



TOWN of NEEDHAM  
MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT  
**Economic Development**  
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**MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC ADVISORS**  
**WEDNESDAY, September 7, 2016 7:30 AM**  
**Charles River Room PSAB**

Present: Matt Talcoff, Chair; Glen Cammarano; Moe Handel; Michael Wilcox; Ted Owens, Virginia Fleisher; Rick Putprush; Bob Hentschel; Marty Jacobs; Bill Day; Peter Atallah; and Devra Bailin.

Not Present: Janet O'Connor; Brian Nadler; and Bruce Herman  
Also Present: Lee Newman and Denise Garlick

**I. Approval of Minutes**

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

**II. Reminder of Next Meeting Dates**

Our next meeting is scheduled for November 2nd. Future meetings will be scheduled for the first Wednesday of the month (unless a holiday) in the Charles River Room at PSAB. (The members also agreed to **cancel** the October 5<sup>th</sup> meeting due to Devra's planned vacation.)

**III. Update on Needham Crossing (Signage)**

Devra met with Mark Rubin at 197 First Avenue to discuss a workable location for a "Needham Crossing: Gateway to N<sup>2</sup> Innovation District" sign visible from Route 128N. The proposed location was discussed, which also includes Town-owned land, and is acceptable in theory to Mark, who requires more detail. Devra has also obtained Steve Tanner's help in reviewing the sign location, orientation, and design. Devra explained to Mike that Steve may be contacting Tina Snyder for greater understanding of the design requirements. I have sent all relevant information to Steve and will contact him in a week or so to gauge our timeline.

We are still awaiting the BOS's response to Bill's suggestion that we just rename Kendrick Street in some manner as "Needham Crossing". Members discussed that changing the actual name would likely meet resistance from businesses located on Kendrick but they would not likely oppose if "Needham Crossing" became part of the name. Sixth Avenue in NYC is known as Avenue of the

Americas. What if Kendrick Street were Kendrick Street at Needham Crossing? Or something like that. Then the actual exit could be so noted. Moe will forward the request.

#### **IV. Update from the Downtown Subcommittee: Detailed discussion and prioritization of streamlining initiatives**

The members began working through the list of streamlining initiatives using the September 23, 2014 “Topics of Discussion” document. With respect to the parking study moratorium for restaurants 100 seats or less, Devra noted that this is really an issue of practice and that RFK Kitchens was required to obtain one at a cost probably in excess of \$3000. Lee indicated that smaller food uses were not required to obtain studies as a matter of practice (New Leaf 12 seats, French Press 24 seats, New Garden had parking lot). Members expressed concern that we know what parking exists in the downtown and it isn’t going to change so there is no reason for requiring the studies. Further the view was expressed that restricting lunch trade is problematic for the success of restaurants. Providing more public parking in, for example, the Needham Bank and Chapel Street lots by reducing the permit parking spaces there would be helpful. CEA Planning Board representatives will bring this issue for discussion by the Board. Moe will discuss with the BOS.

We turned to the next item on the list—standards for parking and traffic studies. Devra noted that every project triggering site plan review technically requires these expensive studies and that this issue involves both practice and Planning Board Rules and Regulations. Landlords and attorneys had suggested creating standards via regulation to allow waivers automatically if triggers are not reached. Lee indicated that she felt this was possible and cited Cambridge as an example. CEA Planning Board representatives will bring this issue for discussion by the Board.

There was a detailed discussion of Special Permit transfers—particularly for restaurants. It was noted that the procedures were very different between the Planning Board and the ZBA. Since these uses are always special permit uses under the By-Law, they technically can only be changed by notice and hearing if are personal to the applicant. The Planning Board handles these usually as de minimus changes (with caveat) and ZBA requires full notice and hearing. Devra suggested that perhaps we want to create a more limited process for these and other types of changes. A zoning change allowing a limited site plan review process might reduce the process associated with certain changes to special permit uses. Another solution is to expressly allow in the special permits that the applicant may substitute another operator who agrees to the terms and conditions of the permit. CEA Planning Board representatives will bring this issue for discussion by the Board.

The members also discussed the issues remaining in regards to preexisting nonconforming parking lots. The sense was that if it is highly unlikely relief will be not be granted then there shouldn’t be a formal special permit process associated with it. Lee agreed that this should be reexamined—perhaps exempting lots of a certain size. (It should be recalled that the CEA recommended and the ZBA requested that minor changes not triggering relief in the form of a waiver of the number of parking spaces should not trigger design requirement relief. The Planning Board declined to make that change.) Devra noted that this issue requires zoning changes—perhaps the special permit for modification of preexisting nonconforming parking lots should be changed to non-special permit status; perhaps another use of limited site plan review. CEA Planning Board representatives will bring this issue for discussion by the Board.

There was also a discussion regarding post construction insignificant modifications. Lee had no issue with the separately prepared list but noted that these weren't coming to the Planning Board now. Allowing such changes to be made administratively could be made by a Rules and Regulations change to the existing policy. We could also include changes within certain parameters be permitted under limited site plan review. CEA Planning Board representatives will bring this issue for discussion by the Board.

Finally, there was discussion of the Site Plan Review and Special Permit decisions. Language changes going forward may help resolve some of the issues associated with the need to go to full notice and hearing on any changes. The Planning Board needs to review the detailed documentation already prepared and see if changes can be made going forward. CEA Planning Board representatives will bring this issue for discussion by the Board.

Due to time available, the members were unable to get to the list beyond number 6. It was noted that a key component to effective change is to increase uses as of right and decrease the uses by special permit. It was also noted that this is a time-consuming task, as we would need to go through each use table for each type of use and discuss the change as it relates to a particular district. We will continue our discussion of the streamlining initiatives at our next meeting.

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

Mark Gluesing has been hired to make the elevation drawings for the CEA's meeting with the neighborhoods about zoning changes. There was a brief discussion about the timing of these changes. It was noted that the closure of the Elliot Street/Central Avenue Bridge renders neighborhood meetings problematic. It was also noted that, if we don't get the zoning on for May 2017, we will not likely be able to present these zoning articles until May 2018. Concern was expressed that we will miss the market.

Devra pointed out that the traffic report, especially as to Central at Gould Street, demonstrates that certain traffic mitigation measures are required whether development takes place or not. A signal is warranted at Central and Gould. Moe noted that this should be addressed soon, as it takes time to get such work on the list and funded.

#### **VI. Update on N<sup>2</sup> Innovation District**

Devra handed out the BBJ front page article on the District—marketing is progressing.

#### **VII. Update on Infrastructure Improvements in Needham Crossing, Downtown, and Elliot Street/Central Avenue Bridge.**

Due to time limitations, this topic was not reached.

#### **VIII. Other Business**

Virginia Fleisher and Ted Owens were officially welcomed to the CEA. Denise also invited the members to attend the official opening of the Kendrick Street (partial) interchange at 8:00 a.m. on September 16<sup>th</sup> at the PTC parking garage (top floor). Devra circulated the official invitation to the members after the meeting.

## **IX. Adjourn**

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