



TOWN of NEEDHAM
MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
Economic Development
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MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC ADVISORS
WEDNESDAY, September 6, 2017 7:30 AM
Charles River Room PSAB

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

Not Present: Peter Atallah; Stuart Agler; and Russ MacTough

Also Present: Anne Weinstein, District Director for Rep. Denise Garlick; Terry Morris, Attorney; and Michael Panella

I. Approval of Minutes

The members approved the Minutes for the meeting of July 19, 2017.

II. Reminder of Next Meeting Dates

Our next meeting is scheduled for October 4th in the Charles River Room. Devra advised members of her presentation for the Needham Heights Neighborhood Association on Monday, September 11th at 7:00 at Powers Hall in Town Hall. Future meetings will be scheduled for the first Wednesday of the month (unless a holiday) in the Charles River Room at PSAB.

III. Discussion of Central Avenue Neighborhood Business District

Terry Morris, attorney for the Panella family, and Michael Panella came to meet with us about making a change in the above district to allow residential above retail/commercial. He proposes that residential be allowed by special permit in the district consistent with the requirements of the Apartment A-1 district. Photographs of the existing conditions in the neighborhood were presented and the argument made there is a need to improve this gateway into Needham. There was discussion about whether the CEA or Planning Board should be the contact point. It was noted that the Planning Board would also be required to weigh in and members of that Board suggested Terry get before them informally—probably in October. Devra noted that she invited Terry to come to make a presentation because she believed that, like the in the downtown business districts, allowing residential above commercial could incent development. She noted that we could limit this additional use to this neighborhood business district by proximity to Route 128 (as we did for athletic facilities in Industrial

districts). Devra also noted that the 40-50 Central Avenue are both split lots and it would make sense to change the boundary of the Industrial District so that all of the property in question was in neighborhood business. It was noted that the Council was generally supportive of changes that incent economic growth. There was also discussion about whether it made sense to include a full study of this business district with our Industrial rezoning efforts. It was pointed out that our work on the Industrial zones has been going on for over five years and it should not be delayed any further.

IV. Update on Marketing for Needham Crossing/N² Innovation District

It was noted that efforts to market the area continue. There was a discussion about the Board of Selectmen determining with NBCUniversal how the advertising of Needham Crossing and N² will be accomplished.

V. Update on NBCUniversal Media Project

Normandy recently advised that the contracts with NBCUniversal were signed and the deal actually closed. Normandy also reported that they have leased 50,000 sq. ft. in the SharkNinja building to Stewart Healthcare for its HQ.

VI. Update from the Downtown Subcommittee (Streamlining Initiatives; Food Truck Petition)

Devra noted that she received a couple of comments from members about prioritizing the streamlining initiatives. Devra suggested and Ted and Marty agreed that it would make more sense for Devra to meet with them (and Lee) to go over the initiatives and get them in position for consideration by the Planning Board.

Moe explained that the Board of Selectmen has modified regulations regarding food trucks and carts. At the request of businesses, the Board also approved an additional food truck location on Second Avenue in Needham Crossing. They have also approved locating food trucks at DeFazio field by permit by the Board. There is also discussion of allowing food carts in the Downtown but the BOS is working with the Planning Board on that subject.

VII. Discussion of Industrial District Subcommittee

Devra will be holding another presentation of the proposed zoning on September 11th at 7:00 in Powers Hall with the Needham Heights Neighborhood Association. The Association has sent out notice via constant contact and mailed over 300 postcard notices to the abutting neighborhoods. The presentation will also be taped by the Needham Channel and broadcast.

VIII. Update on Downtown events (Reimagine Needham Update)

Devra anticipates that discussion of next steps, in particular to engage the right people to serve on the various groups to move the ideas forward and create momentum, will occur shortly. Moe noted that the Reimagine group needs to keep both the BOS and Planning Board informed of its efforts so that those key boards can weigh in. A report should be delivered to those boards.

IX. Update on Infrastructure Improvements in Needham Crossing, Downtown, Elliot/Central Avenue Bridge

Devra noted that the Downtown project is almost completed—there has been a slight delay due to a milling subcontractor backing out at the last minute, which has in turn delayed the final paving. It was noted that the First Avenue signal has been installed (which will not be activated until the connector roads and interchange at Highland are completed). Although it looks like MassDOT is ahead of schedule on the connector roads, they have not revised their project projections.

X. Other Business

Devra noted that Babson's Management Consulting Field Experience is again seeking projects for the spring. She asked if anyone has any suggestions on a project, please forward them to her.

XI. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:50 a.m.