

Town of Needham
Council of Economic Advisors
Meeting Minutes of January 23, 2024

Present - Adam Block, Kate Urquhart, , Heidi Frail, Bill Day, Bob Hentschel , Rick Putprush, Mike Willcox, Lise Elcock, Jeremy Halpern, Adam Meisner, Dan Goodman, Matt Talcoff

Absent - Bruan Patel

Also Present: Kaite King (Asst. Town Manager) Amy Halesen (Director of Communication) Lee Newman (Director of Planning and Community Development) Alex Clee (Asst. Town Planner) J.P. Cacciaglia (EDM), Lars Unjhem, Tim Sullivan, Paul Dawson, David Downing, Greg Petrini, Bill Lovette, Bob Smart.

Adam Block: Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:02 pm. He explained the purpose of this meeting was to hear from the HONE Committee on their models for municipal compliance of the MBTA Communities Act and for the CEA and residential development stakeholders to provide feedback to the HONE Committee.

CEA member H. Frail (also a select board member and Co-Chair of HONE) and HONE Committee member Bill Lovett delivered a presentation on HONE's models for compliance with the MBTA Communities Act including a summary of the regulatory framework for each effected district. The presentation identified three options that HONE is exploring. The density and dimensional regulations differ in each option.

Lee Newman: spoke about the MBTA Community rules and formula for mixed use.

Greg Petrini: recommended the A1 district should remain entirely residential and recommended retail and mixed-uses should be preserved in commercial districts. He also explained he did not believe the special permit process is a limiting factor in development. He believes builders, like him, are used to special permits as part of a project's approval process. Units per Acre and FAR make more of a difference than by right/special permit.

Tim Sullivan: explained that some development by special permit can negatively impact project financing because lenders and investors see appeals risk with a special permit project that can jeopardize financing.

Steve Dazzo: Hanover Company, would look only at an option C type project. For a larger development the fractional ownership doesn't work. Expanded district to make large projects work in other areas of town.

Kate Urquhart : housing needs to be added all over and we need to focus on what the end goal is and make sure the zoning adopted meets those end goals. If areas need to be added outside of the MBTA area to meet those goals that also needs to be looked into.

Lise Elcock: asked if some of the proposed developments that have proposed in the past been could have processed in a different path if these plans had been adopted. Discussion held and it

was determined it would still be a case by case based on parcel zoning, areas of town have been zoned for higher density for 10+ years but only one development has taken place.

Bill Lovett : commented that if a productive commercial site is being proposed for redevelopment it adds another layer and more cost as that has to be overcome to add housing to the site as that needs to be relocated during the construction period. Asked about a number of units that a project becomes economically feasible.

Discussion held -- becomes very site specific in an urban environment. There are fixed costs for every unit development, some costs increase but some are relatively flat. There are increments help, vertical core etc. Needham properties are so unique that has. 40+ rental units is where it starts to pay for those elements. Smaller number of units a Condo / Town home development can be built with fewer units but this is still Needham and those units would not be affordable in the

Adam Block/Lee Newman: spoke on affordable housing models from the State and MBTA. The numbers from the consultant support up to 20% affordable (80% AMI) Needham is currently over 10% if a project comes in as a friendly 40B if you meet the affordability.

Condo vs Apartments: MBTA doesn't specify so smaller projects might be better as a condo development.

Bob Smart: spoke about affordable housing and that if the goal is meet state requirements and build housing and maybe relax the affordability component on smaller for a 10 or 20 project. Large projects are where you get a number of affordable components.

Dave Downing: keeping retail first flow in the core in the main street areas makes sense but when you get to the fringes that communities require it and it remains vacant. Incentives for commercial for exemption for F.A.R. or amenity for the community.

Adam Block: asked Katie King on the process of getting Needham MBTA community plan adopted

Katie King: HONE had the second public Meeting on the 29th of Jan and is digesting all the feedback and consolidating it into one plan which will be provided at the next public HONE meeting in March, Then getting everything ready for Town meeting in Oct.

Adam Block: spoke to send all comments at Planning@needhamma.gov or to J.P. jcacciag@needhamma.gov and will make sure they are routed to the appropriate group; thanked everyone for coming.

Heidi Frail moved to adjourn with a second by Bob Hentschel.

Adam Block Called Roll , The motion carried unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 4:19pm