



TOWN of NEEDHAM
MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

Economic Development

781-455-7550 x213

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC ADVISORS

WEDNESDAY, December 2, 2015 7:30 AM

Charles River Room PSAB

Present: Matt Talcoff, Chair; Moe Handel; Michael Wilcox; Rick Putprush; Bob Hentschel; Peter Atallah; and Devra Bailin.

Not Present: Elizabeth Grimes; Janet O'Connor; Brian Nadler; Tom Jacob; Marty Jacobs; Bruce Herman; Glen Cammarano; Bill Day; and Matt Borrelli.

I. Approval of Minutes

The members approved the minutes for the meeting of November 4, 2015.

II. Reminder of Next Meeting Dates

Our next meeting will be on January 6th. Future meetings will be scheduled for the first Wednesday of the month (unless a holiday) in the Charles River Room at PSAB.

III. Update on Marketing for Needham Crossing (Babson Consulting Club)

Devra, Mike and Tina Snyder attended the students' presentation on November 17th. The MBA student in charge of the project, Kunal Alaigh, had the team do some research and discuss possible marketing ideas for selling Needham Crossing brand. The students divided the project into three parts—one student contacting possible target companies about coming to Needham Crossing; one student looking into how the area plays to site selectors; and one coming up with online marketing tools. The presentation was fairly general—the students only had about a month to actually work on it. Mike pointed out that one of things that became clear is that we require some sort of owners association to maintain the website and provide leadership. (The situation in Needham is very different from one owner developments like Burlington and Ink Block.) There also needs to be a funding mechanism. Devra noted that she and Mike asked if the students would be interested in working on the project in the spring to create solutions for implementation of a multi-owner site. The members discussed that the Downtown Marketing plan prepared by Babson MCFE students faltered because we have no organization to implement the social media components.

Mike suggested that the marketing of Needham Crossing be put on the agenda for the next owners meeting. Rick pointed out that marketing of Needham Crossing and N² Innovation Corridor give the area two bites of the apple. Promotion of Needham Crossing as the gateway to N² is the key. If

businesses don't come, neither will the amenities. Matt noted that a social media campaign requires persistent efforts; we need a social media strategy.

Mike noted that Vicki Keenan SVP of Transwestern RBJ did a presentation which included analysis of what millennials will ultimately want (as well as trends in the region). He will forward the presentation to us. Bob noted that amenities are critical to attracting them and that is where we need to focus our attention. Peter added that the notion is that there is a 20 miles radius around Boston which creates the next area of development and that Needham is in a good spot to take advantage of the costs and scarcity of space which pressure companies to move out to the suburbs.

Devra circulated the BBJ article entitled “New emerging or yet-to-emerge biotech hubs that aren’t in Cambridge in 2016” dated November 24, 2015. Needham was one of them. “Needham: Gallagher says its [sic] a really good town for development. What biotechs are there now? Celldex Therapeutics, Verastem.” She also circulated an article from Steve Adams in Banker and Tradesman entitled “New Construction Boosts Route 128 Office Rents” and noted the positive impact of recent new construction on rents in the area. Highlighted in Needham were Normandy’s projects. The article specifically referenced “Needham Crossing”. Mike noted that Normandy’s press release did too. He will forward it. Moe and Devra noted that, unfortunately, Intrum (Randy Goldberg) appealed the decisions.

IV. Update from the Downtown Subcommittee

There has been no progress on moving forward on streamlining.

V. Update on Mixed Use-128 Residential Overlay

It is not clear that there is political will to put this on the Annual Town Meeting and there is work to be done to explain this and get it on for Town Meeting in the spring. Moe will coordinate these efforts.

VI. Discussion of NEBC zoning restrictions (use/dimensional) interfering with development

Devra noted that one of the issues that came up with the Normandy project was the open space limitation (which resulted when the Planning Board refused to reduce it per the proposal from the CEA) and another was the limitation on retail, restaurants and other consumer services to multistory office buildings. Devra reminded the members that she had an inquiry from a food ‘manufacturing’ company which is seeking to use a portion of a small one story building for preparation of their product, offices and a small (1000-1500 sq. ft) for food retail—mostly take out. Devra shared the draft zoning she prepared and noted that, although requested several times, to her knowledge, the Planning Board has not taken up the issues. The members agreed we should change these provisions to allow the possibility of a public restaurant or food court, retail, and consumer services in one story buildings as amenities to the park not just the building. (Members had previously expressed concern about the Planning Board double counting the parking required for such amenities.) Devra noted that in reviewing the By-Law she noted that the 15,000 sq. ft. per establishment was inadvertently not carried over to the specially permitted food uses as was intended. She corrected this in the draft.

There was discussion as to whether it still makes sense to ban drive-thrus in all circumstances. One could limit the locations and number, as well as require them to be end caps to existing buildings. There was disagreement on this, especially on queuing problems as are an issue at the McDonalds on Chestnut Street. It was agreed we will study this issue.

VII. Update on Industrial District Subcommittee

BETA is working on the traffic report, which Devra should have by the week of 14th. Given Town delays in responding to BETA's inquiries, the report may be delayed. Devra also has been unable to ascertain through the Planning Department whether the schedule will allow us to move forward with zoning in the spring. There are significant problems in holding public hearings on this after the Central Avenue/Elliott Street Bridge is closed—traffic will be especially bad along Gould Street. The neighbors may see this situation as a sign of things to come once we upzone. Again delays in moving these initiatives forward may cause us to miss the market. Also Devra is still waiting for an answer from the Department as to whether Architect Mark Gluesing has been cleared to do the elevation drawings.

VIII. Update on N² Innovation Corridor

This was not discussed except in relation to the marketing of Needham Crossing above.

IX. Discussion regarding fostering relationship between downtown businesses and TripAdvisor

Due to members having to leave, this was not discussed.

X. Update on Infrastructure Improvements in Needham Crossing

Due to members having to leave, this was not discussed.

XI. Other Business

None.

XII. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:05 a.m.