



TOWN of NEEDHAM
MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
Economic Development
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MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC ADVISORS
WEDNESDAY, November 6, 2013 7:30 AM
Charles River Room PSAB

Present: Glen Cammarano; Moe Handel; Tom Jacob; Matt Talcoff, Chair; Janet O'Connor; Elizabeth Grimes; Bill Day; Michael Wilcox; and Devra Bailin

Not Present: Bruce Herman; Marty Jacobs; Walter Collins; Damon Borrelli; Matt Borrelli; Bob Hentschel; and Brian Nadler

Also Present: Denise Garlick

I. Approval of Minutes

The members approved the minutes for the meeting of October 2, 2013.

II. Reminder of Next Meeting and Hearing Dates

Our next meeting will be on December 6th. 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

There was nothing new to report on this issue. Matt T. wanted assurances that this would be on the May Town Meeting.

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

Devra explained that this request for Home Rule Petition unanimously approved at Town Meeting on Monday night. The next step is for the Legislature to approve the Petition and for the voters to approve the measure. Devra asked Moe if the matter would be on the April or November ballot. Moe said that that had not been decided and it was expressed that it may matter.

V. Update on Babson Marketing Study/Plan

Devra explained that the MCFE students presented their preliminary work, which Devra went over with them. Devra had reviewed a full marketing plan for a small downtown in Washington State near Seattle and used it to suggest additional focus for the final report. The task is to take a restaurant destination location and join it to some sort of niche retail focus to create a unique marketing plan for the

downtown. As the members know, the final presentation will be made on December 13th at 10 a.m.-12:00 p.m. and Devra requested that members try to attend. Moe asked if it will be videotaped for those who cannot attend—he can't. Devra will ask.

VI. Public Meeting on Needham Crossing Logo Options

Devra noted that she and Matt T. are scheduled to appear before the Board of Selectmen on November 12th to present the CEA recommendations. A memorandum was sent to the Board previously.

VII. Update from Downtown Streetscape Working Group

Tom explained that the group is targeting a February presentation to the BOS. Parking remains a major issue, especially the loss of on-street parking spaces necessitated by the proposed roadway improvements. Harvey's was concerned about the loss of 3 spaces and they have gotten two back. He pointed out there are a lot of signage issues. 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. 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. Matt T. reminded the members that the lines on Highland Avenue after the interchange should also be undergrounded. It was noted that the cost of undergrounding does not include the cost to individual owners to bring the lines underground from the street into their buildings.

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 ambiguous, 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 focus on zoning of them. A few zones need to reflect current and surrounding uses; all need to be corrected to deal with split lot issues.

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. 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 noted that she's going to bring three or four at a time and see how it goes. She estimates she may be successful with three. She commented that the McDonald's façade modification required the franchisee to come before the Board with his attorney three times for things which had nothing to do with the upgrade (which was required by McDonalds and the franchisee could lose his franchise if he didn't comply).

X. Discussion of Local First Initiatives

Devra spoke briefly about Needham Goes Pink. She said coming up are the Blue Tree Lighting on November 30th and the Holiday Stroll on December 14th. If any of the members have businesses that would like to participate or provide sponsorships, they should contact Lois Marks. Also if there are any performers who members are aware would like to be part of the stroll, they should encourage them. Merchants are working hard on community events; the community needs to repay the favor by actually shopping in the stores.

X. Other Business

There was discussion of the General Dynamics' property. Possible purchasers have been narrowed down to finalists. It is thought a decision will be made in the next couple of months. Denise raised the question of whether infrastructure is adequate for a 26 acre development. Devra noted that a report from Cabot Cabot & Forbes indicated it was not adequate for the 390,000 sq. ft. proposed but her contacts at NStar denied this. Denise will see if her contacts can inform us of the top of capacity for the current grid. Devra noted that the service to this area of Needham is antiquated and could Denise also see if there are plans to update. There was discussion about changes in zoning necessary to incent development of such a large area. Devra noted that a project this size could certainly be a subject for contract zoning—where the developer and Town agree on what it will look like and create special zoning to accommodate a particular project, otherwise know as planned development project. (Mark Rubin sent a letter suggesting this would be the correct approach to take; its working in Burlington.) There was also discussion as to whether a project of this magnitude—26 acres—required a residential component. This issue will have to await specific proposals.

XI. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:50 a.m.