



**TOWN of NEEDHAM**  
MASSACHUSETTS

**PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**  
**Economic Development**  
781-455-7550 x213

**MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC ADVISORS**  
**WEDNESDAY, April 5, 2017 7:30 AM**  
**Charles River Room PSAB**

Present: Matt Talcoff, Chair; Rick Putrush; Marty Jacobs; Jack Cogswell; Virginia Fleisher; Stuart Agler; Adam Block; Glen Cammarano; Peter Atallah; Ted Owens; Michael Wilcox and Devra Bailin.

Not Present: Moe Handel; Russ MacTough; Bob Hentschel; and Bill Day.  
Also Present: Anne Weinstein

**I. Approval of Minutes**

The members approved the Minutes for the meeting of March 1, 2017.

**II. Reminder of Next Meeting Dates**

Our next meeting is scheduled for May 3<sup>rd</sup>. 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 (Signage; Babson MCFE)**

Devra shared with the members the information received by Steve Tanner regarding the highway signage location—Devra and Mike will follow-up with Steve, as the location is not clear from the photograph and it appears that trees in the highway ROW bar visibility. [After the meeting Devra and Mike confirmed the location as being across the street from Bulfinch Companies' building at 250 First Avenue and that there are no trees—just the MassDOT construction fence with debris and dirt piled in front of it. Devra will try to confirm ownership of the land—if Town-owned we should be in good shape.] Devra noted that Steve proposed a monument rather than a sign on piles. We would have to have more money but Mike and Devra explained that part of the Owners' Fund established by Normandy has about \$100,000 committed to signage. Peter asked about the slogan on the sign. It was noted that the slogan on the sign is proposed to read: "Gateway to the N<sup>2</sup> Innovation District" rather than our interior marketing slogan on other signs. Mike also explained that we have located gateway sign locations but need to wait until all construction on Highland and Kendrick is completed for all but three of those signs. (The one located coming west from Newton over the bridge on Kendrick is Town-owned.)

Devra explained that our marketing project for Needham Crossing was not selected by the Babson MCFE students for next fall.

#### **IV. Discussion of Street Banner By-Law**

The CEA members have already endorsed the concept of street banners in our commercial areas. Devra shared with the members the current draft of the General By-Law from the Town Manager's Office, together with Devra's revised regulations and draft Warrant Explanation. Devra explained that she did not have the final regulations from the Manager's Office nor the final Warrant explanation as published. Devra noted that she met with the Design Review Board on Monday April 3<sup>rd</sup> about the Street Banner By-Law. The DRB approved of the use of Street Banners in the manner proposed by the By-Law amendment. The members suggested, however, an addition to the regulations which permits the Board of Selectmen, in its discretion, to require review of banner imagery and detail by the DRB. Devra relayed this to the Town Manager.

The members want to make sure that the Board of Selectmen emphasize to Town Meeting that this is a tool for economic development and that it is supported by the CEA as such. [Devra relayed that message to the Town Manager.] There was discussion about allowing use of corporate sponsorship logos but members will leave it to the BOS to decide if that is unauthorized advertising.

#### **V. Update from the Downtown Subcommittee (Streamlining Initiatives; Farmers Market; Food Truck Petition)**

The Planning Board has assured the members that they will focus on the streamlining initiatives as discussed last month after Town Meeting in May. Ted and Marty will work to focus these issues for resolution.

Devra pointed out that the Board of Selectman has agreed with the proposal to move the Farmers Market to Garrity Way off the Town Common. (The Planning Board will have to vote to approve the change in location as imbedded in their Special Permit decision.) This initiative was supported by the Newton Needham Chamber (especially the Needham Economic Development Committee) and the Needham Business Association. The Town Manager did not feel it necessary for the CEA to weigh in.

As to the Citizen's Food Truck Petition, there was considerable discussion by the members as to the pros and cons of food trucks at Greene's Field, as well as where the BOS were with reporting back to Town Meeting and whether they proposed any changes. The Town Manager requested that the CEA take a position on the Citizens' Petition. The members agreed that, unless the economic terms of competing with brick and mortar restaurants, were more even (e.g. the fee paid by food trucks more comparable to costs incurred by restaurants), they stand by the position they took when the proposal was for the locations on Great Plain Avenue in front of the Town Common. Devra will revise the previously submitted letter and circulate it. [Devra sent the revised letter out for comment.]

#### **VI. Discussion of Industrial District Subcommittee**

Devra noted that she met with Mark Gluesing about the elevation drawings and we are getting close. She'd like to hold the hearings with the neighborhoods, businesses and Needham Heights Neighborhood Association by the end of May.

## **VII. Update on N<sup>2</sup> Innovation District (Report on Roundtable Discussion; Funding)**

Devra noted that the Newton Needham Chamber N<sup>2</sup> committee held a very informative event moderated by Congressman Joe Kennedy on the impacts of Trump executive orders on immigration and hence innovation in Massachusetts.

The fundraising for the N<sup>2</sup> marketing implementation is almost complete. Town Meeting will vote on Needham's commitment of \$10,000 per year for two years. The members noted that this is very important because, as things presently stand, Needham will be highly advantaged by such advertising.

Articles were distributed by Devra making public that NBCUniversal is seeking a TIF from Needham to open its \$125 million regional headquarters in what was 189 B Street. Members were very supportive of the grant of the TIF, seeing it as entirely appropriate under the goals of the economic target area application and, given the amount of personal property taxes attributable to this media use, a win win situation for the Town. Devra also noted that the Host Community Agreement requires NBC to provide collaborative working space consistent with their media use, four high school internships, four college internships, educational opportunities for younger Needham students, and possible increased shuttle use and expansion to connections with commuter rail in the Heights. The HCA also requires NBC to implement a plan to provide on-air placement of the "Needham Crossing" logo. [Per the CEA's request, Devra asked the Town Manager whether she wanted a written recommendation from the CEA, which she does. Devra will draft and circulate a letter for the members' approval.]

## **VIII. Update on Downtown events (Re imagine Needham Update)**

Due to time constraints this issue was not discussed.

## **IX. Update on Infrastructure Improvements in Needham Crossing and Downtown (MPO)**

Devra explained what was happening with respect to the downtown project and also with Needham Crossing. Due to delays by MassDOT as to takings, the corridor project has been delayed by the MPO until 2019. The MassWorks portion—the signal at First Avenue and Highland Avenue—will be installed by 2018 but will not be operational until the connector/distributor road is completed, which will also be in 2018.

## **X. Other Business**

The members discussed the recently announced closing of Not Your Average Joe's and the purported reasons for it. They also discussed rumored interested parties. Members discussed the need to get the space filled and that the time may be ripe for the BOS to approve a pub. Devra noted that the BOS is in the process of reviewing its regulations which preclude such types of restaurants. Members discussed generally the need for landlords to assist prospective tenants to bring buildings up to code and

whether the Council could do anything to encourage such investment by owners to assure continued occupancy in downtown spaces.

The CEA members also wanted to know if the Town Manager wants a recommendation on the zoning by the Citizen Petition for pet sitting with boarding. [Devra sent a request but has not heard back.]

Articles distributed to the members included ones relating to NBCUniversal, Miraca Life Science (new on Crawford Street), Needham Crossing development, N2 developments, and Needham's Purple Carrot providing Tom Brady meal offerings. It was noted that Needham Crossing has received a lot of positive press over the last month.

## **XI. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:15 a.m.