



TOWN of NEEDHAM
MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
Economic Development
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MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC ADVISORS
WEDNESDAY, June 5, 2013 7:30 AM
Charles River Room PSAB

Present: Matt Talcoff, Chair; Glen Cammarano; Bob Hentschel; Marty Jacobs; Bill Day; Moe Handel; Elizabeth Grimes; Bruce Herman; Michael Wilcox; Lee Newman; and Devra Bailin
Not Present: Walter Collins; Tom Jacob; Damon Borrelli; Janet O'Connor; Matt Borrelli; and Brian Nadler

I. Approval of Minutes

The members approved the minutes for the meeting of May 2nd.

II. Reminder of Next Meeting and Hearing Dates

It was decided to cancel our July meeting (which was scheduled for the 3rd) and hold open the possibility of meeting in August (on the 7th as previously scheduled) should the need arise. Otherwise, Devra will notify members of its cancellation as well. Our future meetings will continue to be held on the first Wednesday of each month, unless it is a holiday. All meetings will be in the Charles River Room at PSAB.

III. Update on Needham Crossing

Devra explained that she has emailed Robyn Briggs to find out if any other students submitted logos. She also noted that Dave Linde has not yet sent anything in and, therefore, Devra has sent an email to Matt B. about following up to see if Dave's still interested. It was decided that we will follow the same procedure we did with respect to the naming process to select a logo; that is, we will pull together all of the persons/companies who were involved in the Branding Subcommittee's naming and hold a hearing to narrow the choices to 3 or 4 logos. The CEA will then make a recommendation to the BOS, which will make the final decision.

Devra noted that Matt B. asked how we get Needham Crossing listed on Google Maps and Devra asked for input. Liz noted that she just looked it up and it's there—it's not the entire area but it is shown already!

IV. Request by Restaurants to all full alcohol licenses if under 100 seats

Moe explained that the BOS seems disposed to allow full alcohol licenses to restaurants with seating capacity under 100 seats. He noted that several current restaurants have an issue because they don't have seating for 100. Devra explained that several restaurants were given licenses based on seating plans which showed 100 seats and the Building Department issued occupancy permits to them. The new Building Commissioner was asked to count seats by the BOS and many don't have that number of seats but more importantly don't have the square footage to legally authorize 100 occupants under the Code. Moe explained that when they try to sell the restaurant, there will be an issue about whether the new owner can qualify for a liquor license.

Devra noted that she has had to tell upscale restaurants seeking to locate in Needham that they must have 100 seats to get a full alcohol license; since a lot of these restaurants want a more intimate setting and can't open here if they can't serve their signature cocktails, we lose them. Devra was asked to see if surrounding communities allow such service to smaller restaurants—Newton, Wellesley (which was thought to be exploring this option through Home Rule Petition), and Dedham. Moe said the only real reservation is bringing this initiative so soon on the heels of the retail alcohol sales petition. The CEA voted to recommend that the BOS proceed with licensing restaurants with under 100 seats for full liquor service so that we can encourage small boutique high quality establishments. It was noted that wine and beer is available for restaurants with seating capacity under 100 seats.

V. Update on Zoning Initiatives for Annual Town Meeting

Town Meeting approved the Mixed Use-128 Zoning dimensional amendments. The Sign By-Law amendments, with the exception of the Street Banner provisions, were approved. Devra noted that it was not clear to Town Meeting who asked for the provision and why. Moe said that the BOS will bring the issue forward again, as the discussion which resulted in its removal was somewhat off-point and there were responses which should have come forward and didn't. The clarification requested by the Building Commissioner on lot width passed. Town Meeting also approved by unanimous consent the revised TIF for TripAdvisor. It also passed the medical marijuana moratorium and the eminent domain protections By-Law. Finally, it approved the clarification on the half-story definition.

Lee was asked about the residential overlay for Mixed Use-128, which is supposed to be on the Fall Town Meeting Warrant. Lee said that she is working with Phil Herr on it.

VI. Report from Downtown Streetscape Working Group

Lee reported that the Group is presently working on the traffic issues and explained some of the ideas being explored to improve it. Devra noted that a fault in the traffic analysis so far is its reliance on averages; it is not the average time at the intersections that poses a problem; it's the time it takes when a train comes through. It was also pointed out that a left-hand turn on Great Plain from Chapel would help to reduce School Street traffic, as that's where trucks and other vehicles turn because they can't do so on Route 135. There have been a lot of complaints about bringing this traffic through the neighborhood.

Lee also discussed the Lincoln Street parking lot plans and the Group wants to keep the streetscape consistent on this lot and make sure there is adequate screening. Devra asked if there any thought being given to redistributing permit parking from Chapel to Lincoln; the merchants want more spaces freed up for customers at this critical centrally located lot.

There was discussion of the Heffernan's request to consolidate dumpsters in the Chapel Street lot. Because of on-going lease negotiations, the owner of the Rice Barn and Beersheba Nails is not interested in consolidating at this time. (Betsy Heffernan sought to have her tenants' dumpsters consolidated with Rice Barn's and The Center Café's.) Because the owner of Lewando's is out of the country, she can't really coordinate with him; so she then asked if one or two spaces could be spared on Town property to accommodate an attractive dumpster corral. Moe said that he will look into the possibility of the Town providing this service (for which, of course, there would be a cost, which he will also explore).

There was again discussion of the need to underground the overhead wires on either side of the Town Hall, as the poles are unsightly and potentially dangerous. It was again discussed that undergrounding should also be done on Highland Avenue in Needham Crossing.

VII. Ideas for Promoting/Assisting with Local First

Devra said that, based on CEA discussions and Mike's suggestion, she put ads for unpaid interns on various college websites. She was happy to report that she has "hired" Hongling, a student at Babson to work with her on collecting information about locally-owned independent businesses, which can form the basis of a directory. We have been working on educating consumers about the economic reasons for shopping locally but we really haven't yet focused on the second prong—what we have to offer here in Town by way of products and services. Hongling will conduct individual interviews and pull together the information we need. This information will also be very helpful for the marketing plan study to be conducted by Babson students in the Fall. Marty suggested inviting Hongling to the CEA meeting in September, which Devra will do.

There was also some discussion about getting companies to make donations for the various NBA and NMA initiatives. Mike pointed out that large companies often contribute but you have to go through an approval process. Bob noted that Chevrolet donates to the Little League.

Devra explained that Bruce has put her in touch with Tina Santoro-Smith who is the Marketing Director for Newburyport Development, an affiliate of New England Development. Devra will be meeting with Tina shortly to get her advice about increasing business involvement in NBA and NMA initiatives.

VIII. Zoning Initiatives

In addition to the Residential Overlay for Mixed Use-128, one of the priorities identified by the CEA was streamlining. Lee indicated it will put on the Planning Board agenda soon and Liz said that the Board is anxious to work on this issue. The Planning Board will also be looking at the zoning proposals requested to deal with medical marijuana facilities.

IX. Update on Downtown Subcommittee

See VIII. Devra also explained that Babson students have chosen to provide a marketing plan for the Downtown as part of their Management Consulting Field Experience program. (Devra noted that

we had applied for this year's Spring semester at Liz's suggestion but we didn't get chosen by the students.) Devra will be meeting with the students in early September to go over the plans for the study and recommendations.

X. Other Business

Bob asked if something could be done to clean up the Junction. He noted that the parking lot looks like it hasn't been swept in years and there is trash all over the tracks and grounds from the ice cream store. Moe noted that the parking lot and area is owned by the MBTA, but agreed to discuss it with the Town Manager. He also noted that garbage complaints should be addressed to the Health Department.

XI. Adjourn

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