



TOWN of NEEDHAM
MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
Economic Development
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MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC ADVISORS
WEDNESDAY, July 19, 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; Bill Day; Peter Atallah; Michael Wilcox; Bob Hentschel; Glen Cammarano; Russ MacTough; and Devra Bailin.

Not Present: Ted Owens

Also Present: Anne Weinstein, District Director for Rep. Denise Garlick

I. Approval of Minutes

The members approved the Minutes for the meeting of June 7, 2017.

II. Reminder of Next Meeting Dates

Our next meeting is scheduled for **September 6th** in the Charles River Room. (As decided last month, our summer meeting on August 2nd is cancelled.) Devra told the members about a meeting tentatively scheduled for August 10th at 8:00 a.m. to discuss with Planning Board Chair Ted Owens and others about the vision for Chestnut Street. (Devra sent out notice of the meeting to the members.) 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/N² Innovation District (Signage)

Devra noted that the logo for Needham Crossing and N² Innovation District for use by NBCUniversal is with the Board of Selectmen. As discussed last time, many of the companies who generously contributed to meeting the N² funding requirements expressed the need for the area to be identified as an innovation district, so to them the N² moniker is important to the continuing efforts to market the district. The members were reminded that we reviewed a proposal and thought it accomplished what those investing in N² wanted—emphasis on the innovation district—as well our need to emphasize the Needham location. It was discussed that it might be helpful to the Board of Selectmen in reviewing this with NBC in the future to have the owners' and businesses' need to have emphasis on the innovation district articulated by them.

IV. Update on NBCUniversal Media Project

Now that the Town Meeting and the State have approved the requested TIF focus is on the finalization of negotiations with Normandy. Based on her recent discussion with Normandy, Devra explained that the negotiations continue between NBC and Normandy. (See also Section III.)

V. Update from the Downtown Subcommittee (Streamlining Initiatives; Food Truck Petition)

Devra reminded the members of the CEA that the Planning Board assured the CEA that the Board will focus on the streamlining initiatives starting in June. Marty explained that due to a staff maternity leave, there will be limited ability of the staff to work on this. It was suggested that members review the proposals and suggest three that we should focus on now. Devra will resend the Topics of Discussion memorandum (with Lee's comments), as well as Minutes reflecting the CEA's prior discussions on the initiatives, and each member should send back to Devra three that they think we should focus on over the next few months.

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. The Board of Selectmen will be holding a hearing on revisions to the Food Truck Regulations on July 25th at 8:30 p.m. in Powers Hall. Devra will send the notice around to the members, confirming the date, time and place. Moe pointed out that the proposed revised policy envisions food trucks at certain parks (to be administered by the BOS) and a food cart in the Downtown. (Devra sent notice of the hearing to the members.)

VI. Discussion of Industrial District Subcommittee

As noted at our last meeting, Devra held two meetings on June 6th and 8th; attendees were primarily business owners and landowners. (We've had a total of about 35-40 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. Devra also presented to the Board of Directors of the Needham Heights Neighborhood Association on June 12th which was well received. A meeting with the members of that group will be on September 11th.

Devra met with the Planning Board on July 11th and the Board declined to move forward with the zoning. Part of the reason is that the October 2 date of the Special Town Meeting makes deadlines difficult. Part of the reason is that members of that Board were not familiar with the zoning initiatives.

VII. Update on N² Innovation District

See above.

VIII. 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.

The members discussed generally the difficulty in getting the community, especially residents with young or school age children, involved in Town issues and to take leadership positions. They discussed ways to get people involved and to get information out regarding Town events—through the PTCs, the YMCA, social media (like the Needham group Facebook), word of mouth, community events like the 4th, etc.

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

Devra noted that the Downtown project is causing detours, which businesses have complained about. There was also discussion of the First Avenue signal being installed (which will not be activated until the connector roads and interchange at Highland are completed). It was noted the work is limiting parking for Mighty Sub and others.

X. Other Business

The members expressed surprise that a Montessori school was approved in Needham Crossing on Highland Avenue. It was noted that approval was by the ZBA.

XI. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:00 a.m.