

Minutes
Council of Economic Advisors
Wednesday, January 15, 2020, 7:30 a.m.
Public Services Administration Building - Charles River Room
500 Dedham Avenue
Needham, MA

Members Present: Stuart Agler, Adam Block, Tina Burgos, Bill Day, Anne Marie Dowd, Virginia Fleisher, Maurice Handel, Robert Hentschel, Adam Meixner, David Montgomery, Rick Putprush, Michael Wilcox.

Members Absent: Ted Owens, Matthew Talcoff, Glen Cammarano

Others Present: Lee Newman, Director of Planning and Community Development; Kate Fitzpatrick, Town Manager; Daphne Collins, Zoning Administrative Specialist; Cynthia Roy Gonzalez, Public Information Officer.

Adam Block, Chair, opened the meeting at 7:30 a.m.

1. Minutes of December 4, 2019

Rick Putprush moved to table the Minutes of December 4, 2019. Stuart Agler seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

2. Industrial Zoning (HC1)

The Planning Board (PB) subcommittee comprised of members of the CEA, Select Board, Finance Committee, PB and PB consultants met to discuss next steps in advancing the proposed Industrial Zoning (HC1) change. Adjustments were made to height and FAR to the previously proposed HC1 zone. The PB is also in touch with the Finance Committee.

The Needham Heights Neighborhood Association is hosting a community meeting on the proposed rezoning on January 27, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. at Broadmeadow Elementary School auditorium, with a snow date for February 3, 2020.

Mr. Putprush felt that the public needs understanding that the cost burden of Traffic Studies and Traffic Mitigation is the responsibility of a developer and not the Town's, and that the PB's role also needs to be explained at Town Meeting.

There was discussion whether the origin and vision story for the zoning change for HC1, HC2 and HC3 was necessary. Some felt that selling the future vision for H2 and HC3 was premature and confusing when proposing HC1.

Consultants have been retained to provide a revised Fiscal Impact Analysis and Traffic Study. The Fiscal Impact Analysis will include conditions going back to 2001. Results of both studies will be made available for the Finance Committee.

3. Needham Crossing/N² Innovation District

a) Children's Hospital

Children's Hospital is currently in discussion with the Town regarding their proposal to locate their Pediatric Orthopedic Department in Needham. The project includes three buildings and a parking garage on three parcels. This project will finalize the Normandy Master Plan except for the hotel with retail.

Michael Wilcox reported that Children's Hospital made a presentation about the proposal to the Newton-Needham Regional Chamber.

Mr. Block asked Mr. Wilcox if there were shared areas of engagement in the N2 Innovation District. Mr. Wilcox identified area amenities included transportation, sidewalks, signage and wayfinding, food options, walkability, and food trucks.

Moe Handel said that Children's Hospital is an important, financial occupant and there should be no separate asks with Children's Hospital outside the representatives of the Town.

Lee Newman, Director of Planning and Community Development, noted that the PB requires transportation shuttle as a condition of a Special Permit. It can be done independently or as part of the 128 Business Association.

Kate Fitzpatrick, Town Manager, stated that key to discussions with Children's Hospital is that they pay their fair share of taxes. Children's Hospital will be filing their application on February 3, 2020. Children's Hospital is considering a zoning change and presenting such a change as a citizens petition at Town Meeting.

b) 1 First Avenue (formerly Acapulco's)

Ms. Newman reported that Century Bank and In-Flight Simulation are looking at locating at 1 First Avenue, the former location of Acapulco's. They plan on submitting a PB application for a Major Site Plan Review under Educational Use. They are proposing a structure with a height of 68', taking advantage of the allowable height limitation for the area.

c) Signage Update

Mr. Wilcox anticipates designs and cost estimates to be available for gateway and wayfinding signage in the Spring. The consultant has identified the location for the signs; and easement authorization is ongoing.

Ms. Newman reminded that easement authorization and Design Review Board approvals will be required.

d) Northland Newton Development

The Northland Newton Development proposal was approved by Newton City Council. Mr. Wilcox noted that an important feature would be the restoration of the railroad crossing which would provide an important access to amenities. As a result of a citizen's petition the development has been placed on the ballot for Newton's March 3rd election.

Ms. Fitzpatrick reported that the Town is writing a letter of support for Newton's application for state funding associated with the project.

4. Downtown Business Initiatives

Mr. Block met with Greg Reibman, President, Newton-Needham Regional Chamber, regarding the frustrated relationship between the Chamber and some Downtown Needham Businesses. Mr. Reibman acknowledged mistakes and sincerely wanted to repair the relationship.

Mr. Block convened the Small Business Subcommittee for Thursday, January 23 at 9:30 a.m. The meeting will follow the Needham Business Alliance meeting scheduled from 8:30 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. in the Great Plain Conference Room at Town Hall. Daphne Collins, Zoning Administrative Specialist, will make room reservations and post the meeting on the Town and CEA sites.

David Montgomery, Virginia Fleisher and Mr. Putprush will join the Subcommittee.

Mr. Montgomery advocated that the previous subcommittee known as the Downtown Small Business Subcommittee be renamed to the Small Business Subcommittee to encompass a broader geography.

Tina Burgos provided a copy of the January/February 2020 edition of the *Boston Magazine* which featured Needham's small business community as "a retail scene getting a citified upgrade."

5. Needham Business Score Card

Dave Davidson, Assistant Town Manager; Anne Marie Dowd; Ms. Newman; Ms. Fitzpatrick; and Mr. Block have been in discussion about the framework for the Balanced Economic Score Card which will provide a snapshot of economic performance in the Town. A team of students from the Babson MCFE program will be engaged from January through May to undertake a study and provide a deliverable product either in the form of a map and/or website of the key relevant hyper local indicators.

6. Planning and Community Development Business Permits Issued

Ms. Newman reported on Planning Board business Special Permits:

- 100 West Street (formerly Avery Manor) –LCB Senior Living came before the PB about a 154 rental units Assisted Living development comprised of 83 assisted living units (28 memory care units) and 71 independent living units. Ten of the independent units will be in new space located on the roof on the structure facing the railroad tracks and not visible from Highland Avenue. The project will be presented at Fall Town Meeting. The project is supported by the PB. The units will be age restricted. At a minimum, 10% of the units will be affordable. Ms. Fleisher inquired if the applicant's management record could be vetted.

Ms. Collins reported there were no ZBA commercial Special Permits for the month of January.

7. Economic Development Director Search Update

Ms. Fitzpatrick will be meeting with the PB Chair to discuss the matter.

8. Other Business

Snow Plow Pilot Program – members expressed concern that more of Great Plain Avenue was not identified in the service map. Ms. Fitzpatrick responded that it is a Pilot Program and it will be expanded. Members asked if business owners along Chestnut Street and Great Plain Avenue could be informed that it is a Pilot Program and the program will be expanding. Cynthia Roy Gonzales, Public Information Officer, will make the information available to them.

Streetscape Improvement Program – members inquired about the status of the Streetscape Improvement Program. The DPW will be invited to the next CEA to provide updated information.

Co-Working Space – Mr. Wilcox announced that Workbar will be offering co-working space in the N2 District. An April 1 opening is expected.

NBC/Universal – Ms. Fitzpatrick attended an opening tour of the new space and was impressed by the technology and aesthetics of the facilities. Once they are in full broadcast operation, she will pursue the agreed upon conditions such as Internships, and display of the Town Logo.

9. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 a.m.