



TOWN of NEEDHAM
MASSACHUSETTS

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

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC ADVISORS
WEDNESDAY, September 2, 2015 7:30 AM
Charles River Room PSAB

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

I. Approval of Minutes

The members approved the minutes for the meeting of June 3, 2015.

II. Reminder of Next Meeting Dates

Our next meeting will be on October 7th. Future meetings thereafter are scheduled for the first Wednesday of the month (unless a holiday) in the Charles River Room at PSAB.

III. Update on Marketing for Needham Crossing (Babson Consulting Club/Highway signage)

Devra explained that she has spoken with the head of the Babson Consulting Club and discussed the scope of the work being undertaken. Because this is a volunteer group with a shorter time span to work, it was agreed that the group would focus on the creative aspects of the assignment—marketing ideas for selling Needham Crossing brand. The club has an application deadline of September 13th; interviews are conducted between September 18-20 and the work will need to be completed by November 10th. The students take this extracurricular activity very seriously. Because of the short timeframe, Devra suggested that students meet with marketing representatives from a few of the big owners in the park. Devra asked Mike if Tina Snyder at Bulfinch could take some time to talk to the students and he agreed to “volunteer” her assistance. It was also suggested that Devra ask TripAdvisor and Normandy if they would make someone available. Although the Marriott was also suggested, it was thought that their advertising would be different from selling a particular hotel or area. Prior to the meeting, Matt Talcoff suggested getting the Branding and Marketing Committee back together and the members agreed. Devra noted that was Matt T., Bob, Glen and Mike. She asked if anyone else would like to serve and Rick volunteered. Devra will also discuss with Greg Reibman about how the branding of Needham Crossing and that of N² can be accomplished together.

Because the members had expressed concern about not having Needham Crossing and N² on any highway signs, members were asked to look around on their travels over the summer. Devra thanked the members who sent information in. (It was noted that Devra's review of the MassDOT Supplemental Sign Policy, resulted in the conclusion that the Needham Crossing/N2 signage does not even meet the blue sign requirements.) It was noted other communities have such signs, even though they don't meet the requirements either. Examples obtained over the summer include: 1. there are "sponsor a highway" signs which allow businesses to advertise along the highway (the sponsor panel is 56" by 20"); 2. blue Attraction sign on Route 3 for JFK Library, State Archives Center and Commonwealth Museum; 3. there are green signs for Solomon Pond Mall Road and South Shore Plaza Road—maybe we need to name one of the streets Needham Crossing Road? ; 4. blue sign for Myles Standish State Forest and Pine Hills Village Green and Pinehills Golf Club; 5. on I295 there's a green sign for Emerald Square; and 6. there are signs for Everett Square, Sullivan Square and Andrew Square. There was also a discussion about placing it in the Town's ROW running parallel to Route 128 if we cannot get MassDOT to allow signage. Devra will provide the information to Moe to discuss with the BOS and Kate.

IV. Update on Needham Crossing (Signage at Entrances)

Members were reminded that they had reviewed and approved the revised signage which Tina Snyder of Mike's office prepared. Devra previously confirmed ownership of the land on which the signs are proposed to be installed. She also confirmed with Anthony DelGaizo that, although we cannot put a sign on the Kendrick Street Bridge over the Charles, we could put one no larger than 36" by 36" in the Town ROW just past the Bridge. Mike explained that he has spoken to two of the property owners (Boston Properties, owner of the PTC building, and owner of Acapulcos' property) where we propose to put signs and they are very supportive. The third owner has been difficult to reach but Mike will keep trying. David Tobin confirmed that easements to the Town would be necessary for placing signage on private property. The biggest problem now is making sure that installation of the signs will not be impacted by work on the Add-A-Lane or Highland Avenue corridor project. It was suggested that we start with the sign on Town land (coming in from Newton on Kendrick) and then see how it goes. We will need to seek DRB approval of the signage and secure additional funds for the fabrication and installation—perhaps from the Owners' fund.

V. New or expanding businesses in Needham Crossing

Devra distributed a copy of the Boston Globe article "Business policies giving Needham an edge over Newton". The members commented on all the good press Needham Crossing has received over the last few months. Devra directed their attention to Bulfinch's press releases on Kaminario and Enservio, as well as the note on Boston Real Estate Advisors' ad, the TripAdvisor article and the consolidation of Europro (now SharkNinja) at the former General Dynamics site.

Members noted that we should be working hard on the Israeli connection. Setti Warren has been a trip to Israel to promote Newton and Moe said he was willing to go for Needham ☺.

VI. Discussion of NEBC zoning restrictions (use/dimensional) interfering with development

Devra has had brief conversations with Normandy about this issue. After the meeting, Devra spoke to Roy and asked again if Normandy would be willing to put in writing those dimensional and use

requirements which impaired, impeded or prevented them from building something they felt the market place was looking for. Devra noted that one of the issues that came up was the open space limitation (which resulted when the Planning Board refused to reduce it per the proposal from the CEA) and another was the limitation on retail, restaurants and other consumer services to multistory office buildings. It was noted that the large General Dynamics buildings are primarily one-story and, although proposed to be multi-tenanted, cannot have restaurants or other consumer facilities open to the general public. We should consider changing this to allow the possibility of a public restaurant or food court in these buildings as amenities to the park not just the building. Also, although not a concern raised by Normandy, the question was raised as to whether the 15000 sq. ft. per establishment is an impediment as well. Rick noted that a developer would not bring a plan for the buildings which is not presently allowed by zoning. Moe said that we are looking long-term; even if Normandy wouldn't want to take advantage of provisions allowing public amenities in a one-story building, we should set parameters on what we would allow. Bob noted that we should be doing more to encourage the mix of uses required in the district. Mike commented that we need to assure there are sufficient amenities in the park. Devra will work with Lee on a draft.

It was also noted that there is some confusion on the right to park on the streets in the NEBC. Although it is allowed, we require all parking for projects to be provided onsite. How are these street parking spaces to be considered?

VII. Update on Mixed Use-128 Residential Overlay

Devra reminded the members that she and Matt T. presented the CEA's recommendation regarding the overlay zoning and rationale to the BOS on May 26th. She said it was favorably received by the BOS and, although they did not take a vote, have asked the Planning Board to take it up. The Planning Board is supposed to put it on the warrant and agree to hold a hearing on September 29th.

VIII. Update on Industrial District Subcommittee

John Connery completed his report in June and provided supplemental work for Lee last month. We have just received the scope of the work for the traffic portion of the analysis, which Devra has reviewed. Although the scope is not problematic, the consultants' fee was over 30% over the estimate so she will be discussing this with Kien Ho. Once the scope and price are nailed down, we have to wait for the contract to be drafted and then approved. It will be another couple of months before work begins. We should also be getting elevation drawings for proposed zoning but Devra is not sure if Mark Gluesing has been cleared to do the work.

IX. Update on Infrastructure Improvements in Needham Crossing

In addition to the weekly updates from MassDOT, there will be a NNCC program updating everyone on the status of the Add-A-Lane project by the MassDOT at PTC on September 18th at 8:00. Signups are available online on the Chamber's website. Problems with traffic into the park have been experienced (as anticipated when we changed the two lanes coming in to one lane to accommodate two leaving).

X. Update on N² Innovation Corridor

The Federal Economic Development Commission finally funded the project. We now have a total of \$100,000.00 for the market study and marketing plan for the N² corridor—to create a path to long-term business growth in the corridor. The RFP was advertised over the summer and the responses received. The N² selection committee has reviewed the seven proposals and reduced the interview pool to four candidates. It is anticipated that the interviews will be conducted on September 18th and a decision made shortly thereafter. Per above, Devra will talk with Greg about how this can be coordinated with Needham Crossing promotion.

XI. Discussion regarding fostering relationship between downtown businesses and TripAdvisor

Devra was pleased to report that Tyler Young referred her to Matthew Gabree as the person at TripAdvisor to discuss this with. Devra will be meeting Matt at TripAdvisor on September 10th. The hope is to institute a regular shuttle into Needham Center (and Heights) to promote Needham restaurant and store use. It was suggested that the Town/NBA host a welcome TripAdvisor event in the downtown, which Devra will bring up at the NBA meeting.

XII. Discussion of how to reinvigorate the Downtown Subcommittee's Streamlining Efforts

Devra noted that to her knowledge there has been no progress on this since well before the BOS and Planning Board meeting months and months ago. She expressed frustration that so much effort went into identifying problems and potential solutions but very little has actually been accomplished. We are awash in bureaucratic impediments... Moe suggested reconvening the Subcommittee which Devra will do.

XIII. Discussion of public comment regarding large grocery in Needham Crossing

Moe received a public comment asking about a grocery store in Needham Crossing, like Wegmans. Moe promised to bring the matter to the CEA. Members confirmed their view that a large grocer in the area would be detrimental to development, especially considering the traffic impacts on the corridor.

XIV. Other Business

Matt T. asked about the streetscape for Needham Heights. Moe will look into the status of this.

XV. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:20 a.m.