



TOWN of NEEDHAM
MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
Economic Development
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MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC ADVISORS
WEDNESDAY, April 3, 2013 7:30 AM
Charles River Room PSAB

Present: Matt Talcoff, Chair; Glen Cammarano; Tom Jacob; Bob Hentschel; Marty Jacobs;
Elizabeth Grimes; Moe Handel; Brian Nadler; Janet O'Connor; Lee Newman; and Devra Bailin
Not Present: Walter Collins; Matt Borrelli; Bruce Herman; Bill Day; Damon Borrelli; Michael Wilcox
Also Present: Paul Good; Steve Swadie (sp—from Fast Signs); Mark Gluesing; and Denise Garlick

I. Approval of Minutes

The members approved the minutes for the meeting of March 6th.

II. Reminder of Next Meeting and Hearing Dates

The next meeting date is May 1st. Our future meetings will continue to be held on the first Wednesday of each month, unless it is a holiday. All meetings will be in the Charles River Room at PSAB.

III. Update on Needham Crossing

Devra explained that, at the CEA's suggestion, she has been in touch with David Neves and Linda Burke about having students try their hand at possible logos for Needham Crossing. Devra explained that we are seeking ideas for the logo design for "Needham Crossing", incorporating the name and some sort of symbol reflecting the area. She sent them a copy of the Naming Recommendations Memo given by the CEA to the BOS, as well as the List of Amenities and Unique Qualities of the NEBC. Dave responded that he thought it sounded like an interesting project and cc'ed all NHS visual art teachers. He thought it might readily fit into existing classes, as logo design is actually incorporated into many of the art classes. He also thought it might be something the Visual Art Society might take on as a project. He has indicated there is interest and we agreed the time frame could certainly be extended to the end of the school year (rather than this month) but he has not yet committed. I send weekly requests for updates at his request.

Also, Matt Borrelli is seeking input from a friend who is a designer. Moe asked if that was David Linde and Devra said that it was.

IV. Request by Restaurants to all full alcohol licenses if under 100 seats

Devra noted that she has had several requests, a few from upscale restaurants, about the possibility of obtaining full alcohol licenses for restaurants with seating capacity under 100 seats. Upscale restaurants like Clios or Toros often want intimate seating but rely on income from their specialty cocktails. Devra commented that this issue has arisen in the past and, since we were pursuing the retail sale of alcohol, it couldn't be pursued and it may still be too soon. Moe agreed to bring the matter to the attention of the Board of Selectmen and get back to the CEA.

V. Update on Zoning Initiatives for Annual Town Meeting

Devra noted that, although she told the Planning Board that the Mixed Use-128 Zoning (both dimensional amendments and residential overlay) is a high priority for the CEA and that they had initiated the zoning, the Planning Board has asked for a letter from the CEA demonstrating their support for the changes in dimensional zoning. Devra drafted the letter which the Chair reviewed and the Board of Selectmen authorized. The Board of Selectmen also sent a letter of support for the amendments. Because Devra was unable to attend the continued Planning Board hearing, Matt T. attended. The dimensional zoning changes were approved by the Planning Board and will be on the Annual Town Meeting. Devra reminded the CEA that work on the Residential Overlay has not been completed and that those provisions will not be going forward at this time. The Planning Department is engaging Phil Herr to advise and redraft the proposal.

It was noted that Simon Boyd again raised issue with the limitations caused by the FAR requirements. We had previously discussed dealing with the FAR issue in the future. Devra noted that we did try, with respect to the NEBC rezoning, to remove the FAR requirement by arguing that the setbacks, height, open space, and parking requirements should be sufficient to assure responsible growth. Mike Boujoulian's analysis demonstrated it was a stumbling block to maximum build-out, especially for smaller lots. Bob reiterated his view that, if one meets all the other requirements, that should be sufficient. Tom asked why we need it all. Lee explained that it provides for an understanding of maximum build-out and controls the bulk of development on each site. Tom said that if the tools conflict, then we need to understand what development would look like if it were removed.

Glen asked where we were getting the standards that led us to leave the FAR in. Lee explained that the urban form, accommodation for maximum future development, and infrastructure adequacy come from the Goody Clancy report. Glen noted that, since we already changed the FAR beyond what was envisioned there, it isn't clear that the "vision" in the Goody Clancy is still accurate. Bob noted that there are unintended consequences; we **have** changed the vision (more dense more urban more height) but the FAR will still constrain the growth so that it doesn't meet the new vision. Moe suggested that it would be helpful to do a graphic analysis—model the development under the new standards without and without the FAR. It was noted that the overall vision has changed and, although we increased the FAR, we need to understand if we are actually constraining what we intended should be constructed. Lee will look at the models we received for the NEBC but Devra thought that the consultant never took the FAR out of the mix. It was also observed that the FAR is particularly restrictive on smaller sites, as Simon (and Mike) noted. We will examine the material we have so we can understand the issue better. It may be, as Bob note, that the FARs we have allowed in the NEBC and Mixed Use-128 constrain development so that we cannot realize the more dense urban vision we adopted with the zoning changes.

VI. Request by Board of Selectman that CEA vote its recommendation on the Medical Marijuana Moratorium

Devra explained that the Board of Selectmen has asked for the CEA's recommendation on the medical marijuana moratorium. This was discussed at a previous meeting—the consensus was that the Town needed time to study the potential impacts on existing businesses, the actual regulations not yet promulgated by the State, and whether restrictions as to areas of use should be imposed. Marty explained that the Planning Board unanimously endorsed the moratorium. Matt T. asked if there was any further discussion on the article. Seeing none, a motion was made to support the moratorium and it was approved (with two abstentions [Marty and Moe] and one negative vote).

VII. Sign By-Law Amendments Public Meeting 8:00

Devra explained that the sign by-law amendments are the result of her work with the Design Review Board and David Roche to streamline the process for sign approvals. Basically, we all agree that an applicant should be able to find out if he/she requires a special permit, or if he/she knows he/she does, that he/she should be able to apply for the special permit, serve the notice of hearing, and be heard by the DRB at one hearing rather than going twice to DRB. The DRB has also agreed to allow a blade sign as of right in addition to the allowed wall sign and to provide a standard for all sandwich signs. The amendment also makes provision for street banners to be permitted by the Board of Selectmen; the amendment is now timely because the Downtown Streetscape Working Group is actively engaged in creating a plan. Devra also drafted regulations for the street banners.

Devra noted that she received comment from Jon Feder of Fast Signs who requested that the sandwich signs be allowed to be both black (as already in the draft) and white. He suggested that the latter is actually the standard sign (not requiring special order) and that because it doesn't absorb the light and fade is more long-lasting. Devra noted that the DRB was amendable to that change.

Mark Gluesing said that the DRB doesn't get a lot of appeals and feels that many of the missteps are caused by applicants not reading the Sign By-Law closely. However, the amendments clarify how to go about getting approval and allow those seeking special permits to do so in one hearing. The allowance of blade signs in addition to wall signs will reduce the number and need for special permits. Also the allowance of sandwich signs will allow businesses to advertise specials and daily menus but also clarifies where they can go and how they need to look. Sandwich signs posted on the street away from the front of the businesses will not be allowed.

Steve Swadie from Fast Signs stated that his company handles many sign applications for customers and agrees with the changes, which will permit their customers to understand how to get their signs approved. He noted that it is very confusing under the current By-Law. His company welcomes the changes and thanks the Town for getting them done. Moe noted that if these changes clarify things and provide greater guidelines to applicants, he will support them.

VIII. Discussion of Ideas for Promoting/Assisting with Local First

Devra asked the members to think about this issue, which they have made a priority for this year. Devra noted that the Needham Merchants Association will be sponsoring the Adirondack Chair event again in September, a new event Needham Goes Pink for breast cancer in October, and providing open studio space during NOS to artists. Devra noted the most difficult problem is getting more businesses to participate—one needs critical mass to make programs work (e.g., Holiday Stroll Passport). Paul Good noted that the NBA is changing guidelines for not-for-profits (reduction in membership fees of 50%) and is working hard to get the variety of events available in Needham onto the Discover Needham website. Tom thought the CEA should work to assist the NBA in its efforts. He suggested letting new businesses join the first year for free. Denise noted that the CEA can assist by identifying problems and then fixing them. Devra said that is part of what the Downtown Subcommittee is trying to do with respect to streamlining. Denise added dealing with holiday lights and snow removal are other ways we can make recommendations to assist the merchants. Moe agreed that the latter is something that needs to be addressed and it is being looked at by the Downtown Streetscape Working Committee.

Denise suggested getting together a list of wants and needs, going door to door to canvas them. Tom cautioned that if we get put together a list of recommendations but don't have BOS's, Town Manager's, DPW's and/or Planning Board's support, we may be creating a bigger problem. Exacerbating a problem by creating expectations of resolution could be more harmful. Tom noted that many of the infrastructure issues are now in front of the Downtown Streetscape Work Committee.

IX. Update on Downtown Subcommittee

It was discussed that one of the priorities for the CEA next year is to move on the streamlining initiatives which came to light during the discussions with the landlords in the Downtown. There is nothing to report from the Planning Board on this issue.

X. Other Business

Tom asked that Downtown Streetscape Working Committee be placed on the Agenda as a standing matter, which Devra will do. Tom noted that the preliminary traffic study has begun. He advised that the peak times are not as high as one might think [Devra noted that is because people go around the Center to avoid the lights] and they are looking to upgrade the traffic signals to allow greater through traffic when the train comes through. Tom explained that there is a meeting tomorrow morning with downtown merchants and restaurants to discuss the status of the Committee's work and to get their input. The Committee will work closely with the NBA and merchants to make sure that the business community has input and is kept informed.

XI. Adjourn

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