



TOWN of NEEDHAM
MASSACHUSETTS

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

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC ADVISORS
WEDNESDAY, August 1, 2018 7:30 AM
Saco-Petee Building
156 Oak Street, Newton MA

Present: Adam Block, Vice Chair; Matt Talcoff; Rick Putprush; Moe Handel; Tina Burgos; Peter Atallah; Bob Hentschel; Glen Cammarano; Stuart Agler; and Devra Bailin.

Not Present: Adam Meixner; Anne Marie Dowd; Bill Day; Michael Wilcox; Virginia Fleisher; and Ted Owens.

Also Present: Kent Gonzales, Vice President of Northland Investment Corp. and Greg Reibman, President Newton Needham Regional Chamber

I. Approval of Minutes

Introductions were made, including the welcoming of new member Tina Burgos. The Minutes of June 6, 2018 were unanimously approved.

II. Reminder of Next Meeting Dates

Our next meeting is scheduled for September 5th 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. Presentation by Kent Gonzales, Vice President of Northland Investment Corp.

Kent explained that the current project at the corner of Oak and Needham Streets is comprised of 27 acres, including the Saco-Petee Building, several old buildings, and the Marshall Plaza. He noted that it is an historic area but only the Saco-Petee building will remain. Northland also owns 6 acres across the street, which includes the old TJ Maxx building. The plan for the two sites envisions connecting the Greenway bike path to the other side of Needham Street, then across the River into Needham and onto the DCR path around the River. They will be submitting that proposal separately from the current one.

The current project proposes 200,000 sq. ft. of retail, 180,000 sq. ft. of office, and 822 apartments of which 15% would be affordable under Newton's inclusionary zoning. The heights along the street edges of Needham Street and Oak Street are between 4-5 stories; in the center of the site around the Village Green around 7 stories; and 2-3 stories along the Greenway. There will be a center smart garage for all office and retail parking, with parking for residential underneath the apartment buildings. The apartment units will be a mix of studio, 1, 2, and 3 bedrooms.

Concerns have been expressed for traffic along Needham Street and through the project. The internal roadways have been designed to slow traffic through the project and discourage pass-through. Northland has been working with the 128 Business Council to design and develop a transit system using shuttles to access their site. Ideally, an integrated shuttle system will evolve to include access throughout the N2 Innovation District. 128 Business Council study shows the need for intercity connections. A mass transit component is important to the project because they are proposing only one vehicle parking space per apartment.

The 12,000 sq. ft. Village Green is central to the project. It will allow 1000 people to gather. People will be able to walk from the Greenway through the Village to the proposed Mill Park, which includes a heritage trail open to the public. They are also proposing a mobility hub for shuttles, busses, Lyft/Uber, and bikes.

They will be filing with the City next week and hope to have their permits by next spring. The filing consists of zoning changes with building parameters—zoning defines the building envelopes and uses. Kent noted that they have had over 130 meetings with the community and with the City for the past two years. Once they receive their permits, they expect the buildout to occur in phases—probably a 5-7 years buildout altogether. They have a master plan for signage in the hopes of simplifying signage for individual tenants.

In addition to traffic, the other voiced concern is the impact of the apartments on the schools. They have completed a fiscal impact analysis to deal with this issue.

Although they have not decided on the precise amenities they will offer to the residents, there will be at least one pool. As to other amenities, they are still discussing. (E.g., fitness center vs. boutique fitness facilities.)

They will, of course, be using the N2 prominently in their marketing. They agree that one needs to have housing for workers and to create a sense of place. They also think that the retail world is changing and they don't want it to look Legacy Place. Their view is more local retailers, who are service oriented. They have committed square footage for local retail, like NE Mobile Book Fair.

IV. Discussion of Vacancies on the CEA

The Select Board has filled the vacancies on the CEA as follows: Small Business Owner: Tina Burgos of Covet + Lou; Real Estate Development Attorney: Anne Marie Dowd; and Newton Needham Chamber member: Adam Meixner of 128CRE.

V. Update from the Downtown Subcommittee

Adam explained that the reconstituted subcommittee is working to understand the challenges to establishing and growing a business in the Downtown. In light of the current and proposed Town investment in the infrastructure, we need to understand the needs of businesses. Landlord and tenant discussions are underway. Members asked Devra to send out copies of the Minutes of the Subcommittee to the entire members (which she did). Tina was asked if she could attend our next meeting on August 8th—as a small business owner and retailer, her input would be very valuable to the Subcommittee.

VI. Discussion of Needham Crossing Branding

There was a brief discussion of where the Select Board stands on the logo for signage for Needham Crossing/N2. The Chamber provided a sample logo, which the Select Board did not like. Devra noted that we need to coordinate the look of the Needham Crossing/N2 Innovation District signage with that proposed by Wells Office; there needs to be continuity. Devra will discuss with Greg Reibman about where we are with a plan for the logo/signage. (Greg noted that the Well Avenue discussions have been delayed due to reconfiguration of the intersection and discussion of alternative access/egress.)

Members discussed how to get brokers and owners to use N2 Innovation District and/or Needham Crossing. It was noted that the press release on the \$96.5 million sale of the Shark/Ninja HQ didn't mention either. (It said Needham but mentioned only Founders Park.)

VII. Discussion of CEA priorities/future goals

Members should forward to Adam any suggestions for priorities this year beyond Downtown, Needham Crossing and Needham Heights. Although members discussed reuse of the Kindred buildings, Devra noted that Welltower has plans for reuse which are consistent with either assisted living and/or memory center, possibly together with medical office. So not so dissimilar to the Kindred use.

VIII. Update on Needham Crossing/N² Innovation District (Streetscape/ river walk grant; consulate outreach)

Devra noted that we were still waiting to hear from MAPC on our streetscape design grant. Moe asked that Devra send him the latest emails (which she did) and he will follow up with MAPC.

IX. Update on Infrastructure Improvements in Needham Crossing

Due to time constraints, this topic was not discussed.

X. Other Business

Devra advised the members that the Planning Board declined to allow food uses allowed as ancillary to the buildings in which they are located to advertise outside the building. Devra will need to submit special permits for all such uses so that they can do so. Devra will work with owners to try to file them together.

XI. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:10 a.m.