



TOWN of NEEDHAM
MASSACHUSETTS

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

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC ADVISORS
WEDNESDAY, May 3, 2017 7:30 AM
Charles River Room PSAB

Present: Matt Talcoff, Chair; Rick Putprush; Marty Jacobs; Moe Handel; Jack Cogswell; Virginia Fleisher; Stuart Agler; Adam Block; Peter Atallah; Ted Owens; Michael Wilcox; Bob Hentschel; Bill Day and Devra Bailin.
Not Present: Glen Cammarano; and Russ MacTough.
Also Present: Anne Weinstein

I. Approval of Minutes

The members approved the Minutes for the meeting of April 5, 2017.

II. Reminder of Next Meeting Dates

Our next meeting is scheduled for June 7th. Members discussed our summer meetings; it was decided to cancel the meetings for July 5th and August 2nd and instead hold one meeting on July 19th. Devra will advise as to the location. 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)

Devra advised that the signage location for the “Needham Crossing: Gateway to the N² Innovation District” may be in the MassDOT ROW, according to the Engineering Department. Devra will ask Mike to help her measure the site from the Needham ROW.

IV. Discussion of Letter Supporting NBCUniversal Media TIF (Vote)

Devra advised that the Board of Selectmen asked for the CEA’s recommendation on the TIF. Devra provided to the members a draft letter. There was discussion about TIF policy, whether this was a unique proposal, whether other media businesses already in the area would also get one if they threaten to leave, what are the justifications for this one, etc. The letter outlined the position of this TIF in relation to the goals of the Target Area Application, as well as BOS policy. It was noted that the value of the personal property taxes over what would normally be paid for office purposes, alone justified the

TIF. The members asked Devra to include in the opening paragraph a statement that aside from the financial benefits of the project, it was a game-changer. The members were particularly cognizant of the free advertising the project offered to Needham Crossing by virtue of the Host Community Agreement as negotiated. They agreed that the N² Innovation District should be highlighted but that the location of Needham Crossing was critical. They suggested that the N² Innovation District logo should be used with the words “at Needham Crossing” underneath. There was also discussion of owners coming together to discuss attracting amenities to the area. The members (with Moe abstaining due to his membership on the BOS) unanimously voted to strongly support the TIF and the draft letter as revised. Devra will revise it and send it to Kate.

V. Discussion of Citizens’ Zoning Petition (Vote Pet sitting/hotel)

Devra explained the history of the Citizens’ Zoning Petition to amend the special permit provisions of Mixed Use-128 to allow boarding of animals at veterinary and/or treatment facilities, as well as at animal care facilities. The BOS have asked for the CEA to make a recommendation. Devra’s letter to the Planning Board was provided to the members for their review and possible adoption as a letter to the BOS. Having discussed the Petition and reviewed the letter, the members asked that the letter be revised to reflect their view that they were supportive of removing an obstacle to development and of allowing a new business use to come to Needham. Devra will revise the letter accordingly. The members unanimously (with Marty and Ted abstaining due to their membership on the Planning Board) voted to endorse the Petition.

VI. Discussion of Street Banner By-Law

Devra advised that the BOS did not request a formal letter supporting this article. She did however relay to the Town Manager the members’ desire 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. The article should be explained by pointing out that this is NOT a sign By-Law proposal; it is an economic development one, one requested by downtown businesses and endorsed by the CEA. Moe noted that he was making the presentation and would incorporate the CEA’s views.

VII. 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 will also try to get the ZBA to attend the discussions.

As to the Citizen’s Food Truck Petition, the members submitted a letter to the BOS, which reflected the views of the members at last month’s meeting. There was a discussion of what the BOS is proposing to Town Meeting in its report and Warrant Articles—essentially to start the process of allowing such trucks at schools and recreation facilities by making certain changes to the restrictions on hawkers and peddlers licenses. Peter asked if the BOS is interested in having the CEA look into the food truck issue after Town Meeting. Depending on what transpires, Moe thought that would make sense.

VIII. Discussion of Industrial District Subcommittee

Devra noted that she sent out draft zoning for the Industrial 1 zoning district. She wants to start setting up the neighborhood, Needham Heights Neighborhood Association, and business meeting at the end of this month or early next. She is still waiting for the elevation drawings from Mark Gluesing, who is working on them. She thought it might make sense to hold the meetings for Reservoir area until later. Members will review the materials for our next meeting. Marty suggested that Devra make the Planning Board aware of the zoning initiatives sooner rather than later. [After the meeting, Devra asked Lee and Alex to put her on the earliest Agenda to discuss the proposals.]

IX. Update on N² Innovation District (Funding; Town Meeting Approval)

Devra noted that Town Meeting approved \$20,000.00 towards the N² Innovation District implementation. The goal has been met but the Chamber continues to try to exceed budget plan so as to allow greater flexibility in spending, including extension beyond the two years.

X. Update on Downtown events (Reimagine Needham Update)

Due to time constraints, Devra simply noted that Reimagine efforts will continue on June 6th. Members who participated will be asked to come and help with committee work.

XI. Update on Infrastructure Improvements in Needham Crossing, Downtown, Elliot/Central Avenue Bridge

Given time constraints, Devra simply explained that, due to delays by MassDOT as to takings, the corridor project has been delayed by the MPO until 2019-2020. 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. The Elliot Street/Central Avenue bridge sidewalk work will be done by the end of May but Eversource will be back in the fall to complete its work.

XII. 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.

XI. Adjourn

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