



TOWN of NEEDHAM
MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
Economic Development
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MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC ADVISORS
WEDNESDAY, June 6, 2018 7:30 AM
Charles River Room PSAB

Present: Adam Block, Vice Chair; Rick Putprush; Michael Wilcox; Moe Handel; Bill Day;
Glen Cammarano; Stuart Agler; Marty Jacobs; Virginia Fleisher; Ted Owens; and Devra Bailin.
Not Present: Jack Cogswell, Chair (deceased); Peter Atallah; Bob Hentschel; Matt Talcoff; and Russ
MacTough (resigned).
Also Present: Anne Weinstein, District Director for Rep. Denise Garlick; and Chuck Tanowitz, Director
of the N² Innovation District

I. Approval of Minutes

The Minutes of May 2, 2018 were unanimously approved. Members noted the passing of Jack Cogswell with a moment of silence. Ted moved to have the CEA send a letter to the Select Board recommending that they rename PSAB the John H. Cogswell Building. The motion was seconded and the members discussed the numerous contributions Jack had made to the Town. The motion was unanimously passed and Devra instructed to send a letter to the Select Board notifying it of the CEA's recommendation.

II. Reminder of Next Meeting Dates

Our next meeting is scheduled for August 1st in the Charles River Room. Members decided to cancel our July 11th meeting. For the time being, we will hold the meeting for August; Devra will circulate a note in July to see if members feel there is a reason to meet in August. 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 Vacancies on the CEA

With Jack's death, the CEA now has two vacancies. (Russ previously resigned.) Moe will raise the issue with the Vice Chair. Devra reminded the members that we had numerous applications for the vacancies and perhaps it made sense for the Vice Chair to look at the previous applicants. It was also suggested that any member who had a recommendation to make should get it to Moe. Rick mentioned a tenant who might be interested and he was encouraged to invite them to apply.

IV. Report on Town Meeting

Devra explained that the Special Town Meeting Warrant on Public Safety Initiative passed (\$100,000 to fund a pedestrian safety audit and improvements) should prove helpful to the Downtown, especially pedestrian safety at crosswalks and with the loss of the one by the tracks, and near public buildings and schools. If any members have any pedestrian concerns, they should let Devra know so she can try to include them in the audit. Town Meeting also approved at the Special the article authorizing the acquisition of 43 Lincoln Street, which will reduce the loss of parking associated with the new Police and Fire Public Safety Facility. The article relating to Chestnut Street overlay zoning was withdrawn, as was the article for funding of a long range plan. The articles on stormwater management regulations and public safety monopoles for public safety buildings were also withdrawn. Funding for a new Memorial Park building was approved.

It was explained that the stormwater management regulations were withdrawn per Moe because there was not enough education and understanding on the impact on residential owners. Devra noted that private sector commercial entities also felt left out of the process in drafting them.

In response to questions about the overhead street banners, which had been previously approved, it was noted that there is not presently infrastructure to hang such banners. Such features will have to be included in the next phases of the Downtown Streetscape project. Moe is on the committee and will make sure that issue is addressed.

Members asked Planning Board members if the CEA can be of any assistance on the Chestnut Street zoning. Ted noted that the Board had not yet decided next steps but hope to have it on for the October Town Meeting. Moe noted that in general his Board did not want the fall special to go beyond one night and that the time is usually taken up with corrections to fiscal budget. The issue of an override for the police and fire stations is also scheduled.

V. Update from the Downtown Subcommittee

Adam reported that the Subcommittee has met. He noted that the Town has been working to improve the infrastructure and public amenities in the downtown and yet we are still not seeing diversity in the mix of tenants and private investment. The Subcommittee reviewed the past work of the Subcommittee, which included landlord and tenant interviews. The members decided to canvas tenants in the downtown with a series of questions. Members will try to understand from the tenant perspective positioning in the market and what improvements would boost businesses. Bob will undertake to speak to the major landlords.

Rick invited Linear Retail, which does downtown and small strip mall retail in the area, to speak to the Subcommittee at our next meeting. Any members of the CEA who desire to attend are welcome as well. The meeting will be on June 19th at 7:30 a.m. in the Charles River Room. Devra will copy members on the reminder for the meeting.

Members discussed whether this Subcommittee should also be looking at the Heights given the availability of the Kindred Buildings. It was thought this probably should be studied by another

Subcommittee. Rick noted that he called the owner of the property who was unwilling to talk with him about their plans. He got the impression that the owner has plans—may be planning to develop it themselves. Devra noted that the area is zoned for apartments. Devra will try to reach out.

VI. Discussion of Needham Crossing Branding

Devra provided to the members the two memoranda which went to the BOS about positioning, key messaging, analysis of existing brands, and branding and naming strategy. The memoranda explained the choice of the name “Needham Crossing” and the logo for brand we recommended. Also attached to the memoranda were the logos proposed to integrate Needham Crossing into the N² marketing brand. Moe had asked that the issue be placed on the agenda.

It was noted that many of the commercial brokers use the name Needham Crossing in their materials. Chuck noted that in the N² context, it is used as an identifier of the area within the N² Innovation District. Projects still tend to advertise their unique branding—e.g. Founders Park. It was noted that when a development, like Burlington, is owned by one party, it is easy to brand the area, as the project and the area are the same. It is not as easy when you have multiple owners and two municipalities. The Needham Crossing identifier is intertwined with the branding of the N² Innovation District. It was suggested that we need to get branding information about Needham Crossing and N² into the hands of commercial brokers. We should provide a defined area on the map but, as it was noted, owners of individual projects will continue to compete with the brand as they sell their project.

It was asked what was happening with the NBCUniversal obligation to promote Needham Crossing. Moe said that it was being negotiated but his board is insistent that Needham needs to be identified, as it was Needham which granted the TIF.

Since it didn't start out that way, the CEA should be promoting the entire area as Needham Crossing. Devra noted that the positioning and key messaging that we sought to convey with the name is coming to fruition and we should be making sure people know where the area is and what it comprises. There was discussion again of the separate zipcode idea (which had previously been deemed impractical and difficult for existing businesses).

Members reiterated their view that the Needham Crossing moniker should not apply to the areas of the Heights along Route 128, especially where the vision is not the same.

VII. Discussion of CEA priorities/future goals

Needham Heights was again mentioned and it was noted that this may make sense for a separate Subcommittee, especially with the unique opportunity the Kindred/Avery Crossing property provides. It is owned by a real estate investment trust, as Rick previously mentioned. Devra noted that she has had inquiries regarding the property—not surprisingly, most questions relate to multifamily residential use. Upon review, she noted the zoning allows for apartments in this district. She was asked if the owners had contacted her and she noted that she does not know. People making inquiries don't always do so directly. As noted above, Devra will try to reach out to the owner to see if she can assist in any way.

Marty noted that the Planning Board is in the midst of Town projects in the Heights (Fire Station #2) and the temporary use of the Hillside School for temporary police and fire. Planning Board insight into this area would be helpful in focusing the CEA's efforts.

Anne suggested we may want to look for ways to serve as a conduit between the Town and businesses. Are there particular complaints which require attention? The work of the Downtown Subcommittee may provide other areas requiring our attention.

Adam noted that he is in the process of arranging meeting with Greentown Labs and a CIC meeting with Boris.

VIII. Update on Needham Crossing/N² Innovation District (Streetscape/ river walk grant; consulate outreach)

Devra noted that there is a Needham Crossing owners' meeting on June 28th at 2:00 at the Sheraton Hotel with MassDOT representatives to discuss Add-A-Lane and Highland Avenue corridor projects.

MAPC has not acted on our streetscape application yet, despite assurances of fast turnaround. Moe requested our contact so he can follow-up. [Devra provided same after the meeting.]

Moe suggested we contact Northland Development to provide a presentation about their project on Needham Street at Oak/Christina. Devra suggested we could meet at the old Clark's building, as Kent has it all set up with project plans. Moe suggested we find out if the open meeting law lets us meet in Newton. Devra will. [Devra emailed Town Counsel and is waiting for an answer.]

IX. Update on Infrastructure Improvements in Needham Crossing and Downtown,

See above, including notice of the Needham Crossing owners' meeting on June 28th at 2:00 at the Sheraton Hotel with MassDOT representatives to discuss Add-A-Lane and Highland Avenue corridor projects.

X. Other Business

Mike reported that he is working with Normandy to try to resolve issues with Coca Cola regarding the truck parking on Third Avenue and updating the fencing with artificial greenery. He also advised that they have agreed to use some of the development funds in the owners' fund to hire the company which did Kendall Square's placemaking/specialty retail. They will hire Graffito for three months to review Needham Crossing's open space, transportation, entertainment, retail, restaurants and other placemaking recommendations.

Chuck and Devra have been in contact with Ashland, who tore down a building in their downtown and created a shed which has rotating retail, restaurants, and other popup amenities in an effort to create a gathering place in their downtown. The shed is surrounded by outdoor seating and landscaping. We had discussed it for use in Needham Crossing but the Town has no land that would be suitable. Normandy's pad site on A Street next to the food trucks would be a perfect location for this

popup endeavor. Devra will be talking to Normandy about it next week at the owners' meeting but Mike should feel free to mention it as well.

The members again discussed the problem created by food uses in buildings not being allowed to advertise their use, even though they are open to the public. Mike suggested that, rather than making the issue about one food enterprise, it should be addressed in Needham Crossing globally by the Planning Board. How do these ancillary uses get to spread the word? How can Needham Crossing and the N² marketing let people know these amenities exist?

XI. Adjourn

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