



TOWN of NEEDHAM  
MASSACHUSETTS

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

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

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

Not Present: Glen Cammarano; and Bill Day

Also Present: Anne Weinstein; Jack Cogswell; Rebecca Waber; Stephen Miano; Stuart Agler; Daniel  
Cooper; Adam Block; and Cornelius Young

**I. Approval of Minutes**

The members approved the minutes for the meeting of November 2, 2016.

**II. Reminder of Next Meeting Dates**

Our next meeting is scheduled for January 11<sup>th</sup> to accommodate Devra's planned vacation.  
Future meetings will be scheduled for the first Wednesday of the month (unless a holiday) in the Charles  
River Room at PSAB.

**III. Plastic Bag Ban**

It was noted that former Needham High School students are seeking to have Needham impose a  
plastic bag ban. Moe noted that the BOS has made a goal of evaluating this issue. He asked for the  
CEA's recommendations. The ban would prohibit the distribution of plastic bags less than 4 mils in  
thickness; give businesses a time period of between six months to a year to adjust to the ban; require that  
businesses use completely biodegradable bags made out of 100% recyclable materials; exempt thin-film  
plastic bags without handles such as newspaper, laundry/dry-cleaning, produce, meat and bulk food  
bags; and give the Health Department the authority to administer and enforce the ban with fines. At our  
last meeting, we noted that the Chamber's comments on the Newton ban.

Again at this meeting, questions were asked about the relative cost of paper vs. plastic, approach  
of simply charging for such bags (as has been done in Europe), and about other communities in  
Massachusetts which have instituted bans (31). Comments included the nuisance factor of plastic bags  
at the RTS, the lack of ability to recycle them at the RTS, the increased value of RTS waste if such bags

are not included, the impact on restaurants, and the need to canvas the businesses for their views/concerns.

Members felt that they could not make a recommendation without outreach to the businesses which may be impacted, especially restaurants. Devra will conduct outreach and report back.

#### **IV. Update on Needham Crossing (Signage)**

As previously noted, 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 required more detail. Devra obtained Steve Tanner’s help in reviewing the sign location, orientation, and design. Steve Tanner reviewed the location and determined that there were too many underground conduits in the area and proposed a different location on Maric’s land. Devra is waiting for the details from Steve before meeting again with Mark Rubin. Steve is working on it.

We are awaiting the BOS’s response to the suggestion that we just rename Kendrick Street “Kendrick Street at Needham Crossing”? Then the actual exit could be so noted. Moe will forward the request to BOS.

#### **V. Downtown Banner By-Law**

Devra reminded members that this issue was brought to Town Meeting along with other sign by-law changes and the street banner amendments were edited out by Town Meeting. Devra will distribute a copy of the General By-Law amendment applicable to street banners along with the regulations which were created at the time when the draft Minutes are circulated. Moe noted that with the streetscape project moving forward this is the time to make sure permanent posts for street banners are incorporated in the new streetscape designs.

Moe asked that we include the topic in next month’s Agenda. He will ascertain whether the Board of Selectmen desires the Council to make an official recommendation.

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

Due to the large number of guests, Devra was asked to explain this topic. Devra walked through the topics which were discussed last month—reference is made to last month’s Minutes for the details. Discussion picked up on the issue Special Permit transfers. Devra noted the best solution, in her opinion, is to imbed in the special permits themselves the ability of the boards to make changes to the permit with respect to certain items (e.g. transferee of permit). Marty asked if Town Counsel agrees that that resolves the notice and hearing requirement of G.L. c. 40A, section 9 for such changes. He suggested that Lee consult with Dave Tobin for an answer.

Due to time constraints and the fact that Lee’s memorandum responding to the Topics of Discussion was just distributed at this meeting, it was decided to hold on the remainder of the discussion until January. In the interim, Devra will distribute that memo with the draft Minutes of this meeting.

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

Devra simply noted that she is still waiting for Mark Gluesing, who was hired to make the elevation drawings for the CEA's meeting with the neighborhoods about zoning changes, to complete his work. It was noted that it probably not possible to get this on the May TM Warrant, which may mean we miss the cycle. Due to time constraints, no further discussions were held about this.

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

Devra noted that a formal business plan has been adopted, fundraising has been initiated, and that the Israeli connections group meetings are starting up again. Moe asked the CEA if the members were willing to take a position on the funds being asked of the Town--\$10,000 a year for two years. Newton has pledged \$12,000 a year for two year. There is concern that Newton is the larger municipality and should be shouldering a greater percentage.

Members noted that, presently, it is Needham that is in the better position to reap the economic benefits of marketing the N<sup>2</sup> Innovation District. We have the zoning and housing in place to make the community required for a successful suburban "urban" district. Within the Normandy site alone, we have, not only over 500,000 sq. ft. of vacant pad site, but hundreds of thousands of sq. ft. of available rehabbed space. (It was noted that when the CEA recommended the up-zoning of the Needham Crossing area, we estimated that we could absorb 2.5 million sq. ft. of new growth.) It was noted that many State and Federal grant funding sources require municipalities to contribute to the efforts monetarily to qualify for the grants. Members noted that, while Newton has other areas of potential economic targets, the N<sup>2</sup> area is our main economic engine. Marketing the area is not something that Needham can afford to undertake on its own. (Virginia noted that a marketing budget for economic development in Needham Crossing is something we should be exploring as well.) We will benefit from significant tax revenue increases and increases in local jobs, not to mention the attendant growth in ancillary services and businesses. It was also noted that the lion's share of the funds to move the marketing plans forward will come from the private sector.

Because of the clear economic advantages that will accrue to Needham and Needham's unique ability to reap the economic benefits of marketing plan of the N<sup>2</sup> at this time, the members think that the allocation suggested between the communities is not material and therefore unanimously voted to recommend that the Board of Selectmen recommend the expenditure of \$10,000 per year for two years toward the N<sup>2</sup> Innovation District marketing efforts. (Moe did not vote.)

## **IX. Update on Downtown Events**

Devra briefly mentioned that the Needham Lights event on Saturday December 3<sup>rd</sup> (including the Blue Tree lighting and activities in Powers Hall) was highly successful. She reminded members and guests that the Needham Winter Arts Festival will be on Saturday December 10<sup>th</sup> (with over 30 artists and artisans in Powers Hall).

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

Due to time limitations, this topic was not addressed in any detail. (**NOTE:** There is a Reunited Bridge Opening Parade planned for the official opening of the Elliot Street/Central Avenue Bridge on Saturday December 17<sup>th</sup> from 11:00 a.m. to noon. March over the bridge with the vintage Needham fire truck and a marching band with kazoos and more. Cider, Cocoa and cookies served after the parade.)

**XI. Other Business**

None.

**XII. Adjourn**

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