



TOWN of NEEDHAM
MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
Economic Development
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MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC ADVISORS
WEDNESDAY, February 7, 2018 7:30 AM
Charles River Room PSAB

Present: Adam Block, Vice Chair; Bill Day; Peter Atallah; Moe Handel; Bob Hentschel; Glen Cammarano; Stuart Agler; Marty Jacobs; and Ted Owens.

Not Present: Jack Cogswell, Chair; Rick Putprush; Michael Wilcox; Matt Talcoff; Virginia Fleisher; Russ MacTough; and Devra Bailin [due to a flight reschedule, Devra was unable to attend.].

I. Approval of Minutes

The members approved the Minutes for the meeting of January 3, 2018. Adam shared the notice of Rep. Denise Garlick's "Report to the Community to be held on February 12th. [This event was cancelled and will be rescheduled.] These meeting Minutes were taken by Adam.

II. Reminder of Next Meeting Dates

Our next meeting is scheduled for March 7th in the Charles River Room. Future meetings will be scheduled for the first Wednesday of the month (unless a holiday) in the Charles River Room at PSAB.

III. Discussion of Central Avenue Neighborhood Business District (Review Draft)

Peter noted that the Central Avenue Neighborhood Business District letter raised the question of our role in specific zoning. Moe noted we operate in a bit of a grey area as zoning affects development. We discussed that our remit is both proactive ideation and reactive to BOS specific direction. The members voted to authorize Devra to send her February 7th letter to the Planning Board as drafted. [Devra did so.]

IV. Discussion of Industrial District Subcommittee

The Industrial District discussion focused on the BOS public hearing in January. Adam noted that Jack did an excellent job summarizing the history and process we used to arrive at our zoning recommendations. CEA members discussed several comments from the meeting, including one by a

member of the Finance Committee (although she was not speaking as a member of that Committee). Bob reiterated that the majority of the public comments related to development fatigue.

The discussion moved to the immediate time frame. Ted mentioned that, with the load on the Planning Board plate, the piece that was referred to them will not be able to make this May Town Meeting warrant, as there isn't enough time for them to process and arrive at a resolution. Marty mentioned that the Planning Board is also awaiting direction from the BOS on what the priority level is for this matter. He also mentioned that the Planning Board would not necessarily hold the CEA's draft zoning as the standard and will likely look at it fresh, from its own perspective. Stuart raised the question of CEA priorities.

Adam mentioned that he and Jack are having their first chair/vice-chair meeting with the BOS on February 22nd, which Kate has advised Devra to also attend.

The conversation returned to process on the issue of highway zoning and generally what our role is. It was acknowledged that we may have gotten ahead of ourselves on the specific zoning recommendations and that going forward we will keep the BOS aware of what we are studying. [Note: Devra wants to remind the members that in order to provide an accurate traffic impact report, as requested by the neighborhood, we were required to obtain a maximum buildout analysis, which can only be prepared by providing zoning parameters to the consultant. What we provided the buildout analysis consultant was what we thought would be maximum zoning initiatives; the zoning actually recommended by the CEA was less dense, particularly in the Ellis/Crawford area.]

Ted remarked that it appeared the BOS hasn't reached consensus on the policy question of whether to encourage commercial development on the west side of the 95. Moe concurred.

It was acknowledged that getting to our level of detail in the zoning was not a usual circumstance as this was an organic outgrowth of Needham Crossing development.

V. Discussion of Design Review Board Initiatives

Member believed it was helpful to understand where the DRB is at and to understand their scope, questions and challenges. [Note: Devra learned from Mark Gluesing that the DRB has not produced any specific recommendations at this time, as they haven't had a full group in attendance yet to discuss and decide next steps. He agreed to keep the CEA posted and appreciates the offer to assist in formulating and drafting initiatives that can affect development/redevelopment.]

VI. Discussion of CEA priorities/future goals

With regard to the CEA priorities, no one brought up specific priorities beyond Devra's 'shopping' list. Adam invited members to make any suggestions regarding priorities by email to Devra, Jack and/or Adam in advance of the chair/vice-chair meeting with the BOS on February 22nd.

VII. Update on Needham Crossing/N² Innovation District (Streetscape/ river walk)

This was briefly discussed, with Moe clarifying what was meant by river walk project.

VIII. Update from the Downtown Subcommittee (Streamlining Initiatives)

No update was provided at this time.

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

When we discussed infrastructure, Moe mentioned that the Highland bridge is not being closed while improvements are being made.

X. Other Business

Stuart asked what was happening to Cloudberry Cleaners and Taylors. Moe mentioned that The James had a soft open and he enjoyed it. Bob mentioned a new Italian restaurant, Cappella, is opening in approximately two months at the location of Petit Robert.

XI. Adjourn

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