



TOWN of NEEDHAM
MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
Economic Development
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MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC ADVISORS
WEDNESDAY, October 4, 2017 7:30 AM
Charles River Room PSAB

Present: Matt Talcoff, Chair; Rick Putprush; Marty Jacobs; Moe Handel; Jack Cogswell; Virginia Fleisher; Adam Block; Michael Wilcox; Bob Hentschel; Glen Cammarano; Peter Atallah; Stuart Agler; and Devra Bailin.

Not Present: Bill Day; Ted Owens; and Russ MacTough

Also Present: Anne Weinstein, District Director for Rep. Denise Garlick

I. Approval of Minutes

The members approved the Minutes for the meeting of September 6, 2017.

II. Reminder of Next Meeting Dates

Our next meeting is scheduled for November 1st in the Charles River Room. 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

Devra asked whether the BOS want the CEA to provide its comments on this zoning initiative. She explained that Terry Morris, attorney for the Panella family, after presenting their proposal to the CEA last month, presented their plans to the neighborhood. Members asked that Devra get a summary from Terry Morris about changing the Neighborhood Business District at least in this area to allow residential above retail/commercial. As noted, the proposal is to that residential be allowed by special permit in the district consistent with the requirements of the Apartment A-1 district. Moe agreed to ask the BOS whether the members wanted our input. If so, members will need the summary.

IV. Discussion of Industrial District Subcommittee (NHNA and recommendation)

Devra explained that she held another presentation of the proposed zoning on September 11th at 7:00 in Powers Hall with the Needham Heights Neighborhood Association. Although concerns remain

about the traffic impacts, most comments were favorable. Devra distributed written comments that she has received. Devra noted that many people were confused/concerned about neutralizing the zoning for Route 128. We need to come up with a clearer explanation that the layout cannot be used for any purpose than highway and maybe add a component that should any of the layout be sold for private purposes, it shall be considered to be part of the abutting zoning district and any development controlled by the zoning requirements of that district. There was discussion of the potential traffic impacts of development.

Devra also mentioned that, despite invitations to comment on changing the size of allowed retail and categories allowed (e.g. grocery), she received very few comments. Devra suggested changing the proposal to allow retail, restaurant and consumer services up to 10,000 sq. ft. per establishment by right and from 10,001 to 25,000 sq. ft. per establishment by special permit in HWC 2 and 3; in HWC 1, with its larger lots and topography, 15,000 by right and 45,000 by special permit (including grocery). It was decided that the CEA should not make these specific recommendations but that those concepts should be reviewed and determined by the Planning Board and BOS. There was discussion of the fact that the retail world is changing rapidly. There was discussion as to whether the zoning should contain any numbers restricting the size of such facilities by special permits. The concern is that the numbers we used for the purposes of the traffic study really don't take into account those larger boxes—as with Needham Crossing, Devra explained, the retail, restaurant and consumer service uses on the sites were considered ancillary (using Needham Crossing limitations on retail by right). Although any major development will be required to provide an updated traffic impact analysis, it would be difficult to provide clear impact answers if we sweep aside the assumptions. There was discussion of Burlington's creation of a new suburban mixed community and of its success.

There was also discussion of the competing goals of economic development to shift back the real estate tax burden to commercial real estate and desire to preserve Needham as it always was. As to next steps, Devra is waiting for the Town Manager's instructions but anticipates that there will be a presentation to the BOS soon. The members are comfortable with bringing the proposals as they presently stand to the BOS with the understanding that certain policy decisions will need to be made by that Board and Planning Board. As with everything the CEA does, this is an effort to incent development by changing the underlying zoning which severely restricts it. The specifics are obviously subject to further review and comment.

V. 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.

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 will be meeting with Ted and Marty (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. Update on Downtown events (Reimagine Needham Update)

Greg Reibman met with the BOS regarding the Reimagine group and its future plans. There is not yet guidance from BOS as to how the BOS and Planning Board are to be kept informed and/or weigh in.

Members want to make sure that the street banner(s?) is provided for in the plans for Phase 2 and/or 3 of the downtown project. Since Town Meeting passed this, we need to make sure that becomes a reality.

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

Devra noted that after months of complaints, the Town has restored the lead left at Kendrick/Hunting/Greendale. (It was noted that shortly after the Town fixed it the first time, MassDOT changed it back...)

Issues were again raised about the left hand turn onto Third from Kendrick—the left turn light is too short and it should be fixed to allow traffic to turn left when there is no oncoming traffic.

Members also noted that there is a need for a signal at Fourth and Kendrick—it is not safe. Devra noted that the plan remains for the need to be assessed when all the other traffic mitigation is in place.

There was discussion of the impact of any development on Reservoir with the signal in Newton at Chestnut and Elliot. It was pointed out that we have been coordinating with Newton on Kendrick/Nahanton and Highland and Needham Street/Oak/Christina regarding traffic signals and will continue to do so.

The connector road from Route 9 to Highland is in place but signage is very confusing.

IX. Other Business

Matt and Moe expressed our condolences to Bob on the passing of Gary Petrini. Moe advised members that the visitors' hours will be from 4-8 on Friday.

Devra noted that Steward Health has taken about 50,000 sq. ft. for administrative offices and HQ space in the SharkNinja building. Devra mentioned that she is trying to work with Normandy to use the 10000-15000 sq. ft. left in the building to create collaborative working space (Plug, WorkBar, etc.). She also discussed with Mike the possibility of owners sharing the expense of such an endeavor as an

amenity for Needham Crossing. This is a critical component missing from N2. She also mentioned to Normandy the possibility of Normandy selling the idea to Amazon of the state-of-the-art bookstore with pick-up and distribution facility in one of the pad sites.

There was discussion of the new restaurants opening in the downtown—Cook's, the James, and Capella. It was noted that it is a good sign that these restaurants immediately replaced older ones and that we have had no vacancies as a result of closings.

X. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:05 a.m.