



TOWN of NEEDHAM
MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

Economic Development

781-455-7550 x213

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC ADVISORS

WEDNESDAY, June 3, 2015 7:30 AM

Charles River Room PSAB

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

I. Approval of Minutes

The members approved the minutes for the meeting of May 13, 2015.

II. Reminder of Next Meeting Dates

Our next meeting will be on **September 2nd**. (It was decided at our last meeting that we will not hold a meeting of the full Council in July and August. Subcommittees may be called to meet during the summer depending on issues which arise or projects requiring attention.) Future meetings thereafter are scheduled for the first Wednesday of the month (unless a holiday) in the Charles River Room at PSAB beginning again on September 2nd.

III. Street Fair and Spring Arts Festival

Devra reminded members that Saturday June 6th is the NBA Annual Street Fair and first Annual Spring Arts Festival sponsored by the Cultural Council in Powers Hall. Devra encouraged members to attend.

IV. Update on Mixed Use-128 Residential Overlay

Devra explained that she and Matt T. presented the CEA's recommendation regarding the overlay zoning and rationale to the BOS last week. She said it was favorably received by the BOS and, although they did not take a vote, have asked the Planning Board to take it up. Devra is not sure when Lee intends to make it up for public hearing, as one member (Jeanne) will be out of Town all June. Moe suggested Jeanne review the hearings minutes so she can participate in the vote. Marty will ask Lee to find out if that is possible for zoning change hearings.

V. Update on Industrial District Subcommittee

Devra noted that, although we now have funding for the consultants (available July 1st), based on Lee's timeline, we cannot make the fall Town Meeting. She explained that John Connery is going to start the build-out analysis this month from existing consultant funding that the Department has. The fall Town Meeting is scheduled for November 2nd with all articles due no later than October 9th. To meet that schedule we would have to have the BOS vote to refer the zoning articles to the Planning Board on September 8th at the latest. The Planning Department would submit the legal notice to the newspapers on September 3rd for publication on September 10 and 17. The Planning Board hearing would be scheduled on September 29th. The CEA could not meet this schedule without holding meetings over the summer or the first week in September with neighbors. If we waited to hold the meetings in the first week in September, it would have to be with zoning we had already decided to proceed with. That would not look right to the public. We simply cannot hold meetings over the summer, especially since it looks like August would be the first available time all the consultants would be ready with their reports. As Devra explained to FinCom, funding July 1 would put the zoning initiatives off until the spring, which it has. Devra noted that she will likely be convening this Subcommittee as information from the consultants comes in.

VI. Update on Needham Crossing (Signage at Entrances)

Members reviewed the revised signage which Tina Snyder of Mike's office prepared. Devra has confirmed ownership of the land on which the signs are proposed to be installed. She also confirmed with Anthony DeGaizo that, although we cannot put a sign on the Kendrick Street Bridge over the Charles, we could put one no larger than 36" by 36" in the Town ROW just past the Bridge. Most of the signs will go on private property but we need to confirm that where located on private property that they are outside the temporary or permanent takings. David Tobin confirmed that easements to the Town would be necessary for placing signage on private property. We will need to seek DRB approval of the signage and secure additional funds for the fabrication and installation—perhaps from the Owners' fund.

VII. Update on Infrastructure Improvements in Needham Crossing

Devra submitted a letter on behalf of the CEA to support the MPO vote last month to place the Highland Avenue/Needham Street Corridor Project into the FFY 2018 TIP, as Newton and Needham requested. And to support the vote to move it from the 2021-2025 time band in the Long Range Transportation Plan to FFY 2016-2020 to be consistent with the first vote. Devra noted the improvements underway and reminded members of the Needham Crossing Owners' meeting scheduled for this afternoon at 2:00 at the Needham Residence Inn. Bob asked to be added to the list of invitees.

VIII. Discussion of N² and Needham Crossing Branding

The members expressed concern about not having Needham Crossing and N² on any highway signs. Devra reviewed, as did Tom, the MassDOT Supplemental Sign Policy, and concluded the Needham Crossing/N² signage does not meet the blue sign requirements. Tom will see if perhaps Denise can help. Moe and/or Devra will also ask the MassDOT representatives how we can get a blue

sign identifying the area. It was noted other communities have such signs, even though they don't meet the requirements either. There was also a discussion about placing it in the Town's ROWs running parallel to Route 128 if we cannot get MassDOT to allow signage.

Bob asked to discuss an issue related to Needham Crossing in connection with Normandy's development based on the presentation last week to the NBA. Bob noted that he thought, while we are close to realizing a true mixed use environment in Needham Crossing with the real opportunity to create a sense of place, we are going to stop short of it. To him, it seemed that an unwillingness to have this area compete with the Downtown might be getting in the way. He personally doesn't feel there are enough retail or restaurant establishments to create a community there.

Lee noted that the roadway spine of retail, restaurants and services was lost under the revised plan. Devra noted that the Department had raised issues about that earlier plan; the argument then was the consolidation of retail etc. would require a traffic study for the destination retail (which we know the area couldn't handle based on Giles' calculations and our decision to treat the retail as accessory and therefore attach no separate weight to it). Moreover, forcing the garages to the interior and the need for visible parking for retail, restaurant, etc. mean that such uses cannot realistically go in the spine anymore, even if it were a road. Lee noted that she thinks retail, etc. should be wrapping the garages or at least that the garages be made with flexible space which would allow them to be converted from garage to more active space in the future. Marty noted that Planning Board simply asked that they make the garages more attractive but have not in any way mandated mixed uses in the garages. It was understood that retail etc. needs to be visible. Mike agreed that the amount retail etc. being proposed might not be sufficient to create a successful community (e.g., Burlington); the amenities may not be great enough to support the entire park.

Marty asked if we could clarify the existing constraints; he understood the plan was market driven. Devra agreed and noted that with three empty pad spaces (taking up to two years to develop), Normandy's position is that it needs to tap a different market—businesses looking for rehabbed space that can be ready for occupancy within 6-12 months. There was also discussion of whether the limitation on the establishment size to 15,000 sq. ft. is posing a problem. Moe asked what besides big box have we done that might constrain development? Bob said that we only allow consumer services like retail and restaurants on the first floor of multistory buildings; what about the 4-story restaurant building called "The Stack" in Waltham? Also, what about such uses in rehabbed one-story space? Tom asked if we are doing everything we can do to incent what we want? Rick commented that we should talk to Normandy about long term plans.

It was noted that these questions should be addressed to Normandy. (After the meeting, Devra spoke to Roy and asked if Normandy would be willing to put in writing those dimensional and use requirements which impaired, impeded or prevented them from building something they felt the market place was looking for.)

IX. Update on N² Innovation Corridor

Devra explained that the project is still supposedly funded but not granted. The new head of the Federal Economic Development Commission advised that the project would be funded but NOT under

the application we submitted (in accordance with his predecessors' instructions). We were promised an answer in sixty days (now past) but still don't have one.

X. Update on Babson MCFE Downtown Marketing Plan

Devra noted that she is likely going to convene the Downtown Subcommittee to study the recommendations of the two Babson MCFE marketing plans closely and see what can be done to implement them. It was noted that much of the online work was to be placed in the hands of the NBA, which probably does not have the personnel or budget to commit to the work.

X. Update on Downtown Subcommittee (Streamlining Suggestions)

Devra noted that to her knowledge there has been no progress on this since well before the BOS and Planning Board meeting months ago. Lee said that the Planning Department will be funding a study to update the parking study in the Downtown in an effort to implement a moratorium on requiring parking studies by restaurants. There is nothing else to report.

XII. Other Business

Devra advised members of another Needham business profiled in BBJ--Celldex. She also noted that Olin is looking for incubator space (for which they indicated they could pay). Bob expressed interest and Devra will provide contact information. She also noted that Bulfinch Companies is trying to create a food truck week to bring the trucks back to Needham Crossing.

XIII. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:10 a.m.