



TOWN of NEEDHAM
MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
Economic Development
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MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC ADVISORS
WEDNESDAY, November 4, 2015 7:30 AM
Charles River Room PSAB

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

I. Approval of Minutes

The members approved the minutes for the meeting of October 7, 2015.

II. Reminder of Next Meeting Dates

Our next meeting will be on December 2nd. Future meetings will be scheduled for the first Wednesday of the month (unless a holiday) in the Charles River Room at PSAB.

III. Update on Marketing for Needham Crossing (Babson Consulting Club)

Devra, Mike and Tina Snyder met with the students at The Bulfinch Companies' offices yesterday. The MBA student in charge of the project, Kunal Alaigh, had the team do some research and discuss possible marketing ideas for selling Needham Crossing brand. The meeting with The Bulfinch Companies was designed to explore their marketing ideas with the guidance of experts. The students explained that they divided the project into three parts—one student contacting possible target companies about coming to Needham Crossing; one student looking into how the area plays to site selectors; and one coming up with online marketing tools. The students have also set up a meeting with a marketing person at TripAdvisor. Based on those discussions the students will present their ideas at the Babson Consulting Club meeting on November 17th (we were originally told the 18th but that was not correct) at 5:00-8:00 p.m. in the F.W. Olin Graduate School of Business's auditorium on the Babson Campus (231 Forest St.). Members are encouraged to attend. (Devra sent the invitation out to members on the 9th.)

IV. Update from the Downtown Subcommittee

Moe spoke to Kate and they decided, rather than public outreach, the CEA members should conduct focus groups with businesses. Devra expressed concern that such an approach would be subject

to the same criticisms the meetings conducted with landlords and permitting lawyers met with—that the criticisms are isolated, not true, exaggerated.... Members also expressed concern that, unless the direction to change comes from the top down (politically and managerially), nothing will change. The us vs. them view and the perceived need for control has resulted in little improvement. There was suggestion that the businesses be surveyed; Devra reminded the members that that is precisely what she was doing when the landlords said permitting was the number one concern.

V. Update on Mixed Use-128 Residential Overlay

There was discussion of the fact the Board of Selectmen asked the Planning Board to withdraw our article and the Planning Board did so. Moe explained the rationale—primarily because of concern that the zoning article would push the Hillside discussion into a second night. Devra noted that, if that was the concern, the zoning article should have been deferred. Withdrawing it meant a waste of time and money for an article the CEA has been trying to get on the warrant for more than three years.

VI. Discussion of NEBC zoning restrictions (use/dimensional) interfering with development

Although Devra has requested if Normandy would be willing to put in writing those dimensional and use requirements which impaired, impeded or prevented them from building something they felt the market place was looking for, she has not received any written response. She noted, however, that one of the issues that came up was the open space limitation (which resulted when the Planning Board refused to reduce it per the proposal from the CEA) and another was the limitation on retail, restaurants and other consumer services to multistory office buildings. Devra reminded the members that she had an inquiry from a food ‘manufacturing’ company which is seeking to use a portion of a small one story building for preparation of their product, offices and a small (1000-1500 sq. ft) for food retail—mostly take out. There was discussion of whether to limit use of one story buildings to a percentage of the total space for these purposes (it was thought this was NOT necessary) and include the 15000 sq. ft. per establishment already imbedded in the requirements for multistory buildings (which was thought to make sense). The members think we should change this to allow the possibility of a public restaurant or food court, retail, and consumer services in these buildings as amenities to the park not just the building. Members expressed concern about the Planning Board double counting the parking required for such amenities.

The issue was to be put on for discussion by the Planning Board. Devra did not think that occurred and will remind Lee.

VII. Update on Industrial District Subcommittee

John Connery completed his report in June and provided supplemental work for Lee. After working out the scope and the price with BETA (BETA agreed to hold the original price), it took several months for Engineering Department to put together/through the necessary paperwork. Kien Ho provided a time line for their work last month, but Devra has been able to ascertain through the Planning Department whether the schedule will allow us to move forward with zoning in the spring. Also Devra is waiting for an answer from the Department as to whether Architect Mark Gluesing has been cleared to do the elevation drawings.

VIII. Update on N² Innovation Corridor

Camoin was selected and Devra met with them on the October 21st. They seemed very organized and informed. They will be meeting with businesses on November 17th—Devra has sent the invitation around and encourages members to attend.

IX. Discussion regarding fostering relationship between downtown businesses and TripAdvisor

Devra was pleased to report that Tyler Young referred her to Matthew Gabree as the person at TripAdvisor to discuss this with. TripAdvisor offered to run a shuttle to the downtown on Monday November 30th—Cyber Monday. They thought they would say, we are an online business but we support shop local. Devra met with a group merchants who have agreed to provide TripAdvisor employees a 10% discount—she will be going around next week to sign other businesses up. (On Friday afternoon November 6th, Devra received an email from TripAdvisor advising that they had a change of plans and would not be offering the shuttle on Cyber Monday. No further explanation was offered nor did Devra receive a response as to whether they would consider doing something after the holidays.)

X. Update on Infrastructure Improvements in Needham Crossing

Members asked why there was still no lead left at the intersection of Greendale/Hunting and Kendrick. Devra advised she has been asking MassDOT about this for months without success—it was agreed to at the owners meeting in February. Devra was asked to find out whether Coca Cola was legally allowed to have semis parked on both sides of Third Avenue. One member noted that the parking on the street to line up for pick up started about two years ago and has gotten much more extensive. Devra will find out if Lt. Kraemer knows the answer.

It was also noted by the members that the Highland Avenue/ Second Avenue intersection is working well. It was suggested that if the Town pushed back the stop line on Highland Avenue a bit, it would work even better. Devra noted that Highland Avenue is a State road and therefore the Town cannot make those changes.

XI. Other Business

A member asked about removing parking meters in the downtown to assist businesses. A member noted that there never seems to be anyone at the Senior Center and suggested the space be used for community events. It was noted that the parking spaces at the municipal lot behind Blue on Highland has spaces reserved for the Senior Center and there's no one in them.

XII. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:05 a.m.