



TOWN of NEEDHAM  
MASSACHUSETTS

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

**MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC ADVISORS**  
**WEDNESDAY, December 6, 2017 7:30 AM**  
**Charles River Room PSAB**

Present: Jack Cogswell, Chair; Adam Block, Vice Chair; Rick Putprush; Marty Jacobs; Moe Handel; Michael Wilcox; Bob Hentschel; Glen Cammarano; Stuart Agler; and Devra Bailin.  
Not Present: Matt Talcoff; Ted Owens; Virginia Fleisher; Bill Day; Peter Atallah; 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 November 1, 2017.

**II. Reminder of Next Meeting Dates**

Our next meeting is scheduled for January 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 and Vice Chair of CEA**

As noted in the Minutes from last month, it was decided that anyone interested in the position of either Chair or Vice Chair should send an email to Devra and Matt and we would vote at our next meeting. Jack Cogswell submitted his name for the position of Chair and Adam Block for vice chair. The members unanimously approved Jack and Adam as Chair and Vice Chair, respectively.

**IV. Discussion of Central Avenue Neighborhood Business District**

Moe has not yet ascertained whether the BOS wants the CEA to provide its comments on this zoning initiative. Marty reported that, as the Planning Board heard the matter informally, no action was taken. Marty sensed that proposal was generally positively received. There was discussion that the Reservoir Industrial District zoning may be delayed to deal with both proposals together.

**V. Discussion of Industrial District Subcommittee**

Jack, Adam and Devra were present at the BOS meeting on November 28<sup>th</sup> to discuss the CEA recommendations regarding revisions to the Industrial zones along Route 128/I95. Jack focused his remarks at the joint meeting of the BOS and Planning Board to the issues regarding process which had been raised recently. It was determined that there should be periodic meetings with the Chairs and Vice Chairs of both the BOS and Planning Board to make sure that the boards are kept informed of CEA initiatives. At the meeting, the BOS agreed to refer to the Planning Board the neutralizing for zoning purposes the layout of Route 128/I 95. As to the three Highway Commercial zones recommended, the BOS will hold a public hearing on January 9th. It was noted that it is important that the CEA mobilize the owners, businesses, its members and supportive neighbors to support the CEA's recommendations.

The BOS asked for a one page summary of the recommendations, which Devra drafted and, at Jack's request, provided to members at the meeting. Members were asked to review and get their comments to Devra by the end of the week. [Subsequently, the Town Manager, who was provided a draft, said that she had enough to create the notice of hearing and did not require anything more.] Because of the difficulty in understanding the elevation drawings, Devra reported that she asked Mark Gluesing if he could make them clearer and provide some information on them about the topography (i.e., elevations which form the bases for the drawings). He has agreed to do so.

## **VI. Discussion of Design Review Board Initiatives**

Devra explained that she had spoken to Mark Gluesing, the Chair of the DRB, and he indicated that his board is working on certain initiatives which may be of interest to the CEA. These include a proposed regulation not allowing multiple tenants to put their names on the top of buildings—the regulation would allow only a main tenant sign, with all other tenants appearing on a compound sign on the ground. Members expressed concern about such a regulation and suggested that Devra reach out to Mark to discuss how best to create a dialog.

Mark also said that the DRB is considering a By-Law amendment allowing increased signage along the highway. (The DRB is allowing in excess of 100 sq. ft. which doesn't seem to be allowed by current By-Law.) Mark also said that the DRB would like to again try to deal with streetscape facilities and display. (The Planning Board had declined to incorporate these changes when we brought façade modifications to Town Meeting.)

There was also discussion about ongoing concerns about the DRB's refusing to allow logos on signs (deeming it advertising) and restriction of color (even if it is the company's official color).

## **VII. Discussion of CEA priorities/future goals**

Assuming most of the Industrial rezoning moves forward next year, the CEA needs to reevaluate its priorities and goals. Ted had indicated that the Planning Board will take over the streamlining initiative so Devra, Marty, Lee and Ted need to meet to bring this forward. Depending on the progress through the Planning Board, the CEA should monitor.

Stu thought it might make sense for the BOS to provide advice on what they would like us to focus on. Moe will bring that up with BOS and get back to the CEA. Some possible priorities may include Chestnut Street and streetscape in Needham Crossing.

## **VIII. Update on Marketing for Needham Crossing/N<sup>2</sup> Innovation District**

Devra noted that there is some ongoing concern that the Chamber is pressing for expanding the bounds of the District into other areas of Newton and Wellesley. The members discussed this and felt that it was inconsistent with the goals articulated by the Town in joining the endeavor. The initiative is primarily a marketing effort and, although it is believed that that marketing disproportionately helps Needham Crossing right now (due to the fact we have zoning in place to incent development), expanding the area of the district will dilute the value of Needham's investment. While issues like mass transit go beyond the district boundaries, the marriage of interests which created the District do not include expansion to all areas of Newton (or other towns). The Chamber needs to keep on message in selling the District as a whole.

## **IX. Update from the Downtown Subcommittee (Streamlining Initiatives)**

See above.

It was also reported that the Newton Needham Chamber and the Needham Business Association will officially merge January 1<sup>st</sup>. The agreement to do so will preserve those events the NBA has historically hosted (Street Fair, Harvest Fair, Blue Tree Lighting, and Annual Dinner).

## **X. Update on Downtown events**

The Reimagine group is still awaiting guidance from BOS as to how the BOS and Planning Board are to be kept informed and/or weigh in. Moe will see if we can get further clarity on this so the initiatives can move forward.

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

Due to the shortage of time, this was not discussed.

## **XII. Other Business**

Due to the shortage of time, Jack asked Devra to scan and email the articles she had copied for the members. It was noted that the Hospital has now obtained the lease to the parking near the Junction; members wondered what the impact has been for commuters. The need for additional public parking along lower Chestnut was discussed.

## **XIII. Adjourn**

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