



TOWN of NEEDHAM
MASSACHUSETTS

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

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC ADVISORS
WEDNESDAY, March 7, 2018 7:30 AM
Charles River Room PSAB

Present: Adam Block, Vice Chair; Rick Putrush; Michael Wilcox; Matt Talcoff; Moe Handel; Bob Hentschel; Glen Cammarano; Stuart Agler; Marty Jacobs; Ted Owens; and Devra Bailin.
Not Present: Jack Cogswell, Chair; Bill Day; Virginia Fleisher; Russ MacTough; Peter Atallah;
Also Present: Anne Weinstein, District Director for Rep. Denise Garlick

I. Approval of Minutes

An amendment was offered by Stu to correct the name of one of businesses that he mentioned was closing. The amendment, along with the main motion to approve the Minutes of February 7, 2018, was passed.

II. Reminder of Next Meeting Dates

Our next meeting is scheduled for April 4th 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. Anne announced that Denise Garlick's report to the community has been rescheduled to March 12th at 7:30 p.m. in Powers Hall. (Reception begins at 7:00 p.m.)

III. Discussion of Central Avenue Neighborhood Business District (Review Draft)

Planning Board members verified that the zoning for residential over commercial was moving forward for the May Town Meeting. The CEA's letter to the Planning Board recommending the change was sent.

IV. Discussion of Industrial District Subcommittee

The Planning Board will move forward with a provision which will eliminate the 50' buffer area from commercial districts where the residential district is the highway. The provision neutralizing Route 128 became complicated by the map purportedly required to accomplish the task and one member's insertion of language as to precise bounds which became convoluted. Devra expressed concern about the need to make sure that those provisions are the only ones applicable to the impacts of

residential zones in the highway layout—requirements are often buried in our By-Law where they are not evident.

V. Discussion of Design Review Board Initiatives

No information or suggestions have been made by the DRB to date. The CEA and the Planning Board should be kept apprised.

VI. Discussion of CEA priorities/future goals

Members were provided a copy of the Executive summary which was used to discuss priorities with the Chair and Vice Chair of the BOS. Adam noted that they were not in any particular order. At the meeting, the BOS Vice Chair noted that there is no interest in financial incentives provided by the Town.

It was noted that, as a priority, we should be trying to shift the tax burden to the commercial side by expanding that base. One member pointed out that we should use more neutral terms to describe that goal: diversify the tax base.

There was discussion of how the streamlining initiatives and how they came to be on the CEA agenda. It was discussed with members of the Planning Board that this was now in their hands. (Devra noted again the need to separate SPR from true special permits in the Board's decision; she also noted that Roy Cramer, as Ted requested, has provided a draft of a streamlined decision, which Devra will be reviewing.) Matt noted that historically streamlining was seen as a way to help fill vacancies and decrease the investment and time needed to open or expand a business.

Members discussed the need to return to basic stuff—helping businesses, including e.g. snow removal from sidewalks in the downtown. Members also discussed our role in the promoting N2. It was noted that this is a huge marketing opportunity for Needham. It was suggested Devra contact Jeremy Fried (recently left BRA for his new firm 128 CRE) and Brendan Cohn (JLL), commercial real estate brokers in the Needham Crossing N2 area and ask them to talk with us about the need to market and how we can increase the reach.

Matt noted that to be added to the list of priorities is to focus on Needham Heights. Peter's ideas were added to the list: (1) attracting more start-ups to Needham Crossing, including establishing incubators and business eco systems; (2) how other communities influence the mix of businesses in their downtowns and what we can do; (3) perform an economic inventory of the Town (SWOT analysis). It was noted that some of this could be coordinated with ReImagine Needham effort. Virginia indicated a desire also to focus on downtown Needham. She too focused on how we obtain a better mix of businesses and amenities. The downtown should be more vital and appealing. She also raised looking at what other communities do and what our residents want. She suggested the possibility of co-working spaces as well.

VII. Update on Needham Crossing/N² Innovation District (Streetscape/ river walk grant; Israeli visit and presentations)

Devra explained that a technical assistance grant has been filed with MAPC regarding concept plans for streetscape and connections to the River in Needham Crossing. She also noted that a presentation to 60 Israeli municipal representatives will take place this afternoon.

There was also discussion about the logo design for Needham Crossing/ N² Innovation District and the need to coordinate the look with what is being proposed for Wells Office Park. It was agreed that the signage for the whole area needs to be consistent. Mike and Devra have locations selected for gateway signage but we have to wait for construction of Highland Avenue to be completed.

VIII. Update from the Downtown Subcommittee (Streamlining Initiatives)

See comments above.

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

Members asked about when the signals at First Avenue and on the interchange will go live— Devra was unable to provide any update other than the issue is between the State and Eversource or Verizon. Mike asked again about when timing of the signals on Kendrick Street, including at the interchange itself, which seem to impede flow.

X. Other Business

Moe noted that the plastic bag ban will begin with voluntary compliance by larger businesses. Also an announcement was made that the Needham Heights Neighborhood Association is sponsoring a discussion on marijuana retail and the Planning Board articles for the warrant.

XI. Adjourn

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