

NEEDHAM PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

November 28, 2017

The regular meeting of the Planning Board held in the Selectmen Chambers, Needham Town Hall, was called to order by Ted Owens, Chairman, on Tuesday, November 28, 2017, at 7:00 p.m. with Messrs. Jacobs and Alpert and Mmes. Grimes and McKnight, as well as Planning Director, Ms. Newman, Assistant Planner, Ms. Clee and Recording Secretary, Ms. Kalinowski.

7:00 p.m. – Joint Meeting with Board of Selectmen: Report from the Council of Economic Advisors on Zoning Recommendation for the Industrial District at Gould and Reservoir Street.

Members of the Board of Selectmen (BOS) present were: Chair Marianne Cooley, Daniel Matthews, John Bulian, Maurice Handel and Matthew Borelli. Town Manager Kate Fitzpatrick was also in attendance. Jack Cosgwell reviewed the process of the Council of Economic Advisors (CEA), how they operate and their role. This proposal is for the commercial areas on the west side of 128 including the Crawford/Gould Street area. The town is trying to get the tax revenue back up to 25% for commercial property. The objective to develop the zoning concept is to come up with regulations, be transparent as possible, meet with affected townspeople and try to satisfy them, then turn in the final proposal to the Selectmen. He would like to get a discussion going regarding this process. He noted the CEA may need to come in more frequently to update the Selectmen.

Ms. Cooley noted the meeting tonight was to discuss process and decide if the Board of Selectmen want to refer the zoning to the Planning Board. She feels Mr. Cogswell's statement of process is correct and feels the CEA should have brought the proposal to the BOS sooner. Mr. Cogswell stated the Large House zoning bylaw amendments took precedence over everything for a while. Devra Bailin, Director of Economic Development, stated this proposal began back in 2014. There were meetings, then further study had to be done. Board members thought discussions were being reported back to the individual Boards. Mr. Owens stated he feels the process is the correct process. The proper path is the CEA reporting to the Selectmen then a referral by the Board of Selectmen to the Planning Board. Mr. Borrelli stated the CEA has done fabulous work. He feels there should be more Chair/Vice-Chair communication, and check ins would be great. He feels better communication is needed.

Mr. Matthews stated he feels some of the policy details should have been addressed earlier. There should be some formal vetting before all the detail work is done. He spoke about what works and what does not work. He stated if the CEA wants the Selectmen to know something the CEA needs to let the Selectmen know. He stated he is concerned with urban scale development on this side of 128. Ms. Grimes reiterated what Mr. Matthews said. There cannot be an assumption that people know. The CEA work is invaluable. The Planning Board needs to be involved from the get go in zoning. It is hard when the Planning Board members are not part of the process. The Planning Board should be involved in the beginning.

Mr. Cogswell commented the CEA is an advisory Board to the Board of Selectmen. He did not think about the Planning Board but he likes the Chair/Vice-Chair involvement. Ms. McKnight stated the Planning Board has started quarterly meetings devoted to long range planning. She hopes the CEA representative will make reports at that meeting. Mr. Cogswell asked if the Planning Board would like the CEA minutes each month. Ms. McKnight would like that.

Mr. Jacobs stated he agrees with Mr. Matthews. Ms. Cooley noted the question is the scale of redevelopment and commented she would like the Selectmen to refer this to the Planning Board. She asked for Selectmen's comments. Mr. Handel agreed with Mr. Matthews that the Board of Selectmen need to discuss the scale of development. There are 3 areas shown on the map that have zoning issues. He noted the areas are individual areas with urban characteristics but are blighted and underutilized. We need to protect the residential characteristic. Ms. Cooley noted Mr. Handel is the Board of Selectmen's designee on the CEA.

Mr. Matthews stated it might be helpful to have a summary of core provisions and different elements, then take it under advisement. He needs to think about this. Ms. Cooley suggested Ms. Bailin briefly talk through the 3 areas being discussed. Ms. Bailin described the 3 different areas. She noted the Muzi area slopes down to 128. Six stories could be done there. The Crawford and Ellis Streets area went to 3 stories in front, to not overshadow, with a landscape buffer of 20 feet, and to 5 stories in the back edge. Reservoir Street is a constrained site due to the river, so the CEA is looking at much less than 6 stories. Most areas need a significant consolidation of sites. The CEA worked very hard with the neighborhood. This is an effort to deal with traffic and development. This is similar to the process of Needham Crossings zoning but not a transplant.

Mr. Matthews commented de-zoning of the highway strip might be well served to be broken out of the project and referred to the Planning Board. He asked if there are other elements to be considered in the same way. Mr. Cogswell commented the three areas could be done separately, but all have policy issues.

Mr. Borrelli noted he is concerned with the idea of that type of density in these neighborhood areas. He feels the Boards need to go slow and be very cautious. Mr. Bulian stated build outs attract workers and residents leading to gridlock and traffic. He asked how the Boards could work with the state to continue public transportation to this area. There is an immense amount of traffic that would not get better. He is in favor of development but the town needs to look at that now. Ms. Cooley stated she is hearing there may be interest in referring to the Planning Board only the housekeeping rezoning of 128.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Handel, and seconded by Mr. Bulian, it was by the five members present unanimously:

VOTED: to refer the proposed amendment to the Zoning Map, to exclude from the Single Residence B and Single Residence A Zoning Districts any and all portions of the layout of Route 128/I 95 so that said layout areas shall no longer have any zoning designation, regulations or requirements, to the Planning Board for its review, hearing and report.

Ms. Cooley asked the Planning Board for feedback regarding the three areas. Mr. Owens stated the Planning Board has not discussed this as a group. These are his comments. Needham Crossing is a big step forward for the town. The 3 different sections should be looked at separately. He feels Mr. Borrelli and Mr. Bulian raised excellent points. This needs to start with a concept. He would encourage the Selectmen to be open to more discussion and details. This needs further consideration. Ms. McKnight agreed with Mr. Owens. There is no unified approach yet. This really should be concentrated on the Muzi area and TV Place as well as across the tracks. The town should be aware when across from residential. She feels the Reservoir area should be put off and the Boards should concentrate on the other 2 areas. There was a traffic study done and the report has specific recommendations. She commented she looks forward to working in this area. Mr. Jacobs stated he feels all areas deserve study as Mr. Owens said. He commented he would not call them blighted but rather areas that could use improvement.

Mr. Matthews stated the Selectmen need to have a discussion regarding policy decisions. The Selectmen need to talk about urban development particularly around the height. Ms. Cooley noted the Selectmen would need to give this some thought. She appreciates the work done by the CEA and the explanations tonight. She thanked the Planning Board for coming tonight.

The Planning Board recessed to move to the Great Plain Room at 8:02 p.m.

Ms. Grimes went home ill.

Public Hearing:

7:30 p.m. – Major Project Site Plan Review Special Permit No. 2004-01 Amendment 2017 Needham High School Addition and Renovations. (Property located at 609 Webster Street).

Mr. Owens noted the following correspondence for the record: minutes from the Design Review Board (DRB) from its 11/20/17 meeting; DRB approval; a memo from Hank Haff regarding the temporary traffic pattern during construction to begin 2/12/18 and completed 9/1/18; a draft amendment to the decision dated 11/28/17 with a redlined version. Mr. Owens reviewed the changes to the draft decision. Ms. McKnight stated Section 3.13 talks about faculty parking. It does not mention faculty and visitor parking. She assumes it is the same. Mr. Haff stated it does include both. Mr. Owens stated "and visitor" will be added.

Mr. Haff stated in Section 3.2, it should be Kingsbury Street. Mr. Alpert noted the neighbors are concerned with traffic patterns post construction. Ms. Newman stated that is being left for the Selectmen. Mr. Alpert asked if Ms. Newman has formally notified the Selectmen about the issue brought to the Board's attention. She has not. Mr. Alpert commented she should let them know. Mr. Jacobs agreed. He feels it is a significant issue. Ms. Newman will send a notice to the Selectmen.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Alpert, and seconded by Mr. Jacobs, it was by the four members present unanimously:

VOTED: to close the hearing.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Alpert, and seconded by Mr. Jacobs, it was by the four members present unanimously:

VOTED: to grant the requested Amendment to Major Project Site Plan Special Permit under Section 7.4 of the Needham Zoning By-Law and Section 4.2 of Major Project Special Permit No. 2004-01, dated April 6, 2004, amended January 5, 2010, December 6, 2011, October 27, 2015, July 19, 2016 and August 9, 2016; the requested Special Permit under Section 1.4.6 for the alteration of a pre-existing non-conforming structure and the requested Special Permit under Section 5.1.1.5 to waive strict adherence to the requirements of Section 5.1.2, Required Parking, subject to and with the benefit of the following plan modifications, conditions and limitations as set forth in this amended decision dated 11/28/17 as discussed by this Board.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Jacobs, and seconded by Mr. Alpert, it was by the four members present unanimously:

VOTED: to approve the decision in the form submitted with the modifications previously discussed.

Deminimus Change: Major Project Site Plan Special Permit No. 2014-11: French Press, LLC, 45 Chapel Street, Needham, MA, Petitioner (Property located at 74 Chapel Street, Needham, MA).

Mr. Owens asked how this lower percentage went in the decision. Ms. Newman stated the applicant asked for a lower percentage.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Jacobs, and seconded by Mr. Alpert, it was by the four members present unanimously:

VOTED: to treat this as a deminimus change.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Alpert, and seconded by Mr. Jacobs, it was by the four members present unanimously:

VOTED: to approve the requested change to the Major Project Site Plan Special Permit No. 2014-11 as requested and filed with this Board.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Jacobs, and seconded by Mr. Alpert, it was by the four members present unanimously:

VOTED: to approve the form of the amended decision in the packet tonight.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Alpert, and seconded by Mr. Jacobs, it was by the four members present unanimously:

VOTED: to waive the fee.

ANR Plan – Robert J. Roach and Noel & Tamiko Watson, Petitioners (Property located at 1600 Central Avenue and 29 Carleton Drive).

Ms. Newman noted more detail has been added. The Board signed an earlier plan but it was not recorded. The lawyers wanted the parcels detailed.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Jacobs, and seconded by Mr. Alpert, it was by the four members present unanimously:

VOTED: to endorse the plan ANR.

Recreational Marijuana – Update

Ms. Newman stated there is no draft article yet. She will draft one. Ms. McKnight stated she went to 2 meetings. The MAPC meeting on 11/15/17 with Representative Cusack from Lynn as the speaker. He had a lot of insight. She gave an overview/summary of the meetings. She also went to the Norfolk County Commission meeting. She stated 4 things could be done – growing, processing, testing and retailing. Ms. Newman will draft a decision that would ban all 4 components.

Minutes

Ms. McKnight had a couple of changes for the 9/26/17 minutes. She passed in her changes.

Correspondence

Mr. Owens noted a draft of a letter to the Legislature which will be reviewed and discussed at the 12/7/17 meeting and a draft of the 2017/2018 meeting schedule.

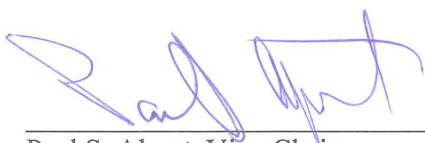
Report from Planning Director and Board members.

Ms. Newman had nothing to report. Ms. McKnight stated the MBTA will close off the parking area at Needham Junction. She noted it provided 48 parking spaces. She asked what the VFW permit says regarding parking. Ms. Newman will look at the permits. Steve McKnight stated this was just discussed at the Transportation Committee meeting of which he is a member. The MBTA parking spaces have been chopped away at for years. Spaces have been lost in the Heights due to the Senior Center. Mr. Alpert stated the Board approved 48 spaces in the Junction. Does the Planning Board have the legal authority to tell the VFW they need to lease spaces to the MBTA? Mr. Owens requested the Planning Director look into it. Ms. McKnight asked if the VFW was in compliance with its permit.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Alpert, and seconded by Mr. Jacobs, it was by the four members present unanimously:

VOTED: to adjourn the meeting at 8:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna J. Kalinowski, Notetaker



Paul S. Alpert, Vice-Chairman and Clerk