

Minutes

Economic Development Advisory Board

January 9, 2023 7:00PM

Held remotely via Zoom

Committee members in attendance (noted by Y/N):

Anne Meyers, Co-Chair	Y	Derrick Choi	Y	Carol Levin	N	Marilyn Newman	Y
Paul Saner, Co-Chair	Y	Alan Christ	Y	Ken Lewis	Y	Al Raine	N
Cliff Brown*	Y	Sandi Silk	Y	Tom Nally	Y	Zeina Talje	Y

*Arrived late or left early

Staff & consultants present: Meredith Mooney, Victor Panak, Aaron Norris, William Dorfman, Maria Morelli

Attendees included: Susan Silberberg, Sue Kim, Arlene Mattison, Perry Grossman, Josh Danesh, Carla Benka, Carol Gladstone, Linda Pehlke, John VanScoyoc, Hugh Mattison, Danny Danesh

Meeting Materials: <https://www.brooklinema.gov/DocumentCenter/Index/2936>

- William Dorfman Resume Fall 2022
- Agenda for Strategic Planning Discussion
- CC-JFK Rapid Recovery Plan (2021)
- EDAB Lab and Bio-Life Sci Report (2021)
- ED-LT Five Year Strategy and Work Plan (2018)
- ED-LT One-Pager
- ED-LT Study Corridors FY19-23 (2018)
- Major Parcel Study (2018)
- MAPC Report on Brookline Commercial Areas (2018)
- DRAFT EDAB Memo – MBTA Communities – 1.6.23
- DRAFT EDAB Minutes 12.5.22

Meeting Recording:

https://brooklinema.zoomgov.com/rec/share/XedtgT3XGeptS1RfJ64xhcOtXLINWuwf1nBwOfAdpPrCBye293Mqpf_v22kQKQDt.yYaC5oYnrjCsO2Oc

Opening Remarks

Anne Meyers opened the meeting and briefly reviewed the agenda items.

Presentation and Discussion facilitated by Susan Silberberg (CivicMoxie) on Strategic Planning for the Economic Development and Long-Term Planning Division

Ms. Mooney briefly introduced the topic and provided the Board with a presentation on the Division's Strategic Work Plan, including its purpose, process, format, and contents.

Susan Silberberg (CivicMoxie) facilitated a discussion about EDAB members' opinions about the current workplan and hopes for the next strategic workplan. The Board discussed achievements over the past five years, what important things have changed with the pandemic, how to transition from Covid rapid-recovery to longer-term needs for the commercial districts, and ways to support existing businesses and attract new commercial uses. Board members also discussed things that have helped achieve goals and what could help in the future. Board members specifically called out the efficient and effective manner in which the Town and the Economic Development Division reacted to the pandemic and expressed a desire to harness that effective energy into urgent projects that may arise in the future.

The Board discussed what goals need focus moving forward. Board members highlighted the urgency of completing more corridor studies and rezonings, expanding the Town's commercial development pipeline and expanding the Town's commercial tax base, and engaging property owners where there is potential for new commercial development. The Board also identified the need for some focus on arts and culture to help shape the Town's commercial areas into attractive destinations.

Ms. Silberberg and Ms. Mooney reviewed the next steps of the project.

Introduce new Economic Development / Long-Term Planner William Dorfman

William Dorfman, the new Economic Development and Long-Term Planner introduced himself to the Board.

Discussion and Possible Vote on EDAB Memo Regarding the Regulatory Division's Multifamily/Mixed-Use Study on Harvard Street and Compliance with the MBTA Communities Guidelines

Mr. Saner introduced the discussion by noting that the Planning Department had asked all of the relevant land use boards to express support for the ongoing work on the MBTA Communities requirements. Mr. Saner reviewed some of the elements of the proposed solution being advanced by the Planning Department, noting that the proposal involves an adjustment to the base zoning, rather than an overlay zoning district, and involves form-based zoning.

Ken Lewis expressed opposition to the draft EDAB memo for several reasons, including the elimination of minimum parking requirements, the potential impact of the zoning changes on the development of new commercial spaces, and the cost and length of time required to study form-based zoning. Mr. Lewis emphasized that EDAB's role is to recommend actions to the Select Board that enhance and expand the Town's commercial property tax base and, on that basis, he suggested that the Board make four recommendations to the Select Board regarding the proposed Harvard Street rezoning. He suggested that EDAB (1) recommend working with Representative Vitolo to seek a waiver of the MBTA Communities deadline, (2) recommend working with Rep. Vitolo to seek an amendment to the Guidelines thereby allowing more flexibility in requiring ground-floor retail, (3) support funding for form-based zoning based on a budget and timeline that is coordinated with the Housing Production Plan, and (4) oppose the elimination of parking minimums.

The Board and Ms. Morelli briefly discussed the consequences of minimum parking requirements in a Section 3A District. Ms. Morelli explained that any lot area needed to meet parking minimums would get subtracted from the area devoted to a compliant Section 3A zoning district. She also noted that the Town's current by-law already allows residential developments with no parking by special permit.

Mr. Brown asked several questions to Mr. Lewis and Planning staff related to the timing of the Town's response to MBTA Communities, the TJ Maxx site, coordination with the Housing Production Plan, and

Rep. Vitolo’s involvement in the process. Ms. Morelli briefly discussed parking utilization in the Harvard Street corridor, noting that it never exceeds one space per unit. She discussed development options for the TJ Maxx site and the timeline for adopting form-based zoning. She explained that she had discussed the timeline with a number of consultants and is confident in its achievability. Mr. Lewis responded to Mr. Brown and discussed the proposed change in the parking minimums. He also noted he had not directly spoken with Rep. Vitolo.

Mr. Christ expressed support for the timeline for developing a form-based zoning district along Harvard Street, saying that a short timeline will ensure the work gets completed whereas an open-ended timeline might never reach a conclusion. Mr. Christ and Ms. Morelli briefly discussed how form-based zoning might interact with specially designed overlay districts and the comprehensive plan.

The Board continued to discuss details of the rezoning proposal including the financial feasibility of a four-story scale in this corridor. Ms. Talje and other members expressed concerns with the likelihood of ground-floor retail without strong incentives. Board members discussed possible incentives, related to inclusionary zoning, parking minimums, or other options.

Mr. Saner stated he supports the draft memo because it represents a step in the direction of comprehensive rezoning along the corridor – something that EDAB has long advocated for. He also expressed concerns with the consequences should the Town fail to comply with the MBTA Communities requirements as well as the loss of momentum towards zoning reform that it might cause. He stated he strongly supports incentives for ground-floor retail but would not condition his approval on that issue.

Mr. Brown stated he has mixed feelings about the draft memo. He felt that the Board’s advocacy for commercial uses is getting lost in the larger discussion. He stated he is concerned that the proposal may lead to a loss in commercial tax base, which is contrary to the mission of the Board.

Board members continued to deliberate. Ms. Silk emphasized her belief that supporting housing development synergizes well with economic development and Ms. Meyers and Ms. Newman highlighted that EDAB’s issuance of this memo does not represent a definitive endorsement of any specific zoning outcome but merely endorses the initiation of a process to study Harvard Street as the locus for a Section 3A district and form-based zoning as a zoning strategy.

Ms. Meyers moved that EDAB issue the memo on the Regulatory Division’s Multifamily/Mixed-Use Study and MBTA Communities as drafted and edited. Mr. Nally seconded the motion.

<i>Anne Meyers, Co-Chair</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>Derrick Choi</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>Carol Levin</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>Marilyn Newman</i>	<i>Y</i>
<i>Paul Saner, Co-Chair</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>Alan Christ</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>Ken Lewis</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>Al Raine</i>	<i>n/a</i>
<i>Cliff Brown*</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>Sandi Silk</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>Tom Nally</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>Zeina Talje</i>	<i>Y</i>

Y = Yes

N = No

A = Abstain

n/a = Absent

The Board voted 7-0-3 to approve the motion.

Staff and Board Updates

This agenda item was not discussed.

Linkage Fee Program

Economic Development & Long-Term Planning Division Staffing

10 Brookline Place Committee

Boylston Street Corridor Study Committee

Review and approve draft 12/5/2022 meeting minutes

Mr. Saner moved to approve the minutes. Ms. Silk seconded the motion. The Board voted 7-0-3 to approve the minutes.

The meeting was adjourned.