



TOWN of NEEDHAM  
MASSACHUSETTS

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

**MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC ADVISORS**  
**WEDNESDAY, January 6, 2016 7:30 AM**  
**Charles River Room PSAB**

Present: Glen Cammarano; Moe Handel; Michael Wilcox; Marty Jacobs; Rick Putprush; Peter Atallah; and Devra Bailin.

Not Present: Matt Talcoff, Chair; Elizabeth Grimes; Janet O'Connor; Brian Nadler; Tom Jacob; Bruce Herman; Bill Day; Bob Hentschel; and Matt Borrelli.

**I. Approval of Minutes**

The members approved the minutes for the meeting of December 2, 2015.

**II. Reminder of Next Meeting Dates**

Our next meeting will be on February 3rd. Members asked Devra to see if the first Wednesday at 7:30 a.m. still works best for most members; she will send out an inquiry. Unless changed, future meetings will be 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)**

Devra provided members with a copy of the students' presentation. As was discussed last time, one of things that became clear is that we require some sort of owners association to maintain the website and provide leadership. (The situation in Needham is very different from one owner developments like Burlington and Ink Block.) There also needs to be a funding mechanism. Devra has asked the students if they would be interested in working on the project in the spring to create solutions for implementation of a multi-owner site—a sort of how to do it model.

Members discussed that our legislative representatives have recently submitted a letter to MassDOT asking that the green signs and/or blue signs say Needham Crossing: Gateway to N<sup>2</sup> Innovation Corridor. Devra was asked to find out from DPW/Engineering whether the Town controls property next to 128N right of way (along First Avenue) on which we could put such a sign if MassDOT continues to refuse the signage. (Email was sent out today.)

**IV. Update from the Downtown Subcommittee**

There has been no progress on moving forward with streamlining. Moe will follow-up on the idea of making this discussion a public process as the Subcommittee recommended.

#### **V. Update on Mixed Use-128 Residential Overlay**

CEA members want to have this on the Annual Town Meeting. Moe will coordinate efforts about the work to be done to explain this and get it moving. Rick pointed out that this should be represented not as a zoning change—the underlying zoning is not changing—but rather it provides additional development options. It adds an additional use to the mix and will let the market decide what works there. Moe noted that the provision encourages consolidation and access/egress improvements. Devra noted that it should be made clear to those who don't want to move it forward that: 1. we used this zoning as part of our applications for MassWorks—we assured the State we were moving ahead on zoning allowing multi-family residential development within the corridor and 2. we obtained funding for our consultant from Mass Housing Partnership because we said that the Town wanted to add residential to the mix in the area. We have, in Devra's opinion, an obligation to press for the adoption of this zoning and to let Town Meeting decide.

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

Devra reported to the members on her discussion of the above with the Planning Board. Devra explained that, with respect to the limitation on retail, restaurants and other consumer services to multistory office buildings, Lee wanted to require that such facilities be allowed on the ground floor of one-story buildings only in multi-tenanted buildings. She was concerned about stand-alone buildings. Rick noted that same would not be very likely due to the cost of the land. Moe asked and Marty agreed to speak to Lee about her reasons. Paul had raised issue with the fact that the limitation on 15,000 sq. ft. for food establishments must track the language of all food uses listed. Devra agrees with this. Marty was willing to allow restaurants on floors other than the ground floor. There were really no comments about this by other members of the Board. Members agreed that the market should dictate the location of restaurants. Marty will discuss this with Lee as well. The members agreed we should change these provisions to allow the possibility of a public restaurant or food court, retail, and consumer services in one-story buildings as amenities to the park and not just to the particular building.

Although the members previously agreed that we will study the zoning ban drive-thrus, there was a consensus on the Planning Board that they were not interested in doing so.

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

BETA finalized the traffic report, which Devra summarized for the members. Devra had directed that BETA indicate any mitigation measures that were required under no-build conditions, which they did. Devra can forward the final report to any members interested. It was no surprise that a signal is warranted at Gould and Central, as are certain retiming evaluations. Devra also has been unable to ascertain through the Planning Department whether the schedule will allow us to move forward with zoning in the spring. There are significant problems in holding public hearings on this after the Central Avenue/Elliott Street Bridge is closed—traffic will be especially bad along Gould Street. The neighbors may see this situation as a sign of things to come once we upzone. Again delays in moving these initiatives forward may cause us to miss the market. Devra is also still waiting for an

answer from the Department as to whether Architect Mark Gluesing has been cleared to do the elevation drawings. Moe will see what he can do to get the information we require to move forward and whether we can get the zoning before Town Meeting before the bridge is closed.

### **VIII. Discussion of Street Banners**

Members agreed that the street banner by-law amendment should be brought forward again. Moe will talk with his Board and see if there is a willingness to do so.

### **IX. Update on N<sup>2</sup> Innovation Corridor**

Devra noted that Camoin has circulated its draft Situation Assessment based on community meeting and interviews. She explained that there is once again tension with the NNCC on the issue of expanding the corridor to include other areas of Newton. Moe will reinforce with Greg that Needham contributed to and supported the grant because it related to the corridor in which we have a stake. The work cannot be expanded to dilute the scope and goals by moving into competing quadrants of Newton.

Devra noted that Needham Crossing and the N<sup>2</sup> Innovation Corridor have been receiving a lot of favorable press. She noted the BBJ listed the TripAdvisor in its highlighting of suburban headquarters and top tech stories of the year. Mike sent an article around that discussed “urbanization of the suburbs” and we are moving in the right direction. We are missing an entrepreneur incubator program within the corridor.

### **X. Discussion regarding fostering relationship between downtown businesses and TripAdvisor**

Devra explained the problems she has had in trying to schedule meetings there for community and civic organizations. She also noted the last minute decision to pull out of the shuttle for cyber Monday into the downtown. Members should consider how we can create these connections.

### **XI. Update on Infrastructure Improvements in Needham Crossing**

Due to members having to leave, this was not discussed.

### **XII. Other Business**

Mike mentioned that 200 First Avenue is being proposed for a limited service hotel.

### **XIII. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:10 a.m.