



TOWN of NEEDHAM  
MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT  
**Economic Development**  
781-455-7550 x213

**MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC ADVISORS**  
**THURSDAY, May 2, 2013 7:30 AM**  
**Charles River Room PSAB**

Present: Matt Talcoff, Chair; Glen Cammarano; Tom Jacob; Bob Hentschel; Marty Jacobs;  
Elizabeth Grimes; Janet O'Connor; Matt Borrelli; Bruce Herman; Michael Wilcox; and Devra  
Bailin

Not Present: Walter Collins; Bill Day; Damon Borrelli; Moe Handel; Brian Nadler; Lee Newman

I. Approval of Minutes

The members approved the minutes for the meeting of April 3rd.

II. Reminder of Next Meeting and Hearing Dates

The next meeting date is June 5th. 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. There was discussion of whether to hold the meetings in July and August; most members present cannot make the July 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting but those present agreed to put over the issue until next month. It is likely there will only be one meeting during the summer.

III. Update on Needham Crossing

Matt B. explained that, due to other commitments, Dave Linde has not had the opportunity to create a logo and it was agreed that no decision will be made in the near future. Devra explained that, at the CEA's suggestion, she contacted David Neves and Linda Burke about having students try their hand at possible logos for Needham Crossing. The High School Graphic Arts teacher, Robyn Briggs, had her class work on a logo design for "Needham Crossing", incorporating the name and some sort of symbol reflecting the area. Devra copied and distributed the student ideas received from Robyn; she expects at least six other students to submit their work. Bruce asked how the logo is intended to be used. Devra noted it will be on signage in Needham Crossing and in Highway signage but doubted that it would be used much by owners or businesses in the area. Mike said that he will look at existing signage and see how it can be re-clad with the name and logo. He will find out where the signs are located and explore how to sign the entrance to the park on Highland Avenue. He asked how much money was left with the consultant; Devra said there's about \$3700 and part of that is for use with respect to signage. Glen noted that there needed to be visibility from Route 128. Mike noted that the name played well at the NAIOP meeting yesterday.

Matt T. asked about the process of selecting a logo. Devra commented that she envisioned the CEA narrowing the options—through a similar process to that used to decide on the name—with the BOS making the final decision. Matt B. confirmed that was correct.

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

According to Matt. B., he and Moe have discussed this but that the matter has not been discussed by the entire Board of Selectmen yet. He will get it on the Agenda and get back to the CEA.

V. Update on Zoning Initiatives for Annual Town Meeting

The Planning Board voted to approve the Mixed Use-128 Zoning dimensional amendments. A question arose at one of the precinct meetings at the League of Women Voters about whether a study was done to justify the changes. Unfortunately, the Planning Board member answered, inaccurately, that there was no study. The answer should have been that, aside from the special permit provisions for additional height and increased FAR, the effect of the changes was studied in connection with the original Goody Clancy report in 2001 and many of the changes actually recommended by that report. Glen noted that these dimensional changes were part of the consultant's work completed for the NEBC. Matt T. pointed out that the CEA did study the issues—held symposia and got owner, developer, and public input. Tom thought that there was not a lot of push back. Devra noted that we are very unlikely to get any significant development due to the number of small lots and disparate ownership. Given that, Matt B. asked, what the plan is for the streetscape in the interim; how can it be improved? Devra noted that the problem is that most of the lots are fully developed with parking bleeding into the street layouts. Until someone takes advantage of consolidated lots to create a more reasonable street alignment, improvements are difficult.

Matt T. asked what the plan is for undergrounding—including along Highland Avenue; he noted that was promised when the corridor work was studied years ago. Devra pointed out that the cost of Needham Highland Avenue corridor is about \$7 million; to underground we were told it would be an additional \$5 million. Including undergrounding from Webster to Route 9 almost doubled the cost of the project.

Marty noted that many of the new Town Meeting members were not familiar with this part of Town. Liz explained that she will be explaining it using three maps: one of the area; one showing the businesses in the area; and the other showing 350' from the River, where heights will not change. Marty said that one person asked whether the incentives were sufficient. It was agreed that the incentives may not be sufficient to promote desired development, especially for smaller lots, and there may in the future be a need to revisit the FAR requirements (which Simon Boyd has cited as problematic) and perhaps other requirements, as well. Marty suggested and Liz agreed to include a suggestion that there may be future changes.

A question was asked about the status of the residential overlay, which is supposed to be on in the Fall Town Meeting warrant. Devra said that she has asked Lee for an update.

VI. Report from Downtown Streetscape Working Group

Tom reported that the Committee met last Wednesday and is going through the elements of the design. The traffic study is on-going and the other elements will get detailed further after the traffic report comes in. He has received lengthy emails from many people about what they think the streetscape should look like, and they are not all in agreement. Devra noted that she has received requests that the plan include the undergrounding of utilities. Although most areas of the downtown are already undergrounded, Chapel Street and the portion of Highland opposite it are not (that is, on either side of Town Hall). The Chapel Street wires, especially those in the parking lot, are particularly unsightly and potentially dangerous. As Rick Merson noted when Devra discussed it with him, this is our opportunity to fix it; once the work is done in the downtown, it may be another thirty years before we revisit it. Tom said that everyone would like to see this done but it is a question of cost; the Working Group will get an estimate. Tom noted that the parking banner for Chapel Street lot should be installed soon. (Devra noted that it has been almost two years since the merchants raised this signage issue and it would be helpful to address it.) Tom pointed out that the Group is not close to making any decisions; the time line is late Fall, but he thinks it may take longer.

## VII. Ideas for Promoting/Assisting with Local First

Matt T. suggested having a radio broadcast about it, like the ones for home sales. Other members were not familiar with the service. Devra noted that the merchants have been advertising Second Saturday, a monthly day for specials and shopping locally. Most of the members haven't heard of it. Matt B. suggested QR codes which allow people to access specials from their phones. Matt B. spoke with Dave Davison about getting a 10 minute button on parking meters like Natick so that short-term parkers can run in and out without paying for an hour. Janet thought the merchants should consider being open on Sunday, which is a huge shopping day; Glen suggested being open late one evening (Friday?) to take advantage of people waiting to get into the restaurants. Devra noted that there is a real problem getting the word out and advertising (as is evident from the Second Saturday campaign which has been in the paper) is not terribly helpful. We also have a problem in getting critical mass—it doesn't help to be open on Sunday or in the evening if only a few stores do it. Marty said that, while he reads the paper, he doesn't look at the ads. Liz suggested spotlighting one business a week; Devra said that the paper said that it would do it once a month BUT if news takes over the space, it doesn't happen. The NBA does feature businesses on its website Discoverneedham.

Members felt that cash mobs don't make any sense. It was noted that Saturday's cash mob at Taylor's was not particularly successful. Tom thought there were not effective. Janet said that customers will ask what's in it for them; a cash mob to save a business provides little incentive to the customer, who will come only if there is something he wants to buy.

Mike suggested, in connection with QR codes, to connect with bargains through Groupon. Glen noted that Muzi has used them and price point is critical; too low a point you get bottom buyers, who won't come back; he noted that if priced correctly, you can drive in new customers. He has used both Groupon and Living Social. It was not clear to members that having specials on a website like Discoverneedham makes sense. In fact, Glen suggested that the merchants coordinate functions like the Holiday Stroll with Groupon or Social Living.

Bruce pointed out that there is a fairly active social media presence in Newburyport. There has not been so much participation in special coupons but merchants are using the social media to blast new products and services. In Newburyport, the landlords fund 100% of the cost. There is a need to get significant participation from merchants, especially at special events or promotions. Bruce noted the fashion show, which Devra said the merchants are doing in connection with Needham Goes Pink—a breast cancer awareness and fundraising event to benefit patients at BID Needham who require services or products in connection with breast cancer treatment there. (The Committee is working the BID Needham to create a special fund and to come to agreement that the costs charged to patients using the fund will be at the lowest rate.)

Mike suggested that we approach local colleges to assist with various projects. By creating internships, we can get volunteers to help the merchants. (Devra noted we have reapplied for the Babson downtown marketing study as a course.) It was noted we could use interns to provide the merchants with an ability to collect information on what businesses sell or provide by way of products and services. Devra will talk with the merchants about it tomorrow.

Bob suggested that merchants should do some sort of concerted effort to participate in One Fund Boston. Liz noted that Farm Fresh donated some of its receipts to the Fund and they tripled their business that night. Devra will bring all these ideas to the merchants.

#### VIII. Reminder Needham Open Studios

Devra reminded that Saturday May 4 (10-4) and Sunday May 5 (12-4) is Needham Open Studios and many downtown merchants have opened their doors to NOS artists. Devra will be showing at Perennial Designs and will be giving away her jewelry, quilts, and other crafts for donations of certain amounts to HelpHOPELive. Devra asked members to get the word out; supporting our local artists is a way to infuse the local economy.

#### IX. Update on Downtown Subcommittee

Marty noted that there is nothing to report from the Planning Board on this issue at this time.

#### X. Other Business

Members noted several things are happening around Town. Three Square Meals is coming to Needham—owned by a Needham resident—at the former Bickford’s site. Global has taken over the Mobil Station at Nehoiden and Great Plain, resulting in a drop of gas prices. Vinodivino has applied for its building permit but the plans differ from those shown to the BOS and approved by the Planning Board; new plans leave retail space open on Highland Avenue. Orange Leaf is opening near Subway, across from the High School; this additional frozen yogurt store has prompted Swizzles to look into expanding its food offerings. There is another frozen yogurt store proposed in Needham Crossing near Spigas. Devra noted that there have been inquiries for Ken Mackin’s building on Great Plain so she hopes to see tenants there soon. Matt B. was asked if the 7 Eleven (former Friendly’s) got a 24 hour permit from the BOS; Matt explained that they had not officially applied but it was suggested they ask for something less than 24 hour. Marty asked where the Farmer’s Market is going; he thought they had a one year special permit and he doesn’t believe they have come back. Devra will inquire. Bob asked

why there was so much permitting required for Needham Music. Devra said that schools do require special permits; Marty said that is what they needed from the Planning Board. Bob noted that there were multiple notices; Devra said they could have required a special permit for signage. She added that the owner of Joel's commented that she didn't realize how much was involved in just moving a sign from one location to another. Lisa is moving from the space next to Harvey's into the space formerly occupied by Needham Music, which is now moved into the former Sovereign space. Finally, it was noted that Volante's was issued approval by the ZBA to sell craft beer.

#### XI. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:07 a.m.