



TOWN of NEEDHAM  
MASSACHUSETTS

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

**MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC ADVISORS**  
**WEDNESDAY, December 4, 2013 7:30 AM**  
**Charles River Room PSAB**

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

**I. Approval of Minutes**

The members approved the minutes for the meeting of November 6, 2013.

**II. Reminder of Next Meeting and Hearing Dates**

Our next meeting will be on January 8th. 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 Mixed Use-128 Residential Overlay**

Lee reported that this is with the consultant Phil Herr but she feels there may be a better opportunity for housing elsewhere. The members felt that this project should move forward anyway, as Winhall is supportive of the mix of uses and they own sufficient property to accomplish a project. It was pointed out that Charles River Landing was a successful project and something like that on the River in Mixed Use-128 would be desirable. The CEA does not want to abandon the housing along the River or miss the opportunity to provide for it. Lee suggested we might want to tie such housing to High Tech workers as Boston has done; one bedroom and studios. Devra noted that Winhall is looking for mixed use but also wants greater density than we were able to pass. Lee noted that this area will likely be the site for one of the overlays for medical marijuana facilities.

**IV. Update on Home Rule Petition for Restaurants with Less Than 100 Seats**

Moe explained that the next step is for the Legislature to approve the Petition. The BOS hasn't yet decided whether the issue will be on the April or November ballot. It was suggested that it may well matter.

**V. Update on Babson Marketing Study/Plan**

The MCFE students present their work at the final presentation on December 13<sup>th</sup> at 10 a.m.- 12:00 p.m. and Devra requested again that members try to attend. The presentation will be videotaped for those who cannot attend. Five members said they could or would try to attend.

## **VI. Public Meeting on Needham Crossing Logo Options**

Devra and Matt T. appeared before the Board of Selectmen on November 12<sup>th</sup> to present the CEA recommendations. The BOS adopted the logo selected as its first choice by the Council. Next step is for the consultant to work on taglines, signage and signage location. There was discussion of creating a Needham Crossing app. There was also discussion about funding actual signage, including the possibility of using traffic mitigation funds or the private funds supplied by Normandy to the owners association.

## **VII. Update from Downtown Streetscape Working Group**

Tom explained that the group is targeting a February presentation to the BOS. The next meeting is scheduled for December 18<sup>th</sup> from 8:00-10:00 a.m. in the Charles River Room. Parking remains the biggest issue, especially the loss of on-street parking spaces necessitated by the proposed roadway improvements. Moe and Tom have asked the consultant to create a plan with no loss of on-street parking. It boils down to the crosswalks and associated bump-outs. Devra asked if Wellesley had figured out how to plow them, as at a meeting a year or so ago, the Town Engineer expressed concerns and shared problems with doing so. Devra noted that merchants along the Michelson's block want direction into the Garden Street lot, so there should be some public parking spaces there. It was discussed that at least 10 permit spaces should be designated public and the additional permit parking put in the Lincoln Street lot. This would require moving some Town employees into the new Lincoln Street lots. There was also discussion of the Chapel Street poles (need to underground) and plowing of entire area (and not into store backs). Devra spoke briefly about the dumpster consolidation effort with two landlords, which proposal is before the Town. Moe will discuss these issues with Kate and other members of the BOS.

## **VIII. Update on Industrial District Subcommittee**

Devra noted that the Subcommittee has been reviewing the areas of Town zoned Industrial or Industrial 1. The review has revealed a number of recurrent problems: split lots, Route 128 zoned as SRB or SRA (creating setback etc. issues), streets zoned residential or ambiguously zoned, railroad tracks zoned residential or ambiguously, and 50' setback from residential zones (some of which are on the property itself) and transition zones. Because some areas have at present little or no real likelihood of development, it was thought that the subcommittee should not focus on rezoning them at this time. A few zones need to reflect current and surrounding uses; suggestions as to how to deal with split lots may be approached differently depending on the zone. Focus will be on Industrial 1 and Industrial along Route 128/Reservoir Streets, where development is most likely to occur in the near future and have the greatest economic impact.

## **IX. Update on Downtown Subcommittee (Streamlining Suggestions)**

The Downtown Subcommittee decided to focus on discrete zoning issues and have Liz start taking them directly to the Planning Board. The current plan is to present the following: modifications to boiler plate language to reduce necessity of returning the Board and reduce problems created with respect to financing; changes to the Insignificant Modification Policy to make sure it expressly deals with post construction issues; moving the façade modifications to the Design Review Board including building frontage zone amenities (street furnishings, displays and seating/tables for non-restaurants) with appeal to the Planning Board; allowing new food use owners to sign onto material conditions of existing permits (number of seats, hours of operation, maximum number of employees, etc.); declaring a moratorium on requiring parking plans for restaurants with 100 seats or less; and revising the rules about when a special permit is required for modifying a preexisting nonconforming parking lot. The plan is to create discrete zoning solutions to perceived problems and then have Liz initially present them to the Planning Board. If necessary, working sessions to address them will be arranged. Liz has begun the discussion of these issues with the Planning Board.

There was robust discussion of the above at the meeting. Lee pointed out that it appears that Planning Board members are willing to provide flexibility for preexisting nonconforming parking lots when one use changes to another in areas where there is municipal parking and the area is pedestrian oriented. While the Subcommittee proposed 15 as being the trigger point when a special permit/waiver will still be required, Lee believes the Planning Board may choose 5-10. In areas where there are no municipal lots, she believes the Planning Board will not recommend proceeding without hearing and the same would apply to any additions to existing buildings. Devra noted that Jon Schneider had also weighed in and he doesn't want applications to come to the ZBA where there is a trigger and the only waiver is of parking lot design requirements.

Lee noted her objection to the Insignificant Modification Policy applying to post-construction situations, which she viewed as a slippery slope. Devra commented that this would mean changing out signs for nicer ones (after approval by DRB) would require hearing before the Planning Board and this is precisely what prevents owners and tenants from making changes. It was suggested that such changes be approved by the Planning Director and a designee of the Planning Board. The expressed concern is the lack of standards, which Devra believes we can provide. The test is really—would a reasonable board deny the request? If not, hearings, whether statutory or de minimus, seem unnecessary. Bob noted that the real issue is that, once you have a request going to the Planning Board, the Board is free to and often does raise other issues. There was discussion of the role of the Planning Board in enforcement—often landlord issues—and its connection with permitting, which is primarily a tenant issue. Marty indicated that the hearing is the opportunity to enforce conditions; Bob noted that that is part of the problem but it's also one of timing. Hearings require formal filings and legal representation. It dramatically increases the costs of and delays improvements. As a consequence, they are not made at all. There was discussion that it may be more appropriate to have the Building Inspector enforce outstanding issues.

There was discussion of having the DRB approve façade modifications. Marty had no problem with this in concept but advised he does not believe that the By-Law allows it. He noted we need to change 7.7.2.2. Devra noted this could be added to the language already proposed.

## **X. Discussion of Local First Initiatives**

Devra spoke briefly about the Holiday Stroll on December 14<sup>th</sup>. Merchants are working hard on community events; the community needs to repay the favor by actually shopping in the stores.

**X. Other Business**

None

**XI. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:05 a.m.