



TOWN of NEEDHAM  
MASSACHUSETTS

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

**MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC ADVISORS**  
**WEDNESDAY, September 4, 2019 7:30 AM**  
**Charles River Room**  
**Public Services Administration Building**  
**500 Dedham Avenue**  
*Adopted October 2, 2019*

Present: Adam Block, Chair; Rick Putprush; Moe Handel; Glen Cammarano; Michael Wilcox; Bob Hentschel; Adam Meixner; David Montgomery; Anne Marie Dowd; Matt Talcoff; Virginia Fleisher; and Devra Bailin.  
Not Present: Ted Owens; Bill Day; Tina Burgos; and Stuart Agler.  
Others Present: Lee Newman, Director of Planning and Community Development; and Kate Fitzpatrick, Town Manager.

**I. Approval of Minutes**

The Minutes of July 10, 2019 were unanimously approved.

**II. Reminder of Next Meeting Dates**

Our next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday October 2, 2019 in the Charles River Room at 7:30 a.m. Future meetings will be scheduled for the first Wednesday of the month (unless a holiday) in the Charles River Room at PSAB.

**III. Update on Industrial Zoning (Highway Commercial 1)**

Glen absented himself from the room during the discussion of this topic. The Planning Board will hold a hearing on the zoning, copies of which were provided to members, on September 17<sup>th</sup>. The zoning articles will be on the Town Meeting Warrant for October 28<sup>th</sup>. It was pointed out that members—not as CEA members but as individual residents, owners, and businesses—need to support the articles publicly.

Devra noted that it is likely that Liz Grimes will be making the presentation and Devra has emphasized to her the need to present these as an economic development proposal. The members of the

CEA, as individuals, are in unique positions to drive home the economic impacts of rezoning. Lee raised the issue of the costs of development. Devra noted that developers have always been required to bear the costs of traffic mitigation, sewer and water infrastructure improvements, and the like associated with their development. Lee suggested a fiscal impact analysis, which Moe agreed would be extremely helpful. (The Planning Department will arrange to provide one if the Planning Board deems it desirable.) In the meantime, Adam M. has agreed to work with Jeremy Freid to update the numbers to include numbers for the Channel 5 site as well.

There was discussion by the members of big box retail (which had been rejected as an option), grocery stores (which is now provided for by special permit not to exceed 25,000 sq. ft.), arbitrary square footage of retail provided, deletion of hotels as an allowed use, mix of uses allowed, and laboratory space, among other topics. It was noted that grocery stores were originally taken out by the Planning Board. There was not consensus on the use but in the end the Board compromised as a special permit use of limited size. (Adam M. noted that the whole Trader Joe plaza is 30,000 sq. ft., so Trader Joe's is probably between 8000-9000 sq. ft.) Bob expressed concern about the arbitrary size of retail allowed by right (less than 10,000 sq. ft.) and by special permit (10,000 to 25,000). Devra noted that these are known dimensions in the By-Law and, although arbitrary, have a history. Adam M. noted that there is not a lot of demand for lab space right now; medical office/facility use is high in demand. There was a discussion as to how the language came to be drafted—Devra noted it was a compromise created at the time of the zoning in 2011 to avoid opposition from those supporting BID-Needham. That issue is potentially real today as well. Moe noted that, while the zoning is not perfect, it is not the time to begin discussions of weaknesses already in the By-Law; the CEA should study them after we clear this hurdle. It was noted that it could be helpful to look at the costs and benefits associated with exempt medical uses along with practical ways to capture value for the tax base.

David noted one correction which should be made to the zoning. On page 2 paragraph (m), there's a reference to the Board of Selectman which should be Select Board. He also mentioned with respect to page 5's reference to TDM that his transportation committee would like input on that. Devra noted that the Transportation Committee might want to work with the Planning Board to draft regulations about TDMs; she did not think requirements should be imbedded in the zoning. Moe also suggested raising the issue at Chair/Vice Chair meetings of the Planning Board and Select Board.

There was discussion about whether the use provision of more than one use and more than one building on a lot belong in the use section. It was noted that they have historically been in that section. There was discussion about the ban on drive-throughs. It was thought that the latter issue might be subject to later discussion apart from this zoning.

In response to questions about the commercial mix envisioned, it was noted that this zoning leaves open the option of a development like The Street (without big boxes) or straight office with ancillary retail/restaurants.

Devra asked the members the question posed by a member of the Planning Board as to the impact of reducing the maximum uninterrupted façade length from 300' to 100'-200'. Apparently, the Planning Department reduced it to 200' already. Bob noted that it did make development more expensive but not materially significant.

The CEA voted unanimously to support the proposed zoning. Devra will draft a letter to the Select Board and Planning Board to that effect.

Adam B. noted that members, owners and businesses need to come out to support the zoning at the public hearing before the Planning Board in the fall. Glen rejoined the meeting.

#### **IV. Discussion of possible TAP and other grants**

Anne Marie and Devra spoke with several of Anne Marie's former associates at MassDevelopment, who explained some possible grant options open to Needham. There are TAP grants for which the Town might qualify to use to study strategies for economic development of Mixed Use-128 or Chestnut Street. There are only about 3-4 such grants given by MassDevelopment per year and Needham, not being a community in need, may not have much chance. There is also Patronicity program, which allows communities to crowd fund raise and get matches from MassDevelopment up to a certain amount for placemaking. Unfortunately, Needham doesn't automatically qualify; we would have to prove the program benefits households with less than 120% of area mean income. With 25% affordable units in Needham Crossing at Charles River Landing and the Kendrick, it might be possible. An alternative would be partner with Newton; MassDevelopment encourages municipalities to work together. There are also PACE grants to help businesses and owners install and/or build energy efficiencies. Anne Marie, in Devra's absence, will continue to work on possible grants.

Devra resubmitted the CEA's application for an economic score card to the Babson MCFE program.

#### **V. Update on Needham Crossing/N<sup>2</sup> Innovation District/Infrastructure Improvements**

Mike noted that we are close with N2 signage. We are putting together a package to create four new signs and reface the existing 5 signs. He will have to get the budget approved by Normandy and then the Town will obtain necessary approvals from the DRB. (Devra has already discussed these with Mark Gluesing, the Chair.) Mike is also working to get a proposal from a wayfinding company to provide additional signage.

Devra has also asked for assistance in submitting a capital article for streetscape design in the NEBC. Cecilia was given the information.

Devra noted that the Newton Needham Chamber will have a meeting with MassDOT about the corridor project. It's on the morning on September 27<sup>th</sup>. There is or will be a signup on the Chamber website.

#### **VI. Update from Downtown Subcommittee**

There is no further update from this subcommittee at this time.

#### **VII. Other Business**

Devra noted that she has resigned as the Economic Development Director for Town of Needham effective September 6<sup>th</sup>; she will be taking on that role in Newton starting on September 30<sup>th</sup>. Members thanked Devra for her service.

**IX. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:15 a.m.