



TOWN of NEEDHAM
MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
Economic Development
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MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC ADVISORS
TUESDAY, JUNE 4, 2019 8:00 AM
Charles River Room
Public Services Administration Building
500 Dedham Avenue

Present: Adam Block, Chair; Rick Putprush; Moe Handel; Glen Cammarano; Michael Wilcox; Bob Hentschel; Anne Marie Dowd; Matt Talcoff; Bill Day; Tina Burgos; Stuart Agler; David Montgomery; and Devra Bailin.
Not Present: Adam Meixner; Ted Owens; and Virginia Fleisher.

I. Approval of Minutes

The Minutes of May 1, 2019, with amendments by Moe and Ted on page three section #4, were unanimously approved. Devra will send draft Minutes only to members.

II. Reminder of Next Meeting Dates

Our next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday July 10, 2019 in the Charles River Room. Because of increased traffic and the need for members to leave at 9:00, meetings will start at 7:30 a.m. Members will discuss the need for a meeting in August on July 10th. 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 CEA Priorities/Future Goals

Because Tina has to leave early, the discussion started with the downtown. Tina noted that the Street Fair was well attended but, as been noted in the past, there is no real benefit to the businesses. She is working with the Chamber's Needham Business Alliance group on various proposals. She noted that new businesses Mostly Grey, TinRabbit, Proud Mary and PEX Fitness are very concerned about the lack of foot traffic and how they will survive the summer. Tina does a lot of business online but many stores do not and the summer is particularly daunting. She is working with a graphic designer to create a map of all retail stores and restaurants which will be sponsored by Middlesex Savings Bank. She's also working to create activities/events to drive retail sales.

There was a discussion of several ideas including: Thursday (or other weekday) night event, August sidewalk sale, increasing outdoor seating opportunities, retailers' "yard" sale on the Commons. Tina is also working on making small business Saturday a much bigger event. It was noted that, although Town Meeting approved the street banner By-Law amendment, no location was created in the center during Phase 1 of the downtown streetscape project. Is there a way to place a street banner without waiting for the next phase of that project?

Members also discussed how to create connections with the large employers in Needham Crossing, including shuttles running throughout the day. Mike noted that they were using a shuttle in their Cambridge development but went to offering a free Lyft service in a radius around their project, which afforded their tenants' employees greater flexibility and convenience and actually cost less.

Needham is a destination restaurant location; how do we tap that to help retail? It was suggested that restaurants partner with retail stores that are open. Will it help to create greater connections with Needham Crossing residents and employees? Matt suggested that the Finance Club at the High School hold a competition about how to drive the most traffic to retail stores. Or they could perhaps adopt a store and drive traffic to it. The team that is most successful could win a prize.

It was suggested that banks offer gift certificates to local stores when customer opens a new account or CD. Bill noted that we had a welcome wagon program years ago. And Devra noted that the Needham Merchants Association started one with participating real estate brokers. Unfortunately the gift certificates that were given out rarely came back—since they often didn't have an expiration date, they had to be carried as liability when the businesses were sold. There was discussion of closing streets (in addition to Chapel) to create a more pedestrian friendly environment for shopping local. Childcare at the Y has been tried before but could be helpful to an event. Having music along the street—Eaton Square, Town Common, Greene's Field—during events. Perhaps a beer garden on the Commons?

Can we promote more foot traffic to the downtown stores during the Needham Soccer Tournament event? (Usually just pizza and takeout restaurants and hotels benefit.)

Adam B. noted that we need to do more to get on site selector lists and be more visible to State agencies which assist companies seeking to locate in Massachusetts or relocate within Massachusetts. We also need to have a better sense of commercial vacancies. Devra explained the difficulty of obtaining accurate information—many sites are not advertised on commercial listings. Some of the brokers, including Adam M.'s 128CRE, are very good at sending me information about properties for lease and/or sale but most have declined to routinely send me information. A subcommittee of Mike, Adam M., Adam B., Rick and Devra will work on getting this information together and work to get on site selector lists.

Adam B. will be setting up Chair/Vice Chair meetings with both the Select Board and the Planning Board.

Devra noted that we should be reapplying shortly for a streetscape design TAP from MAPC. There was discussion that, after the Graffito presentation, we will continue to work on signage, amenities, food trucks, use of the unbuilt pad sites for outdoor gathering/events, pedestrian access, and initiate programming. The Town is committed to moving along on the streetscape design issues even if

we don't get State funding. Members discussed the Boston's Business Improvement District. It was noted that this is tax money and some members expressed the preference for doing it privately. The members would welcome a presentation on Boston's BID—which the Chamber offered a year or so ago. Devra will look into it.

Anne Marie noted that the federal disposition rules, which give preference to governmental entities for disposition of assets, do not apply to East Militia Heights Army Corps. of Engineers' property; an exemption was received. So it will go to the highest bidder.

There was a discussion of the fact that the Chamber Executive Committee decided to postpone efforts to fund N² Innovation District so that the Chamber can engage in strategic planning for the Chamber generally and the District particularly. A Strategic Planning Committee was set up. For that reason, Chuck Tanowitz, its current director, will be leaving in late August due to lack of funds. Devra noted that she, along with another member of the Board of Directors, expressed strong concerns about the decision and the impact on ongoing efforts to market the district. She also was concerned that the N² Committee was not consulted with respect to that decision. The N² Committee will continue to meet and the Chamber will continue to events/programming are supposed to continue in Chuck's absence. Moe requested the names of the Strategic Planning Committee. [Devra gave that information to Moe.]

IV. Update on Industrial Zoning (Highway Commercial 1)

A workshop between the Select Board and the Planning Board is being arranged to discuss the zoning. [It is now scheduled for 5:00 July 2nd in the Charles River Room at PSAB.) Devra will also be present. It is anticipated that the workshop will be facilitated by the consultant hired by the Planning Department to provide three dimensional drawings. The plan is still to get this zoning on the fall Town Meeting Warrant.

V. Report on Chestnut Street Zoning (Town Meeting)

The zoning was defeated at Town Meeting.

VI. Report on Accessory Apartment Zoning (Town Meeting)

The zoning was referred back to the Planning Board due to the number of amendments, concerns about renting two units, definition of family member allowed to live in the unit, and enforcement of nine month limitation on owner absence.

VII. Update on Needham Crossing/N² Innovation District

See above discussion.

VIII. Update on Infrastructure Improvements in Needham Crossing

Devra noted that the intersection of Oak, Christina and Needham Street, Newton's MassWork's grant, has begun. There is still no word on the actual start date on the Corridor Project but the bid documents are not expected to go out until the fall (originally it was summer).

IX. Update from Downtown Subcommittee

See discussion above in future goals.

X. Other Business

Dave noted that there is a Transportation Summit by the Select Board on Monday at 7:00 p.m. Dave's Transportation Committee will be there. Due to time constraints, this item was not further discussed.

XI. Adjourn

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