

Minutes
Council of Economic Advisors
Wednesday, March 11, 2020, 7:30 a.m.
Public Services Administration Building - Charles River Room
500 Dedham Avenue
Needham, MA
Adopted April 15, 2020

Members Present: Stuart Agler, Adam Block, Virginia Fleisher, Maurice Handel, Robert Hentschel, Adam Meixner, Rick Putpush

Members Absent: Ted Owens, Matthew Talcoff, Glen Cammarano, Tina Burgos, Ann Marie Dowd, Bill Day, David Montgomery, Michael Wilcox

Others Present: Lee Newman, Director of Planning and Community Development; Dave Roche, Building Commissioner; Daphne Collins, Zoning Specialist.

Adam Block, Chair, opened the meeting at 7:30 a.m.

1. Minutes of December 4, 2019 and January 15, 2020

Stuart Agler moved to adopt the Minutes of December 4, 2019 and January 15, 2020. Moe Handel seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

2. Industrial Zoning (HC1)

Lee Newman, Director of Planning and Community Development, reported that the Planning Board and the Select Board decided to table the proposed Industrial Zoning (HC1) from going forward to the May Town Meeting and to create a committee who will oversee developing a new scheme based on the foundation of the existing proposed Zoning change. A new traffic study will be conducted based on a reduced FAR of 1.35 to determine the impact of traffic at the intersections located at Highland Avenue and Gould Street, and Gould Street and Central Avenue. Based on the results of the traffic study an Urban Design Plan will be developed with the appropriate density and land use mix for the area. After the Traffic Study is completed a new Fiscal Impact Analysis will be undertaken.

The proposed schedule is as follows:

- appoint the Committee in May;
- conduct a Traffic Study from which the Planning Board and Select Board will determine appropriate FAR and land uses in June;
- develop the Urban Design Plan and Fiscal Analysis in summer;
- hold community Public Hearings in November;
- present the revised HC1 Zoning change to Town Meeting in May 2021.

The Select Board will vote on the proposed schedule next week.

There was discussion on whether the new zoning change will include residential use in the land use mix because of the regional need for additional affordable housing.

3. Report on Banner Signs – Dave Roche, Building Commissioner

Mr. Roche reported that there had been a series of illegal banners and sidewalk signs in the downtown area and that the Building Department had been enforcing compliance. Twenty-five notices to businesses were issued. He is working with Cyndi Roy-Gonzalez, the Public Information Officer, on a Public Information campaign to bring awareness of the Town Sign By-Law. Overall, he thought the response was good.

He also reported that an enforcement letter was sent to Art Marsala regarding their deteriorated awning.

4. Northland Needham Street Development Update

Mr. Block reported that the City of Newton voted to approve the Northland Needham Street Development, a 23-acre mix-use development containing 800 residential units, with 140 affordable units and 100,000 sf of office/retail space.

5. NHNA Presentation – MassDOT – Highland/Needham Corridor Presentation

Mr. Block reported that a large Town Community Meeting will be held on the Highland/Needham Corridor Improvement project on Monday, March 23, 2020 at 7pm. The item may be rescheduled because of concerns regarding group gatherings.

6. Small Business Initiatives

a. Small Business Subcommittee Update

The Subcommittee met on February 25, 2020. They decided to hold a series of listening sessions where 4-6 small business owners will be invited in an informal setting to share their concerns and issues.

b. Report on Field Trip to Dedham – Anne Marie Dowd & Tina Burgos

Item tabled.

7. Needham Business Score Card

The team of student consultants from the Babson MCFE program continue to make progress on the Needham Economic Score Card Project. The project goal is to inventory Needham businesses and develop an Economic Score Card. The student consultants went on a bus tour of the Needham business areas culminating with a Q&A with Greg Reibman, the President of the Newton Needham Regional Chamber of Commerce. To

date they have identified over 2,200 Needham businesses. The project has received media coverage in the Boston Globe and the Needham Times.

8. Planning and Community Development Business

Ms. Newman reported that the Planning Department has been working with Children's Hospital regarding the zoning change which will allow Pediatric Care use associated with their relocation plans of the pediatric orthopedic department on three parcels in the New England Business Center District next to Tripadvisor. The proposal includes a 900-car parking structure. The Town is working on a Tax Revenue Agreement with Children's to insure a comparable tax revenue generation of a commercial development. Children's has provided a Traffic and Trip Generation Study. The Town will hire a consultant to conduct a Peer Review. Ms. Newman believed that there will be off-site mitigations which may include adjustments to the light at Kendrick Street and Third Avenue, a new lane and utility upgrades.

Once the Zoning change is adopted at Town Meeting, Children's may apply for a Special Permit.

9. Economic Development Director Search Update

Ms. Newman reported that the Economic Director position role is being changed from a Managerial one to a Professional one. The position will report directly to the Town Manager or Assistant Town Manager. This role change will be going before the Personnel Board by March. The position is expected to be advertised in April.

A new Assistant Manager has been hired.

10. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 a.m.