



TOWN of NEEDHAM
MASSACHUSETTS

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

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC ADVISORS
WEDNESDAY, May 7, 2014 7:30 AM
Charles River Room PSAB

Present: Glen Cammarano; Marty Jacobs; Moe Handel; Tom Jacob; Elizabeth Grimes;
Michael Wilcox; Rick Putprush; and Devra Bailin, staff
Not Present: Matt Talcoff, Chair; Janet O'Connor; Peter Atallah; Bill Day; Bruce Herman; Brian
Nadler; Bob Hentschel; Matt Borrelli; and Lee Newman

I. Approval of Minutes

The members approved the minutes for the meeting of April 2, 2014.

II. Reminder of Next Meeting and Hearing Dates

Because Devra is unable to attend the meeting scheduled for June 4th, the members voted to hold our next meeting on June 17th at 7:30 a.m. The members also voted to cancel our July 2nd and August 6th meetings. We will continue on our regular schedule—the first Wednesday of each month, starting in September. All meetings will be in the Charles River Room at PSAB.

III. Update on Mixed Use-128 Residential Overlay

There was no further update. Lee had advised last month that she had spoken to Phil Herr and he was still willing to do the work but was presently busy with a Newton project. She advised that we will target November Town Meeting.

IV. Update on Industrial District Subcommittee

Devra briefly explained that the public meetings on Industrial 1 District and the Industrial Districts along Route 128/Reservoir Streets, where development is most likely to occur in the near future and have the greatest economic impact, were very productive. At the morning meeting, we had mostly business and landowners in attendance, who were receptive to increasing height and density but expressed some concern about rendering certain types of businesses preexisting nonconforming. At the evening meeting, we had mostly residents who expressed concern about heights and density, mostly as it related to increased traffic, shadowing, and structures along Gould. Devra noticed that many participants arrived with their personal invitations and she felt people were happy to have the opportunity to enter into a dialog. Devra explained that she had decided not to type up any prospective

zoning because then people feel they are being presented with a done deal, especially if the Subcommittee decides to propose what was originally envisioned. Committee and Subcommittee in attendance at the meetings felt that stress should be placed on elevation rather than stories and height—given the topography sloping down in Industrial 1 particularly. There was discussion of obtaining a traffic study to assess impacts of various changes. Devra explained that Lee felt there was money in this year’s budget to do so for Industrial 1. We would have to use next year’s budget to do Reservoir Street. Members are directed to the draft Minutes of these meetings, which have been distributed, for further details.

V. Update on Needham Crossing Work

Devra explained that final mockups have been prepared for the Needham Crossing re-facing project. She thanked Mike and his marketer, Tina Snyder, for all their work. Fast Signs of Needham will be doing the work for about \$2700.00. There will be some money left in the contract to allow exploration of signage along Highland Avenue to announce arrival into Needham Crossing.

VI. Update on N2 and New Companies Moving into the Corridor

Devra passed out press releases on two new businesses coming into the corridor. Pharmaceutical company, Verastem, is moving from Kendall Square to 117 Kendrick. (The BBJ article explains why they chose to move to Needham.) The other is Vision Healthcare, which is subletting from BID at 100 Second Avenue per Mike. Devra explained that the N2 Subcommittee of NNCC is applying for a grant from the Economic Development Administration to fund an organization to promote the corridor. The grant will also help us to refine the image and a marketing plan. Kate, Lee and Devra also met with the Mayor and his team to discuss collaborative efforts in the corridor, including programing to promote shared work space.

VII. Update on Downtown Subcommittee (Streamlining Suggestions)

Two streamlining amendments are before Town Meeting tonight—turning over review and approval authority to the Design Review Board for façade modifications in the downtown and creating a threshold under which changes in use which don’t increase the cumulative parking demand to 10 or more in the Center Business, Avery Square and Chestnut Street Business Districts or 4 or more in other districts will not require waivers. Going forward both Liz and Marty will meet with the Subcommittee to discuss moving forward on other items. Liz explained that she tried to get the Board to agree to declare a moratorium on requiring parking studies. It was represented by Sam that Moe had told him that the Town was doing a parking study and, so, the Board agreed to consider the moratorium idea promptly once the Town study is done. Moe explained that the Town has done one but had never said we would be doing one. Liz and Marty agreed to discuss this with the Subcommittee at the meeting on the 21st.

VIII. Update on Babson Application for Detailed Marketing Plan

Devra briefly explained the scope of the work to be done under this second phase of the Marketing Study. Marty expressed his view that we need not only the detailed vision, which must be realistic, but how we get there. What do we do with the information we get? What can the Town do to

incent the type of development which can retain and grow retail in a market which is presently strong in destination restaurants? How do we get the landlords to take actions to realize the vision? It was suggested by Rick that the Babson students be put in contact with his friend Aubrey who sites retail businesses in Town centers.

IX. Update on the Medical Marijuana Overlay District

This is on for Town Meeting tonight. Both Marty and Moe are presenting.

X. Update from Downtown Streetscape Working Group

The Board of Selectmen is holding a hearing on the Group's recommendations on June 4th.

XI. Other Business

Devra noted that she received an inquiry as to why the Highland Circle area was not included in the Industrial Subcommittee work. She explained that it is in Highland Commercial-128 and Mixed Use-128 and not an industrial district. Moe acknowledged that this area is largely vacant and he understands the concerns. Devra also explained that we had another incident of lack of timely notice on a project in the downtown—this time in connection with MBTA repair of the tracks on the Saturday before Easter. Although the Town didn't schedule it, we knew about the date and didn't relay the information to the merchants to make sure that it created no problem. A suggestion was made that in future we provide signage and perhaps balloons to indicate that the businesses are open and where to park. The problem with this is that the information needs to be communicated to Devra to communicate with the merchants. Now that this issue has arisen, DPW is aware of the need to keep Planning informed.

XII. Adjourn

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