



TOWN of NEEDHAM  
MASSACHUSETTS

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

**MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC ADVISORS**  
**WEDNESDAY, February 3, 2016 7:30 AM**  
**Charles River Room PSAB**

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

**I. Approval of Minutes**

The members approved the minutes for the meeting of January 6, 2016. Concern was expressed about members who have not shown up for quite some time and Devra was asked to contact them to see if they want to continue to serve.

**II. Reminder of Next Meeting Dates**

Our next meeting will be on March 2nd. Devra reported that based on responses the first Wednesday of the month at 7:30 a.m. still works best for most members. 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 (MCFE Babson Application)**

Devra decided to submit an application to the Babson MCFE program to see if students are interested in moving this project forward. We know we require some sort of owners association to maintain the website and provide leadership. There also needs to be a funding mechanism. Devra has asked the students if they would be interested in working on the project to create solutions for implementation of a multi-owner site—a sort of how to do it model.

Moe advised that the letter our legislative representatives submitted to MassDOT asking that the green signs and/or blue signs say Needham Crossing: Gateway to N<sup>2</sup> Innovation Corridor was once again denied. At the request of the CEA, Devra last month asked the DPW/Engineering whether the Town controls property next to 128N right of way (along First Avenue) on which we could put such a sign but did not hear back. Moe will look into it. (After the meeting Devra was advised that there was no such area so she was asked by the Town Manager to make inquiries to PTC about such signage on their property. Because PTC is lessee, Devra also contacted Boston Properties which is the owner. The matter is under advisement with BP.)

#### **IV. Update from the Downtown Subcommittee**

There has been no progress on moving forward with streamlining. Moe asked that I resend the more neutral list of streamlining suggestions I drafted in September of 2014, which had been updated based on the few zoning changes already made. He 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 urge the BOS to put this on the Annual Town Meeting Warrant. Although Marty could not recall precisely, he believed that the Planning Board has asked the BOS to refer the article back. The Planning Board appears to remain supportive. Moe will coordinate efforts about the work to be done to explain this and get it moving. The members discussed the reasons why this should move forward and asked Devra to write up the list. 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. Moe noted that the road capacities for Route 128/95 and Highland Avenue/Needham Street are fixed; if we don't use it by encouraging development, Newton will. (Devra will prepare a full list and circulate it to members, which she did.)

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

The Planning Board discussed the proposed zoning amendments and Devra understood that the Planning Board, with respect to the limitation on retail, restaurants and other consumer services to multistory office buildings, agreed that such facilities be allowed on the ground floor of one-story buildings. They did not endorse allowing it only in multi-tenanted buildings. 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. Marty believes that the Planning Board asked the BOS to refer the article back to it for hearing. It should be on the May Town Meeting Warrant. The open space requirement will stay as it is for now.

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

Devra received word from the Town Manager that Architect Mark Gluesing has been cleared to do the elevation drawings. We must comply with best practices. Devra sent the information to Mark Gluesing and is waiting for his response. We cannot get the zoning before Town Meeting before the bridge is closed. We will need to consider our timing of our neighborhood meetings and zoning amendments in light of the closure.

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

Rick noted at the Collier's event "Needham Crossing" was used repeatedly, especially in connection with TripAdvisor's HQ. He thinks the name is sticking, as commercial brokers are using it.

Camoin's work is continuing. Devra will be meeting with them later in the month (February 22) for an update. Devra reported that the Chamber has also asked Babson graduate students to focus on strengthening the ties with Israeli businesses in the corridor. Devra will be interviewed by the students tomorrow. Israeli businesses include Kaminario which has received favorable press recently.

#### **IX. Discussion regarding fostering relationship between downtown businesses and the Town**

The members support the street banner by-law amendment as a means of making the public aware of events in the downtown which can increase foot traffic and business.

Devra reported that she received word yesterday that a Citizens' Petition has been filed which seeks to amend the current Food Truck By-law to allow food trucks in Needham Center (adjacent to the Town Common) and Needham Heights (adjacent to Avery Square Common). Food trucks are presently allowed only in designated areas of Needham Crossing which have been deemed "**underserved**". In addition to doing away with that requirement in the Center and the Heights (actually everywhere including Needham Crossing), the proposal also reduces the fee from \$1000 for a season to \$250. Under the proposal up to two food trucks would be allowed in the Center in the public right of way (so presumably in parking spaces) and one in Avery Square (ditto). The petition also reduces the required distance from a mortar and brick restaurant from 200' to 15'.

Members asked that I communicate this immediately to restaurant leadership and business organizations. A general hearing on food trucks was already scheduled by the BOS on March 8<sup>th</sup> so this will be discussed there as well.

Members noted their opposition to such an amendment as encouraging unfair competition with brick and mortar restaurants. Based on our discussion, they directed Devra to draft a letter detailing the CEA's reasons for opposing such a change, which will be economically damaging to our downtown areas and will serve to discourage new restaurants in Needham Crossing—quite in the opposition to the zoning change in the NEBC we have recommended and championed.

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

Based on current schedules, this work may not begin until mid/late July. Concerns were expressed that it is imperative to businesses that the bridge be open by the holiday season in mid-November.

#### **XI. Other Business**

Devra thought members would be interested in Needham's place on BJJ's January 2016 Book of Lists:

1. Among largest public companies in Massachusetts are two Needham companies: PTC (#35) and TripAdvisor (#41)

2. Among the fastest-growing public companies in Massachusetts is one Needham company: TripAdvisor (#27—increase in revenue 63%)
3. Among largest private companies in Massachusetts is one soon-to-be Needham company: SharkNinja (#11) and one existing Needham company: Nauset Construction Corp. (#96)
4. Among the fastest-growing private companies in Massachusetts is one Needham company: Acceleration Partners (#3 945% revenue growth) and one soon-to-be Needham company: SharkNinja (#49 103% revenue growth)
5. Among largest commercial property managers in Massachusetts is one Needham company: RK Centers (#14)
6. Among largest accounting firms in Massachusetts is one Needham company: Morris & Morris (#45)
7. Among largest insurance brokers in Massachusetts are five Needham companies: Rodman Insurance Agency Inc. (#19); Roblin Insurance Agency (#20); NorthStar Insurance Services Inc. (#21); Kaplansky Insurance (#23); and Provider Group (#24)
8. Among largest family-owned businesses in Massachusetts is one Needham company: Roblin Insurance Agency (#17)
9. Among largest caterers in Massachusetts is one Needham company: Bakers' Best Catering (#5)
10. Among largest minority/women-owned businesses in Massachusetts is one Needham company: State Cleaning Service (#19)
11. Among largest advertising agencies in Massachusetts is one Needham company: Mittcom (#22)
12. Among largest independent investment advisers in Massachusetts is one Needham company: Beaumont Financial Partners LLC (#21)
13. Among largest IT consulting firms in Massachusetts is one Needham company: Syrinx Consulting Corp. (#13)

### **XIII. Adjourn**

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