrutiny. Public comment will begin after the presentation.

Presentation

Needham MBTA Communities Process, MBTA District Scenarios, Public Meeting #3

Eric Halvorsen of RKG Associate; Emily Innes, Innes Associates

See the **Meeting Packet** available at: <https://www.needhamma.gov/Archive.aspx>

HONE Draft Scenarios

E. Halvorsen presented the Base Compliance Plan draft and the Neighborhood Housing Plan draft along with three layers of analysis: the Propensity for Change Models which examine likely build-out, fiscal impacts, affordability, operational impacts, and capital. Reports are more detailed.

Needham already has multifamily housing in various forms and densities with the goal to meet 15 dwelling units per acre density metric for MBTA Communities compliance. Multifamily housing exists at 30-40 dwelling units per acre. MBTA Communities Law allows for a mix of densities in districts. Artist renderings of multifamily housing types were shown: 3-4 story dwellings, live-work townhomes, 3-story dwellings, and mixed-use buildings. Though not mandated, mixed use can be encouraged with first floor commercial as part of the zoning. It is part of existing zoning.

HONE draft Scenarios for community consideration include:

1. **Base Compliance Plan** - A Scenario that adheres very closely to the zoning boundaries and dimensional standards in Needham's current Zoning Bylaw. This Scenario is intended to meet the minimum compliance requirements of the MBTA Communities Act.
2. **Neighborhood Housing Plan** - A Scenario that increases dimensional standards and the number of units that can be built on a parcel of land as a way to encourage housing production and respond to Needham Housing Plan goals. This Scenario is intended to meet and exceed the minimum compliance requirements of the MBTA Communities Act.

Needham's Minimum MBTA Communities Requirements:

- Acreage: 50 acres
- Unit Capacity: 1,784 units (measured by zoning not actual units built or existing multifamily units)
- Percent in Transit Areas: 90%
- Density: 15 Dwelling Units per Acre

Two Scenario Plan maps were compared side by side down to the individual shaded districts for a sense of size, scale, scope, and geography of the two proposed plans.

The multifamily housing target differs slightly in geography, size, and acreage. Zoning parameters of height, floor area ratio, and setbacks do vary. Renderings of aerial views showed building heights.

The Consultant reviewed existing units and existing unit capacity under today's zoning.

- Existing units for all zoning districts is 775 units.
- Existing zoning unit capacity for all zoning districts is 1,019.
- Existing zoning with overlay Special Permit unit capacity for all zoning districts is 1,636.
 - Number represents capacity of Chestnut Street utilizing the overlay district

The Consultant compared unit capacity under the two HONE scenarios to the above:

- Base Compliance Plan unit capacity is 1,868
- Neighborhood Housing Plan unit capacity is 3,339

A lot of the added unit capacity is in the Apartment 1 and Chestnut Street West districts.

Maps of existing zoning parameters (lot, height, floor area, parking) compared to the Base Compliance Plan were shared to see how closely the HONE tried to adhere to existing zoning, and so the audience can see where changes were made.

Propensity for Change Models

The Propensity for Change Analysis uses a financial feasibility model for multifamily development land value utilizing market return metrics, asking rents, and construction costs.

Consultants estimated parcel turnover for each Plan predicting it highly unlikely that all parcels in all districts will be developed as the process involves not just zoning, but buyers and sellers.

Criteria for Propensity for Change Modeling include:

- Identify development scenarios
- Run financial feasibility model
- Identify potential parcels
- Derive land value

Base Compliance Plan

The propensity of units from a **Likely Build Out** would be 222 units.

The propensity of units for a **Full Build Out** would be 1,868 units.

Neighborhood Housing Plan

The propensity of units from a **Likely Build Out** would be 1,099 units.

The propensity of units for a **Full Build Out** would be 3,339 units.

The greatest number of units would be achieved with greater height and floor area ratio in Apartment A1 and Chestnut St. West districts. Under the most flexible zoning scenario, the Neighborhood Housing Plan, possibly 33% of those parcels and units get built out over time.

Fiscal Impact Results

To test the fiscal impact of HONE's two Scenario Plans, RKG Associates constructed a fiscal impact model to understand the potential tax revenues from new development compared to the municipal and school operational costs to support that development.

Consultants reviewed potential property tax scenarios, benefits, costs, the timeline for building and occupying units, and calculating fiscal impact by subtracting municipal costs from property tax revenue.

Net Absorption of Multifamily Units

When large projects are delivered, annual absorption averaged 100 units annually. It could take 19 years to absorb the Base Scenario Full Build and 34 years to absorb the Neighborhood Housing Plan Full Build.

The Propensity Model Likely Build Out could be in the 2-10 year timeframe for the Base Plan and more than 10 years for the Neighborhood Housing Plan.

Over the past 10 years, Needham has delivered an average of only 53 units per year with most years showing no new multifamily housing.

For a more detailed explanation, the Consultant suggested viewing the presentation on-line or watching the last HONE meeting of 3/4/24 at <https://www.youtube.com/TownofNeedhamMA>

Capital Costs - A detailed memo of Capital Costs will be included in HONE's final report.

HONE's Proposal for Affordability:

- Continue to require that 12.5% of all new units in buildings with 6 or more units are set aside as deed restricted, affordable housing.
- RKG's Economic Feasibility Analysis (EFA) supports HONE's recommendation to keep the current affordability requirements in place for MBTA Districts.
- Keeping the affordability set aside at 12.5% helps Needham continue to stay above the State's requirement of 10% affordability.

Comments - See attachment

Wrap-up & Next Steps

- April 4 - HONE meeting
- April 30 - Joint meeting (Select, Planning, Finance)
- May 1 - Submit Plans to State for Review
- July/August - State returns Plans to Town
- Before October Town Meeting:
 - Plans brought to Planning Board for zoning articles
 - Public Hearing

Stay engaged, speak with neighbors, participate in groups, email Town Meeting members, and read relevant FAQ's. Contact HONE or H. Frail at her Town email with questions or concerns.

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

Watch HONE meetings: <https://www.youtube.com/user/TownofNeedhamMA>

Maps can be found at <https://www.ma.gov/mbta>

To learn more and subscribe to updates on the multi-family zoning initiative in Needham, please **visit the project page on the Town's website.**

Respectfully submitted,

Dale Michaud
Recording Secretary

Comments

Ethan Fener, 40 Tanglewood Road

Q. E. Fener asked about the allowances or requirements for parking.

A. Parking was reduced to one space per unit since the housing will be close to train stations creating a walkable community. See the [Parking Study](#) for evidence of excess parking.

Remote: Jay Spencer, French Press Bakery, 74 Chapel St.

This business owner supports the Neighborhood Housing Plan due to high foot traffic, costs, and retaining staff talent who commute from afar. A zoning change that maximizes local customers would help maintain prices and staffing. The proposed Plan would allow residents, students and graduates to stay in Town reducing the cost of building. He encouraged residents to review the Plan and speak to everyone about passing this Plan. The Special Permit process creates a financial barrier for business owners.

Eric Bailey, 64 Hillside Ave.

We've accomplished much since the first meeting. He supports the Neighborhood Housing Plan.

Remote: Dan Goodman, 807 Plain Ave.

Owner of Building 36 Technologies and member of the Council of Economic Advisors (CEA), he is impressed with HONE's accomplishments. He supports the Neighborhood Housing Plan. Increased foot traffic and a diverse business sector will enhance Town Square vibrancy. He struggles with recruiting engineers who commute from afar due to lack of Needham housing which makes his business less attractive than the competition.

Len Singer, Corner and West St.

Q. He is in favor of the Housing Plan which gets you to 4 stories as long as there is commercial building on the first floor. How do we get more residential housing between 3 and 4 stories in height?

A: The Base Compliance Plan proposed 3 stories in commercial districts while the Housing Plan suggested 4 stories. However, the unit capacity numbers for both Base and Neighborhood Housing Plans only calculate 3 and 4 stories. Under the guidelines, you can't model mixed use; to access the extra half story, the developer has to add first floor commercial.

Remote: Joni Schockett, 174 Evelyn Rd.

The presentation is impressive. She has watched all the meetings and read all she could.

The new medical building will bring 1,500 to 2,000 cars. and traffic While this is supposed to be MBTA compliant to encourage people to use public transportation, there will be 3,000 cars if you use the biggest plan because each unit will have at least one car. People need cars to get around in Needham.

As a language teacher of 40 years, she suggests renaming the Plans as Base 1, 2 and 3 to avoid a clear preference for one over the other. The proposed 3,000 unit Neighborhood Housing Plan is too large for the community and will negatively impact quality of life. She suggests starting with 1,800 units and revisiting to add more but disagrees with the 34 year timeline for building the units.

William Betcher, 38 Oakland Ave.

There is risk in proceeding with the plans on a rushed timetable set by the MBTA. HONE is not only complying with the Base Plan but going far beyond it. There is a risk to opening up property for zoning giving developers more control than the Town. We should pay attention to other communities that have appealed the MBTA Communities Law. He requests a commitment from HONE to meet with Town Meeting members.

Remote: Alexander Cullen, 133 Grant St.

Q. Explain what it means when an area is in the Base Plan but not in the Neighborhood Housing Plan.

A. The details of the differences in the Plans are in the Consultant's presentation slides. We had to follow zoning rules. Some areas did not meet those rules and were pushed out of one plan and into another.

John Crimmings, 32 Plymouth Road

Thanks for your efforts. With all due respect, numbers presented by the Consultant are educated guesses. We shouldn't commit to the Neighborhood Plan not knowing the infrastructure impact for several years. He supports the Base Compliance Plan.

Q. What prevents us from expanding the Base Plan in 15 years?

Remote: Jane Volden, 133 Brookside Rd.

She supports the Base Plan for future Town expansion but is concerned about limited parking per unit. Local transportation is essential to children's schools and activities. A one car per unit requirement is too low. Developers will not offer more parking than required.

A. We put requirements into the zoning that the minimum parking a developer could offer is one space but a developer could offer more parking.

Nordo Nissi, 450 Chestnut Street

The Base Plan is not the best option for the community. The Central Business districts are not included and the Neighborhood Plan seems to be trying to do too many things at once. He and others have contacted HONE regarding the Harney Greymont parcel which is located between two MBTA bridges and has limited activity. The property could be developed as an apartment building but would have significant impacts on the junction of Chestnut St. neighborhoods. HONE should review the property and consider additional changes at the townwide level.

Paul Lennox, Fair Oaks Park

He moved from a community that experienced these changes in a 3-5 year timeframe. Roads were always packed with aggressive drivers. People who stop for coffee in Needham are traveling through and need to park. We need to think how more housing will affect traffic. Needham is advertised as being close to the Charles River; without a car, you'll wait 20 minutes for an Uber driver. Needham needs a bus line.

Sarah, student

She expressed frustration that teachers have long commutes to school due to a lack of affordable housing. She'd like to return to Needham after college but acknowledged current housing prices are too high. She advocated for more diverse housing options like condos and duplexes. The Social and Political Action Club is working with the Housing Coalition to improve real estate availability. She urged the community to consider the Town's future at different timeframes and act quickly to improve Needham. With the

current housing climate, we will have to find a new place to settle down, cut ties with this community, its great school system and the safe place that we all currently call home. She asked HONE to consider what Needham should look like in a few years; if it looks like the students, then we need you to fix Needham fast. Thank you.

Remote: **Bill Wharton, Dale St.**

For the district that goes from Rosemary up to West Street between Hillside and the tracks, the height was limited to 3 stories. There are buildings there that are taller than that. Why has HONE limited the height to 3 stories there as that seems to be a place that has capacity for more? Thank you.

A. One side of the street is significantly higher than the other side of the street. HONE was concerned that if we went up to 4 stories, that would have a shady effect on the residences across the street. We wanted to be sensitive to the neighbors so we decided to make that change.

Student, **Nina, 419 Webster St.**

She is a high school student and president of the Social and Political Action Club who has been attending Housing Coalition meetings for months. She supports expanding affordable housing in Needham. This is a major priority for the community which makes it more welcoming, diverse, and reachable. The Neighborhood Housing Plan is a significant step in the right direction and should be supported now. There has been community apathy toward this important, long-standing issue. The community should take advantage of this opportunity to its full potential. The Neighborhood Housing Plan will enable she and peers to return home after college, able to afford housing, and make Needham a welcome place for the middle-class, teachers, nurses, and young families. She urged everyone to support this important step.

Remote: **Laura Mayer, 484 Chestnut St.**

She expressed gratitude for the detailed presentation. She is interested in parking availability and the potential disappearance of excess parking due to new building construction. She wants to know the location and amount of excess parking and requests it be noted on the maps. She expressed it is a bad idea to leave the responsibility for ensuring adequate parking with builders.

A. The Parking Study can be found on the website.

Erin Doyle, 99 Linden St.

She lives in the Chestnut St. area and fully supports the Neighborhood Housing Plan despite concerns for limited parking. She is proud to live in an area with affordable housing and Housing Authority units although they affect housing values. She desires her community to promote inclusivity and accessibility.

Remote: **Paula Jacobson**, Executive Director of the Charles River YMCA

She is Executive Director of the Charles River YMCA which owns property at 863 Great Plain Ave. and leases the property at 380 Chestnut St. The YMCA has been in Needham for more than 100 years and is an integral part of the community. Retired individuals who want to stay connected to Needham and work part-time cannot afford to stay in Needham and face long commutes. The Y hires young professionals in health and fitness, sports, aquatics and childcare. Not a full-time employee lives in Needham; all have lengthy commutes from home to work. She urged listeners support the Neighborhood Housing Plan. A vibrant, walkable and economically robust Needham is contingent upon available housing. Thank you.

Alyssa Kence, 59 Coolidge Ave.

She works at Beth Israel Hospital in Needham and supports more housing for hospital staff.

Remote: **John Fogarty**, President of BIDMC, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center

The hospital in Needham has been in operation for 112 years. He advocates for the Neighborhood Housing Plan for the reason that adequate housing is crucial for a stable healthcare workforce especially since many senior staff retired during the pandemic. Only 7% of the hospital's 1,000 employees live in Needham, only 18% live in the surrounding area, and 70% of our nurses are under 30 years of age. The two high school students that spoke may be your future nurse, your doctor, or your pharmacist but not if they can't afford to live in town. He supports everything they said. We have to create a housing plan that supports the workforce of tomorrow, or access to healthcare will become increasingly difficult.

Lee Betcher, 38 Oakland Ave.

He supports diversity, affordable housing and Needham businesses. MBTA Communities compliance is rushing this process and it is being concentrated within one half mile of the railroad. We have 11,000 housing units. With the Base plan, we're asking for a 17% increase of housing units.

A. Correction-you have overestimated the number of units. The increase on the flyer adds existing units to the bottom line number on the map. Subtract the existing units from that number. The number is 1,868 units for the Base plan and 3,339 units for the Neighborhood Housing plan.

He feels that By Right development prioritizes developer interests over that of the community's and calls for a voice before the Select Board to prevent passing the Neighborhood Housing Plan.

Remote: **Henry Ragin, 25 Bennington St.**

He supports the Neighborhood Housing Plan due to the significant housing need for medical professionals, teachers, seniors, physical education workers, and tradespeople. The plan is particularly exciting for Chestnut St. Developers may need to add more parking for two or three-bedroom units. The Fiscal Impact Analysis shows a significant gap between expenditures and revenue, especially with bills looming for Pollard, Mitchell, and High Rock properties. This should be revisited. No is paying that little in taxes.

Bob Smart, 25 Mayo Ave.

How will HONE handle the two Scenarios with the Moderator and Town Meeting?

A. If the Neighborhood Housing Plan is approved, it will supersede the Base Plan.

Remote: **Bill Singos, no address provided**

He expressed concern for the change from Special Permit to zoning as it empowers for-profit motives and diminishes residents' ability to collaborate with the Town to maintain the community's charm. He cited unrealistic assumptions about parking spaces and the capacity of schools campuses to accommodate a student increases. Not everyone can work and live in Needham, so the premise that everyone can work and live here is unrealistic. The long-term impact on town charm and sense of community will be significant. Why can't we comply with MBTA Communities Law using the Base Plan but have a more vigorous and expedited permit process while preserving the town's character?

Brian Phillips, Bigbelly Solar (local business)

Each year it gets a little tougher to retain people who live in the area. There has to be a path for residents to live and work where they want to be. He supports the Neighborhood Housing Plan. Thank you

Remote: **Bruce Wolfeld, 208 Nehoiden St.**

If a builder establishes additional retail or commercial space, where are the homeowners utilizing the one allotted space going to be parking?

Barbara MacDonald, 147 Perrin St.

Why didn't HONE wait until after the SJC hearing before putting the vote in the plan? Too few people here understand what's happening with the plan. When you go into the district to meet with Town Meeting members, it would be beneficial to invite the public and make time for questions and answers.

A. Residents can also reach out to H. Frail who is happy to come and talk to groups.

Remote: **Praveen Purushotham, 296 Hunting Rd.**

The presentation on housing in Needham is lacking a holistic approach suggesting that if voters approve and comply with MBTA Communities Law, housing might be built. The focus should be on commercial and business empowerment, affordability, and community development to make Needham an attractive place. Housing is not the only reason for people to come to Needham especially young people who want to start families. A more holistic Community Development plan is needed for housing as part of Needham's government responsibilities. The projected number of students is off with only half a student per household. The presentation also shows only direct costs with 61% of direct revenue taxed at 61%. I'd like to see indirect costs.

Jonathan Traud, 12 Alfreton Road

HONE has considered feedback from residents and reduced the number of units from 4,000 to a smaller number. Having one parking space per unit is insufficient and will cause road congestion. The speaker supports the Base Plan as it offers more opportunities for affordable and family housing that is not limited to .5 acre from the MBTA station. Everyone is concerned about schools and housing affordability. Developers will build unaffordable units that sell for \$1,200,000. If the Base Compliance Plan is approved, the Town can explore other areas that don't need to fit within the confines of the MBTA Communities Act.

Remote: **Lois Sockol, 611 Greendale Ave.**

She thanked the committee for educating her so she could make an informed decision. She is in favor of progress but caution. She is leaning toward the Base Compliance Plan. If it proves to be insufficient to provide the needed housing, more will be done.

Holly Clark, 1650 Central Ave.

As a Town Meeting member, she has concern that the new State law could take away town authority. Consider the Base Compliance Plan, or Plan B using an overlay district with Town zoning, require a permit. Use the tools we have presently. Who will this plan benefit? There has been no discussion of trees, transit options for seniors, and there will be a lack of parking. The cost of raising class sizes in the schools would be too high. We want to develop housing options for people to be able to stay in town. The State law is new. She emphasized the importance of listening to each other's opinions.

Remote: **Michael Normile, 5 Larkspur Rd.**

He supports the Neighborhood Housing Plan though there are risks. He is worried about risk. The lack of housing threatens the economic vibrancy of the Boston area which has benefitted everyone. Business owners struggle to attract employees. He would prefer to live with more traffic congestion than to lose the vibrancy that makes the area a wonderful place to live. He thanked those who support the plan.

Claire Franz, 304 Brookline St.

She supports housing but not the Neighborhood Housing Plan. It won't bring affordable housing to this town at 12.8%. This plan is for greedy developers. We are naive to say employees of the French Press can afford those apartments. The town faces parking issues and limited transportation. She urged a more thorough examination of the new Law. The Town should investigate why Milton is refusing to comply.

Remote: **Louis Wolfson, 29 Cimino Rd.**

He commended the two students who spoke earlier for their wisdom and support of the Neighborhood Housing Plan which provides for maximum housing development. He questioned why Brookline Oriental Rug is not included in the plan. Developers should consider parking. He is unsure whether Hersey Station is being considered but appreciates the progress made to create housing and a more vibrant downtown.

Ellen Sorter Holmes, 805 Highland Ave.

She supports the Neighborhood Housing Plan because it will attract people like she and her mother to a walkable neighborhood which has served them well. Parking recommendations are realistic.

Remote: **Lynne Claflin, 229 Garden St.**

Diverse businesses once made Needham a destination spot. To make a walkable town, more commercial is needed. Because big box stores replaced small shops, it's necessary to own a car to go to a hardware store. Increasing parking is crucial to attracting people. Long-term she's thinking green.

Artie Crocker, 17 Fairlawn St

A Town Meeting and Planning Board member, he questions the decision to reduce the number of units in the proposed scenarios from 987 to 370 in the Base Plan. Housing should offer ownership as it brings generational wealth. A lot of this zoning will bring rentals. He expressed concern about not zoning areas that don't fit within MBTA Communities guidelines. Residents have expressed concern about the Neighborhood Housing Plan. If we do not listen to them now, they won't approve this at Town Meeting.

A. The MBTA Communities Law only allows you to count zoning. HONE was trying to adhere to existing zoning minus what the Special Permit would allow on Chestnut St. which explains the huge reduction in the Base Scenario because we were trying to adhere to, not what's allowed in the Special Permit today for Chestnut St., but with the Base zoning, what it will allow. HONE is not including some areas in Town because there was not sufficient time to include it in this zoning. HONE is sending the Planning Board a very long list of potential parcels to review.

Remote: **James Goldstein, 40 Coolidge Ave.**

He expressed gratitude to the HONE group for their thoughtful consideration of comments from residents. He is in favor of the Neighborhood Housing Plan due to the housing crisis and the need for homeownership as well as rental housing for workers. He supports a vibrant Business District in the downtown and in the Heights. He acknowledged HONE's limited responsibilities and the importance of additional zoning suggestions the committee will pass on to the Planning Board.

Adam Block, 103 High Rock St.

The Planning Board and Council of Economic Advisors member commended the work of the committee and highlighted the competing interests of public policy goals. He emphasized the importance of supporting the Commonwealth and preserving the character of the town, rather than focusing on building policies or encouraging housing that reduces traffic. The character of the town is determined by the community support rather than details and preferences such as the number of parking spaces required. The Planning Board will work with the community to balance all of the community interests including infrastructure within the next 5 years. This is responsible development. Though much of this is for uses and not Special Permit for large scale development, the Planning Board can impose conditions on development through the Site Plan process to mitigate adverse impacts on site circulation, vehicle safety, pedestrian safety, infrastructure, and capacity. The goal is not to impose a perfect solution for all, but to ensure that the town's character is preserved and that the Planning Board's efforts contribute to the Commonwealth. The goal is to create workforce housing that accommodates diverse choices and ensures that everyone can live in the same community.

Greg Reibman, President of the Charles River Regional Chamber at 117 Kendrick St.

A developer needs to get financing to make money. A bank will not finance the project if there is not a market for the project and it is not rentable if there is not enough parking. Leave the matter up to the developer to add the parking.

Why rush the Housing Plan? Have you noticed how much longer it takes to get any services, a prescription at the drugstore, parents finding childcare, a needed doctor's appointment, your favorite coffee? We need more workers. We need more housing. Business owners said they can't find enough workers to commute because there is not enough housing for Needham employees.

Remote: Steve Volante, 745 Central Ave.

He thanked the committee for their efforts. He and co-owners of Volante Farms support the Neighborhood Housing Plan despite opposition to preserve the Town's character. He believes that character is defined by shared spaces where we shop and dine.

Small businesses in Needham are facing a challenge to find local labor from this area. To maintain the area's charm and support small businesses, it is crucial to address the issue of housing for employees of area businesses. This requires action to ensure the preservation and continued growth of small businesses including the larger labor and customer bases that new development will bring rather than relying on apathy, nostalgia and kicking the can down the road to progress.

Dan Matthews, 31 Rosemary St.

There is confusion about the terms affordable housing which can be divided into two categories: subsidized affordable housing and market affordable housing. Subsidized affordable housing is where someone contributed additional funds at housing thresholds where a person of low income pays one third of their income, who otherwise could not afford to rent a home.

There's a shortage of subsidized housing because of the almost wholesale of the Federal government from 30 years ago. We've been limping along like this. The Housing Authority is working to redo 130 units in

this next funding round inclusive of provisions that 12 1/2% will be internally subsidized by the development.

The main elemental piece of this MBTA Communities Law compliance is market affordable housing and that means housing that ordinary people in the middle class can afford rental or homeownership units that they themselves will occupy.

The MBTA is pushing towns to act because the towns won't do anything otherwise. If everyone waits until everyone else acts, nobody is going to act. Yes, these units are going to cost \$1,000,000. Developers are going to make money because there is no subsidy coming in to pay for this. The theory of this Act is to unlock marketing forces to drive most of our economy. Let people get to work building with simplified permitting requirements. If we don't do this, it's going to get worse. We shouldn't be waiting for the result of Milton's court case. There are 50 other towns getting their programs off the ground and there's another hundred that are working on their plans. Let's get our town moving. Thank you.

Michael Fisch, 419 Webster St.

When I was growing up locally in places where middle-class people could afford to live and rent, no one promised that I could live 15 or 20 minutes away from home. The geography of where people can live and work is getting further and further apart. It is worth taking a look at what's happening in California's Silicon Valley. People are commuting 2-3 hours to work and living in their automobile vans. This is not a sci-fi movie; this is real. If we are honest with ourselves, and we think we are going to do the minimum the State requires, we can see that we're close to being another Silicon Valley.