



TOWN of NEEDHAM
MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
Economic Development
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MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC ADVISORS
WEDNESDAY, January 3, 2018 7:30 AM
Charles River Room PSAB

Present: Jack Cogswell, Chair; Adam Block, Vice Chair; Rick Putprush; Bill Day; Peter Atallah; Moe Handel; Michael Wilcox; Bob Hentschel; Glen Cammarano; Stuart Agler; and Devra Bailin.
Not Present: Matt Talcoff; Ted Owens; Virginia Fleisher; Marty Jacobs; and Russ MacTough
Also Present: Christopher Coleman; Mark Gluesing; and Bob Dermody

I. Approval of Minutes

The members approved the Minutes for the meeting of December 6, 2017.

II. Reminder of Next Meeting Dates

Our next meeting is scheduled for February 7th in the Charles River Room. 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 Central Avenue Neighborhood Business District

Moe has not yet ascertained whether the BOS wants the CEA to provide its comments on this zoning initiative. It was also noted that the CEA has not reviewed the overlay district approach that the Planning Board asked the applicant to take. It was, however, thought that the CEA could author a letter of general recommendation for the mixed use zoning approach for the area in order to incent redevelopment in that area. A vote was taken to authorize Devra to draft a general recommendation and address it to the BOS.

IV. Discussion of Industrial District Subcommittee

Members were reminded of the hearing by the BOS on January 9th at 7:30 p.m. in Powers Hall regarding the Industrial 1 rezoning initiatives. Devra noted that she had reached out to one of the residents to make sure he was aware of the hearing and he indicated he would attend. Although Devra had not heard back from the Town Manager on what type of presentation was intended, Jack explained that he had and that the BOS was just looking for a general explanation as to the process the CEA used

to get to its recommendations. There was discussion about the need for members to attend. Notice of the hearing was sent out to all members but any members wanting a copy can contact Devra.

The members discussed the need to emphasize the positive impacts of the proposed rezoning, not just to the Town, but the surrounding neighborhood. These include aesthetic improvements, added amenities, increased commercial base (which could serve to increase the value of the surrounding residential properties), infrastructure improvements (e.g., needed traffic signals that can be expedited and paid for as mitigation to development), 20' landscaped buffer along the streetscape, and the like.

V. Discussion of Design Review Board Initiatives

Mark Gluesing, the Chair of the DRB, and Bob Dermody, a member of the DRB, came to discuss certain sign initiatives which may be of interest to the CEA. These include a proposed regulation not allowing multiple tenants to put their names on the top of buildings—the regulation might allow only a main tenant sign, with all other tenants appearing on a compound sign on the ground. The DRB is also considering a By-Law amendment allowing increased signage along the highway. (The DRB is allowing in excess of 100 sq. ft. which is the maximum specified in the current By-Law.)

Mark noted that the By-Law did not envision buildings along Route 128 like TripAdvisor and Marriott Residence Inn. The size of building signs is too restrictive. A member of the DRB is a sign manufacturer and they are reviewing their approach to the size issue. TripAdvisor's sign is 280 sq. ft. but given the height and size of the building, it looks small. There is also concern about the multiplicity of building signage, noting the number of building signs for multiple tenants on one 4th Avenue building. The members discussed an approach which would allow signage which is based on both the height and the linear wall of the building. It was also discussed that a building may require more than one building sign depending on its location.

There was discussion of the fact that the DRB does not support movement on light displays. Mark and Bob also noted that the DRB's view is that signs are to identify the name and location of a business and are not to be used as an advertisement. Name and location are the keys. They understand sometimes the name requires an identifier so the public knows what type of business it is. They also noted that we need to be careful with logos—are they necessary to identify the business or is advertising their true purpose?

There was discussion about how you do deal with signage for multiple tenanted buildings. If there is a mix of uses, does the building sign provide location information only as to the major tenant? Does it matter what floor the business is on? For this issue, the DRB is reviewing regulations from Woburn, Waltham, and other municipalities fronting on Route 128. It was noted that if only one tenant gets the building identification, then this creates issues for the landlord in negotiating the leases. Ultimately, it is a branding issue. It was also noted by members that there may be an economic benefit to the Town in letting people know what businesses are here—incenting others to come.

It was expressed that there may be different issues for low rise versus high rise buildings. Signage may need to be different. The distance is another factor—where can it be seen from? Compound signs for multiple tenants in front of low rise buildings on A Street may not be appropriate

for a multiple tenanted building on First Avenue where tenants want visibility of signage to Route 128. Mark noted that, where there are multiple tenants, the DRB will be looking to create a uniform look.

Presently the By-Law requires all lights be out at 11:00 if the building is not occupied. Although there is concern for light pollution, that may not be a necessary regulation for signs on the higher buildings, especially with technology available.

Devra noted that the CEA worked with the DRB on several General By-Law changes in the past—correcting the special permit process, allowing blade and sandwich signs, and street banners. She felt that the CEA working with the DRB on these issues would prove helpful. This would be true also with Needham Crossing/N² Innovation District signage proposed when infrastructure projects are completed.

There was also discussion about ongoing concerns about the DRB's refusing to allow logos on signs (deeming it advertising) and restriction of color (even if it is the company's official color). Mark and Bob noted that color is important and there are some that are simply not appropriate, depending on their location. (Also some colors simply fade and that requires applicants to come back..)

Members asked Mark and Bob to keep the CEA in the loop as they move forward. Mark thanked the CEA for its comments and agreed that the dialog was helpful .

VI. Discussion of CEA priorities/future goals

Assuming most of the Industrial rezoning moves forward next year, the CEA needs to reevaluate its priorities and goals.

Stu noted at our last meeting that it might make sense for the BOS to provide advice on what they would like us to focus on. Moe indicated that this in on the BOS Agenda and he will get back to the CEA. Devra noted that she has maintained a list of zoning changes, including removal of the 50' setback requirement injected at various places in the By-Law, and the members asked that she forward the list to them.

VII. Update on Needham Crossing/N² Innovation District

Due to the shortage of time, this was not discussed.

VIII. Update from the Downtown Subcommittee (Streamlining Initiatives)

Due to time constraints, this was not discussed.

IX. Update on Infrastructure Improvements in Needham Crossing, Downtown, Elliot/Central Avenue Bridge

Due to the shortage of time, this was not discussed.

X. Other Business

Due to the shortage of time, this was not discussed.

XI. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:00 a.m.