



TOWN of NEEDHAM
MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
Economic Development
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MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC ADVISORS
WEDNESDAY, June 7, 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; Glen Cammarano and Devra Bailin.
Not Present: Bill Day; and Russ MacTough.
Also Present: Anne Weinstein

I. Approval of Minutes

The members approved the Minutes for the meeting of May 3, 2017.

II. Reminder of Next Meeting Dates

Our next meeting is scheduled for **July 19th** in the Charles River Room. (As decided last month, our summer meetings of July 5th and August 2nd are cancelled and replaced with this one mid-month meeting.) 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. Update on NBCUniversal Media TIF

Devra noted that the Town Meeting approved the requested TIF. Based on her recent discussion with Normandy, the negotiations continue between NBC and Normandy. With respect to the free advertising the project offered to Needham Crossing by virtue of the Host Community Agreement, it had been discussed at our last meeting that the N² Innovation District should be highlighted but that the location of Needham Crossing was critical. Late month they suggested that the N² Innovation District logo should be used with the words “at Needham Crossing” underneath. Devra shared these thoughts

with the Chamber and a logo was designed by the Chamber's marketing consultant. Devra explained that it is similar to the new logo having been designed for the District and, in her opinion, combines the elements in an easily recognizable way. Devra presented the recently received N² Needham Crossing logo. The members felt that it would do nicely. Moe requested that Devra forwarded it to the Town Manager so that the BOS can weigh in. [Devra gave Kate the logos.] Adam suggested that when we discuss this with NBC we might be able to the N² to be in 3D and animated to draw greater attention to it on the screen (or superimpose "Innovation" over the N² and animate it).

The members discussed reinstating the Marketing and Branding Subcommittee to assist in the promotion of the N² Innovation District/ Needham Crossing brand. Adam and Matt are interested in so serving.

Mike pointed out that it might make sense to unify the branding. Now that we have the N² Innovation District and have agreed that will be the primary branding and marketing tool, we should consider refacing the five signs we refaced with the Needham Crossing name and logo. Devra will discuss this with Greg Reibman at the Chamber.

V. Update on Pet Sitting/Hotel Citizens' Petition

Devra was happy to report that 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, which the CEA endorsed, was approved by Town Meeting. (The BOS had asked that the CEA make a recommendation.)

Moe said we have another zoning issue in the Highland Commercial-128 and Mixed Use-128 zoning districts with respect to small alternative medical services (including physical therapists, yoga, wellness facilities, etc.). They are currently not allowed at all and this results in unnecessary vacancies in the area. Devra explained that, when we rezoned the uses in Needham Crossing, there was a feeling that medical uses should be severely restricted in those areas because of parking and traffic demands. What happened, however, was that non-group medical practices (2 or fewer physicians) were allowed but all alternative medical services were not allowed at all—neither by right nor special permit. This is too restrictive. Because the nature of such services in terms of parking demands and traffic impacts can vary significantly, it was agreed with one building owner that allowing such uses by special permit in that area would prove acceptable to him. The Planning Director agreed to bring the change to the Planning Board. Bob expressed his concern for the special permit approach, cautioning against a mechanism (special permit) which permits the Board to dictate business terms. Planning Board members just noted generally the concern about parking in these zoning districts.

VI. Update on Street Banner By-Law

Town Meeting approved the Street Banner By-Law, which the CEA endorsed. Members discussed the issue of where downtown it could be installed. It was noted that Phase 1, Great Plain along the Town Common, is nearing completion and the poles for the banners can probably not be incorporated. The next streetscape design on Great Plain—either Phase 2 or 3—will have to provide this amenity. Moe noted that these designs will be subject to review by the Downtown Streetscape committee.

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

Devra reminded the members of the CEA who serve on the Planning Board that they assured the CEA that the Board will focus on the streamlining initiatives starting this month. It is hoped by the members that Ted and Marty will work to focus these issues for resolution, as they have been outstanding since 2012.

As to the Citizen's Food Truck Petition, it was referred back to the BOS by Town Meeting for a report to the next Town Meeting. It was noted that Town Meeting was clearly not happy that no recommendation was presented by BOS regarding the downtown and, if something is not done to allow some trucks or carts in the downtown, Town Meeting may well vote for By-Law change, which would be in no one's best interest. Dan Matthews will be discussing this issue with the Planning Board. It was again expressed that, if the BOS desired the CEA's assistance, members would be pleased to offer research, analysis, and advice.

VIII. Discussion of Industrial District Subcommittee

The first public meeting was held on Tuesday June 6th; attendees were primarily business owners and landowners. (We only had about 15-20 people.) No one had any negative comments on the zoning for Muzi/Channel 5 portion of Industrial 1—the proposed Highway Commercial 1—or on the Reservoir proposed Highway Commercial 3. The only negative comment was with respect to Highway Commercial 2 on the other side of the RR track from Muzi/Channel 5 and more particularly to a drawing of a four story building on the corner of Ellis and the Highway, which the proposed zoning puts at three stories for at least the first 100 feet on Ellis. This neighborhood homeowner said he was fine with three going to four but not the four at the street itself. He later emailed me to thank the CEA for listening to the neighborhood and would be happy to assist in talking to neighbors if we need it. Greater attendance is expected Thursday evening. Devra also noted that she is speaking the Board of Directors of the Needham Heights Neighborhood Association on Monday evening and that group has agreed to hold a meeting with its members.

IX. Update on N² Innovation District

As the members already knew, Town Meeting approved \$20,000.00 towards the N² Innovation District implementation. The fundraising goal of \$325,000 for a two year budget was exceeded, with many companies in Needham Crossing contributing substantial funds—\$20,000-\$50,000. Many of those companies expressed the need for the area to be identified as an innovation district, so the N² moniker is important to the continuing efforts to market the district.

X. Update on Downtown events (Reimagine Needham Update)

Reimagine Needham continued for a brainstorming session June 6th to detail the priorities previously identified. Next steps are to engage the right people to serve on the various groups to move the ideas forward and create momentum. Moe noted that the Reimagine group needs to keep both the BOS and Planning Board informed of its efforts so that those key boards can weigh in. Once a report is created on the June 6th efforts, a report should be delivered to those boards.

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

Devra reiterated 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 (although it appears MassDOT is ahead of schedule, they will not commit to any earlier date). The Elliot Street/Central Avenue bridge sidewalk work is essentially done but Comcast will need to complete the cable work—anticipated to be complete in the fall.

XII. Other Business

The members discussed the recently announced closing of Not Your Average Joe's and it was noted that Cook appears to be taking over the site. Bob mentioned a small retail business in his building is going out; Devra again suggested taking a chance on the artist collaborative.

Devra also mentioned that there is a new catering/individual meal delivery food establishment on Reservoir Street—True Taste Kitchens—which is trying to create a market for fresh seasonal non-gluten food. Essentially, he's created a virtual restaurant.

XI. Adjourn

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