



TOWN of NEEDHAM  
MASSACHUSETTS

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

**MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC ADVISORS**  
**WEDNESDAY, March 2, 2016 7:30 AM**  
**Charles River Room PSAB**

Present: Matt Talcoff, Chair; Moe Handel; Michael Wilcox; Peter Atallah; Rick Putprush; Bill Day; Bob Hentschel; and Devra Bailin.

Not Present: Elizabeth Grimes; Janet O'Connor; Brian Nadler; Tom Jacob; Glen Cammarano; Marty Jacobs; Bruce Herman; and Matt Borrelli.

**I. Approval of Minutes**

The members approved the minutes for the meeting of February 3, 2016.

**II. Reminder of Next Meeting Dates**

Our next meeting will be on April 6th. 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 has not heard back yet on our application to the Babson MCFE program to see if students are interested in moving the marketing 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. Rick suggested perhaps tenants like TripAdvisor can be of assistance.

Devra was advised that there was no Town-owned area on which to put a sign advertising Needham Crossing so it was visible from Route 128N. At the request of the Town Manager, Devra made inquiries to PTC and Boston Properties about such signage on their property. The matter is under advisement with Boston Properties—Devra even heard back directly from Bryan Koop. Mike reminded the group that Boston Properties had already given him tentative approval of Needham Crossing gateway signage on Kendrick Street. It was agreed that the gateway signage should wait until infrastructure improvements are complete.

Rick pointed out that he took a client to see 250 First Avenue and they expressed serious concerns about the traffic. It was pointed out that many traffic concerns will be addressed with the

improvements in the works. A question was raised about the Kendrick Street bridge and whether it will be four lanes with bike and pedestrian amenities when it comes online in October 2016. Devra thought so but will confirm with Nathan Cabral-Curtis.

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

There has been no progress on moving forward with streamlining.

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

Moe explained that he believes his Board will endorse the effort but explained there remain concerns about family housing and the impact on school enrollment. Because all of the children will be in the same school district, there is the need for assurance about the adequacy of facilities. There is a sense of too much multi-family housing at once. There was discussion about the issue of the cost of the housing and realistic time frame for development.

Devra was asked to check with Matt Varrell and reconfirm what the CEA was advised about the impact of the Rivers Act. (Devra has asked Matt to touch base with her regarding this issue.)

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

The Planning Board discussed the proposed zoning amendments and Devra understands 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 hearing is scheduled for March 15<sup>th</sup> and Devra asked for a CEA member to attend with her. Matt will try to attend. It is on the May Town Meeting Warrant. The open space requirement will stay as it is for now.

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

Devra sent the information regarding the elevation drawings to Mark Gluesing and is waiting for his formal proposal. 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**

Camoin's work is continuing. Devra noted that the meeting on February 22 provided a lot of data but committee members were left with the impression that Camoin did not really provide a framework for understanding what the information means to the Corridor. Devra reported that the Chamber has also asked Babson graduate students to focus on strengthening the ties with Israeli businesses in the Corridor and that presentation is tomorrow at 5:00 at New TV. Mike noted that Israeli company Infinidat is moving from Highland Circle in Needham to newly constructed office space in Waltham. He wondered whether the Babson students did an exit interview to see why they moved.

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

Devra noted that she prepared and filed a letter outlining the CEA's views on the proposed Food Truck Citizens' Petition. The Town Manager asked that Devra bring a CEA member with her to the meeting. Peter will see if his schedule permits it. Rick and Matt both noted that if the Town were to let food trucks into the downtown, the fee should be comparable to what brick and mortar restaurants pay (rent plus real estate taxes attributable to their space). They also suggested fees might be compared to what a kiosk or food cart pays in a mall.

Peter asked if there are any new businesses coming into the downtown. It was noted that a high profile chef has taken over the VO2 Max space.

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

As noted above, Devra was asked to confirm that the Kendrick Street bridge will be four lanes plus pedestrian/bike amenities when the off-ramp from 128N and onramp to 128S are open in the fall. (Devra sent an email to Nathan Cabral-Curtis for clarification.)

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

Bob mentioned that the space vacated by the tanning salon on Chapel Street is still open. Devra suggested perhaps an artist collaborative might work and Bob asked that she resend the contact information, as he will reach out.

Mike asked about whether the hotel is permitting at 200 First Avenue. (Devra ascertained that there has been no filing to date with the Planning Board.)

#### **XII. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:00 a.m.