



TOWN of NEEDHAM
MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
Economic Development
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MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC ADVISORS
WEDNESDAY, February 12, 2014 7:30 AM
Charles River Room PSAB

Present: Matt Talcoff, Chair; Glen Cammarano; Matt Borrelli; Marty Jacobs; Bob Hentschel; Elizabeth Grimes; Bill Day; and Devra Bailin, staff
Not Present: Moe Handel; Bruce Herman; Janet O'Connor; Tom Jacob; Michael Wilcox; and Brian Nadler
Also Present: Rick Putrush; Roy Cramer; and Andy Goldberg

I. Approval of Minutes

The members approved the minutes for the meeting of January 8, 2014.

II. Reminder of Next Meeting and Hearing Dates

Our next meeting will be on March 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.

III. Discussion of Electronic Billboard Sign By-Law

Devra explained that the Board of Selectmen last evening voted to seek the CEA's recommendation in regard to a proposal to install an electronic billboard on Route 128. Attorney Roy Cramer and his client Andy Goldberg were asked to come here this morning and explain the proposal and get our input and recommendations. Matt B. explained that the Board of Selectmen is seeking the input and recommendations from as many boards and committees as possible before making any decision on the proposal. Mr. Cramer handed out a copy of the draft sign by-law which is proposed to allow electronic billboards on Route 128 in accordance with State regulation and municipal by-law, as well as an outline of the proposal given to the BOS. Mr. Goldberg has identified a location on Reservoir Street. Mr. Cramer explained that they have written the draft Sign By-Law to be restrictive—only in commercial zones, at specified distances from other electronic billboards (1000'), at specified distances from interchanges (500'), no material visual impact to residences, and to be approved only by the BOS as special permitting granting authority. If approved, Mr. Goldberg's company, Logan Communications, would pay an impact fee (current offer is \$25,000 per side so \$50,000) and also give the Town five hours per month per side (total of 10 hours) for public service announcements. Devra noted that some of this time could be devoted to promoting the downtown restaurants and boutique

shops niche, as well as Needham Crossing. Mr. Cramer and Mr. Goldberg explained the maximum number of such billboards which could be put up (which will depend on how the State perceives the interchanges at Kendrick and Highland)—2 max on 128North and 3 on 128South—but the number would be entirely within the control of the BOS, from whose decision there would be no appeal. If the Reservoir billboard is approved before the MBTA converts its current billboard, the MBTA would be precluded from changing it. (The MBTA does not need local approval and would not be paying an impact fee.) Mr. Goldberg explained that the advertising slots are 10 seconds long and he targets mainly big advertisers but will consider offering a discount to local ones. Liz asked about the lease, which was to run 50 years, and the impact fee. Matt B. noted that the amount of the latter is to be negotiated. The billboard is approximately 14' high and has a V shape so it can be seen from both sides of the highway. The size is the same as the current MBTA billboard, the smallest billboard size available. Glen asked about whether illumination is limited at night and was told that it is subject to State regulation. There was discussion of control by the Town over the content of the advertising, which was noted to raise First Amendment issues. Mr. Goldberg noted that State law prohibits tobacco advertising but other advertising is subject to the standard in the By-Law (no sexually oriented or provocative advertising or messages). Glen noted that advertising our community would be wonderful but we would need assurances that the community service slots are spread out—some at rush (i.e., not all at 3 or 4 in the morning). Marty asked about enforcement of State and local requirements; Mr. Goldberg explained that the State will investigate a complaint. Marty indicated that meant we will probably be forced to enforce, especially as to local violations. Mr. Goldberg noted that his company, Logan Communications, has been in the business in the State for over 35 years and has an excellent reputation. Matt T. asked if the Planning Board was going to have input; Matt B. explained that they will be asked, as will the Design Review Board. Four members of the CEA voted in favor of the proposal, noting the considerable benefit of free advertising on promoting Needham, including Needham Crossing and the Downtown, to the two million commuters passing through the 128 corridor every day. The two members of the Planning Board and the member of the BOS did not vote. Matt B. said that a written recommendation is not necessary; he will report the CEA's recommendations to the BOS.

IV. Discussion of Food Cart Policy

Devra noted that this was the second issue the BOS asked that the CEA weigh in on. A copy of the draft policy was handed out. Matt B. explained that this came out of the Food Truck By-Law hearings and the desire to grandfather the hot dog guy. It was discussed that, before any hearings are held on the proposed policy, there should be outreach to all restaurants in the downtown to ascertain possible impacts and opposition. Bob questioned how the BOS would decide what's allowed and what's not—the standard is vague and the impacts to brick and mortar restaurants could be substantial. Liz noted that, if the hot dog guy (or any food cart) were not available, people will go to the brick and mortar restaurants, which make substantial investments in our community. Rick suggested that food carts could be limited to those having brick and mortar restaurants in Needham. Glen noted that this is not a level playing field—a food cart vendor has almost no capital investment and he cannot imagine restaurants approving the idea. We shouldn't undercut people who make substantial investment to get their brick and mortar restaurants up and running. The CEA voted that the food cart policy is not a good idea in the downtown area. (Matt B. abstained.) Matt B. again indicated that a written recommendation is not necessary; he will report the CEA's recommendations to the BOS.

V. Update on Mixed Use-128 Residential Overlay

No update was available.

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

Matt B. explained that two weeks ago he testified before the Legislature on our Home Rule Petition. The BOS expects it to be approved shortly and the Board intends to put it on the ballot for voter approval in April.

VII. Update on Babson Marketing Study/Plan

Devra handed out a copy of the final MCFE students' Downtown Marketing Study/Plan. She has filed a second application to seek greater specificity on how to achieve the niche identified by the students.

VIII. Update on Needham Crossing Work

Devra received a note from Mike Panagako about finalizing the branding work. He wondered whether they should continue to work on the signage (where Tina Snyder had pretty much done that), taglines, and gateway identification for us or if it made sense for KHJ to release the rest of the contract money and we use it for other things. Mike Wilcox had identified five signs identifying the New England Business Center with maps; each carries the name of its sponsor. I spoke to Mike Wilcox about the consultant's proposal and he thought it was a good idea to use the remaining almost \$4000 for re-facing the existing signs and getting a sign consultant to advise on gateway location signage on Highland Avenue. He suggests using Fast Signs. Devra contacted Mark Gluesing, who will work with us on re-facing them. The CEA voted to release the funds from the existing contract and engage Fast Signs to begin the work of re-facing and signage location. Devra will work with Sandy Cincotta to accomplish these results.

IX. Update on the Medical Marijuana Overlay District

The Planning Board held its hearing on the above. Devra explained that a copy of the CEA's letter to the Board is on the table. She also understands that individual landowners in Needham Crossing also expressed their views. The Planning Board has not yet deliberated.

X. Update from Downtown Streetscape Working Group

Due to the shortage of time, Devra simply noted that the Group is making its formal presentation to the BOS on February 25th. Further details will be distributed to members.

XI. Update on Industrial District Subcommittee

Devra briefly explained that the Planning Department is finalizing information about the Industrial zones the Subcommittee is targeting (including lot use and ownership information). Once that information is compiled, the Subcommittee will begin holding public workshops to get public input on dimensional and use changes for each zone. Focus will be on Industrial 1 and Industrial Districts along

Route 128/Reservoir Streets, where development is most likely to occur in the near future and have the greatest economic impact.

XII. Update on Downtown Subcommittee (Streamlining Suggestions)

Again, due to the shortage of time, it was simply reported that Liz and Devra are continuing to work with the Planning Board on Streamlining suggestions. It is hoped that specific progress can be reported at our next meeting.

XIII. Other Business

Devra invited members to participate in Needham's Wear Red Day on February 14th in support of Go Red for Women to raise awareness of heart disease in women. On behalf of the Needham Merchants Association, Devra has organized an educational event at the new Senior Center on Friday, February 14th from 1-3 p.m., which she hopes members will attend. The event is sponsored by the BID CardioVascular Institute and BID-Needham.

XIV. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:30 a.m.