



TOWN of NEEDHAM
MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

Economic Development

781-455-7550 x213

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC ADVISORS

WEDNESDAY, April 2, 2014 7:30 AM

Charles River Room PSAB

Present: Matt Talcoff, Chair; Glen Cammarano; Marty Jacobs; Bob Hentschel; Moe Handel; Tom Jacob; Michael Wilcox; Peter Atallah; Rick Putprush; and Lee Newman and Devra Bailin, staff
Not Present: Janet O'Connor; Elizabeth Grimes; Bill Day; Bruce Herman; Brian Nadler; and Matt Borrelli

I. Approval of Minutes

The members approved the minutes for the meeting of March 5, 2014.

II. Reminder of Next Meeting and Hearing Dates

Our next meeting will be on May 7th. Our future meetings will continue to be held on the first Wednesday of each month, unless it is a holiday. Next meeting we will discuss our summer schedule. All meetings will be in the Charles River Room at PSAB.

III. Welcome New Member

The members introduced themselves to our new member Rick Putprush, who was recently appointed by the BOS and has attended our meetings previously.

IV. Update on Mixed Use-128 Residential Overlay

Lee advised that she has spoken to Phil Herr and he is still willing to do the work but is presently busy with a Newton project. She advised that we will target November Town Meeting.

V. Update on Home Rule Petition for Restaurants with Less Than 100 Seats

This matter is on the ballot for voter approval in the April 8th election. Devra noted that the letter the CEA asked her to draft supporting the ballot question is on the table, having been published in both papers. Moe said that members should be sure to vote.

VI. Update on Needham Crossing Work

Devra explained that she and Mike Wilcox met with Design Review Board Chair Mark Gluesing in the Park and reviewed the proposed signs and the existing locations. Mark made suggestions which were incorporated into the drawings which Devra submitted to the DRB. The DRB suggested some additional changes which increased the cost estimates but approved the basic work. Devra filed for the Sign Permits with the Building Department earlier this week. Fast Signs of Needham will be doing the work for about \$2700.00 once the Sign Permits are approved. There will be some money left in the contract to allow exploration of signage along Highland Avenue to announce arrival into Needham Crossing.

VII. Update on the Medical Marijuana Overlay District

Lee explained that the Planning Board voted 3 to 2 to approve the Mixed Use-128 and northern side of Highland Commercial-128 (Staples/Petco side) for medical marijuana dispensaries. The two dissenters thought more areas should be available in Needham. There is a provision added to allow the moratorium to continue for further study if Town Meeting cannot decide the issue.

VIII. Update from Downtown Streetscape Working Group

Tom noted there is not much to report beyond the report last month. Moe noted that the Town is working with the Unitarian Church to create a public pathway from the Chestnut Street parking lot to Great Plain. Lee noted that since the Church tore down the vegetation along the wall, the opportunity is there to create access. Moe noted that if the Church agrees to allow the pathway, the Town will work with the Church to pay for it. He also noted that, on a separate note, the Town is working with the tenants who utilize dumpsters behind the Church (CVS, Farmhouse, and Stone Hearth) to consolidate them and potentially to move them away from the Church playground. Moe said that the Town is also working with the Church to facilitate parking on Sunday in the Town lot and possibly to create short-term spaces for pickup and drop-off of students at the Church daycare/afterschool programs.

IX. Update on Industrial District Subcommittee

Devra distributed questions to facilitate discussion of dimensional and use changes to Industrial 1 District and the Industrial Districts along Route 128/Reservoir Streets, where development is most likely to occur in the near future and have the greatest economic impact. Devra also distributed a proposed press release and letter, on which the members offered comments, which will be incorporated. It was decided to hold one morning meeting (April 29th at 8:00 a.m.) and one evening meeting (April 30th at 7:00 p.m.). Discussion of all districts will take place at the same time. Devra will also reach out to the Needham Heights Association to arrange for a discussion with its members. The members would like the meetings to take place in the Heights and asked Devra to contact the Library, the Center at the Heights, and Wingate to see if the meetings can be hosted some place other than PSAB. Notices will be mailed to owners and tenants (to the extent the information is available from Assessing) and some of the abutters to the district.

X. Update on Downtown Subcommittee (Streamlining Suggestions)

Devra explained that the Planning Board is amenable to the streamlining amendment turning over review and approval authority to the Design Review Board for façade modifications in the

downtown with appeal to the Board. It will be on the May Warrant. The other streamlining amendment, creating a threshold for changes in use which don't increase the cumulative parking demand to 10 or more in the Center Business, Avery Square and Chestnut Street Business Districts or 4 or more in other districts, will also be on the May Warrant. Under the latter, if below these thresholds, most projects would avoid the special permit/waiver process. Devra suggests that the Downtown Subcommittee reconvene to bring forward other proposals for discussion with the Planning Board.

XI. Other Business

There was discussion of the Add-A-Lane project; Devra noted she was told by Normandy that MassDOT is saying the Kendrick Street interchange will be done by December 2015, which was noted probably meant spring 2016. Glen said that the MassDOT which took a temporary construction easement from Muzi said they are starting that interchange when the freeze is over. The Town has received no assurances. There is also nothing further to report on the Highland Avenue corridor project.

Devra noted that there are retail stores closing in the Downtown. Bob said he was aware of Perennial Designs. Devra was asked to send an SOS (save our shops) letter and advise people of the dire situation of our downtown retailers and some restaurants. Devra noted she is working on an artist collaborative to begin the vision the Babson students suggested by creating a retail art niche to promote the downtown, along with our destination restaurants. Mike asked if we have heard if Babson will do any further work on the marketing plan; Devra explained she applied but has not yet heard if we were chosen to proceed in the fall term.

There was also some discussion of the YMCA looking for a location for an indoor pool and athletic facility. They are meeting with Park & Rec.; it seems unlikely that Rosemary pool will be anything other than an outdoor pool. Bob noted that Needham Youth Hockey is also looking for a facility in Town. Various organizations seeking public/community facilities are working together.

XII. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:00 a.m.