



TOWN of NEEDHAM
MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
Economic Development
781-455-7550 x213

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC ADVISORS
WEDNESDAY, November 1, 2017 7:30 AM
Charles River Room PSAB

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

Not Present: Bill Day; Michael Wilcox; and Russ MacTough

Also Present: Anne Weinstein, District Director for Rep. Denise Garlick; Chuck Tanowitz N² Innovation District

I. Approval of Minutes

The members approved the Minutes for the meeting of October 4, 2017.

II. Reminder of Next Meeting Dates

Our next meeting is scheduled for December 6th 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 Vote on the Chair of CEA

Matt noted that he has served as the CEA's chair for a very long time and it was his honor to do so. It was noted that for many years no one volunteered to relieve him from the position. He understands there is some interest now in so serving. There was discussion of what the position entails beyond running the meetings, including attending BOS and Planning Board meetings occasionally to push forward the CEA's agenda. After some discussion, it was decided that anyone interested in the position should send an email to Devra and we will vote at our next meeting. Jack suggested that it would be prudent to elect both a chair and a vice chair, a suggestion readily agreed to.

IV. Discussion of Central Avenue Neighborhood Business District

Moe will ascertain whether the BOS wants the CEA to provide its comments on this zoning initiative. Devra explained that Terry Morris, attorney for the Panella family, will be presenting their

proposal to the Planning Board informally this month. He will be creating a summary about changing the Neighborhood Business District at least in this area to allow residential above retail/commercial, which, pursuant to the members' request last month, Devra will provide to the members. 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.

V. Discussion of Industrial District Subcommittee

Devra explained that the Town Manager has asked the CEA to make a presentation to the BOS and provided some dates. The options given were November 28th, December 5th (which Devra cannot make) and December 19th. It was explained that a member (or members) of the CEA needs to provide the BOS with the background of our work, the reasons for the proposal and the study/outreach made by the CEA before coming to its recommendations. [Please see our Minutes from last week for our discussion.] In the past, Devra has then detailed the consultant information and specific zoning proposal. The following members could attend on the 28th: Adam, Peter and Jack; on the 19th: Matt and Virginia. It was felt we should move this forward as quickly as possible so opted to ask for the 28th. It was also felt important to point out the positive reception to the approach taken by the CEA to discuss this with the neighborhood, businesses and owners from the beginning.

Devra will share the presentation materials she drafted for the various public meetings and will work with the presenting group as to how best to make the presentation. There was discussion about the difficulty in understanding the elevation drawings. Devra will ask Mark Gluesing if he can make them clearer and provide some information on them about the topography (i.e., elevations which form the bases for the drawings).

VI. Update on Marketing for Needham Crossing/N² Innovation District (Review BOS Inquiry)

Devra noted that she received an email from the Town Manager noting that the BOS has had a discussion about the appropriate boundary definition of the area known as "Needham Crossing". The attached map contained in green Mixed Use-128, Highland Commercial-128, and New England Business Center; in light pink the Reservoir Industrial zones; and in bright pink Industrial 1 and the adjacent park and neighborhood surrounding it. The BOS was looking for the CEA's view of including areas beyond the green ones as part of Needham Crossing. Although there was some confusion, the members ultimately agreed with Moe's initial position that Needham Crossing as initially branded included the entire green area. Devra noted that an attempt to conflate Needham Crossing with N² was just confusing—the area in green was up-zoned and re-visioned as an urban vibrant mixed use community with greater heights and densities than elsewhere in Town. Not all of Needham's N² area is consistent with that. Marty noted that the Planning Board too was asked to comment and wasn't sure what the BOS was asking. Stu noted that the physical barriers—the River and the Highway—were keys to the name, together with the different vision for this part of Needham. Rick felt Needham Crossing would lose its unique identity if all parts of Needham within the N² Innovation District were included. Devra noted that it was the green area that was identified as Needham's Economic Target Area. Chuck explained that the N² Innovation District is made up of distinct neighborhoods—Wells Office, Needham Street, etc. It was noted that this is our answer. The unique characteristics which were identified in the branding process to define Needham Crossing reflect the Town's vision of that neighborhood which doesn't include Industrial 1 or Reservoir. Ted moved that the CEA report that in its opinion Needham

Crossing is the green area on the map; it is a unique neighborhood within N²; that using “Needham Crossing” is no different than Newton using Newton Highlands, Well’s Office Park or Needham Street to identify areas of its community with N²; and that, given the uniqueness of Needham Crossing, it doesn’t make sense to include the Reservoir Street Industrial areas or Industrial 1 as part of “Needham Crossing”. Members so voted.

VII. Update from the Downtown Subcommittee (Streamlining Initiatives)

Devra handed out to members the notes of her meeting with Ted and Marty, as representatives of the Planning Board, which were also reviewed by Lee. Devra will be working with Ted and Marty to move along the initiatives. Ted noted that the streamlining initiatives will now be in hands of the Planning Board for action per the memorandum. 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.

Members will review the memorandum and provide comments if they wish. Devra was asked to forward the Topics of Discussion, which formed the basis of the meeting with Ted and Marty, to members.

VIII. 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. Moe said that the boards need to understand how the organizers envision this process and explain how actions will be taken by the various groups. Acknowledging that Town officials don’t have a lock on good ideas, these groups can be helpful. There was discussion about how the CEA and/or its members can be involved.

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

Due to the shortage of time, there was just a short discussion of this topic; mainly concerns were expressed about the confusing signage on the connector roads and interchanges (including the number changes).

X. Other Business

Stu suggested that, as we are coming to the end of the Industrial Zoning and Streamlining Initiatives are now with the Planning Board representatives, the CEA should discuss our future goals. It was agreed that we last did this several years ago. We will take it up for discussion next month.

X. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:10 a.m.