

Economic Development Advisory Board Minutes

December 7, 2020

7 – 9 PM held remotely via Zoom

EDAB Board members in attendance: Anne Meyers, Paul Saner, Al Raine, Derrick Choi, Ken Lewis, Tom Nally, Marilyn Newman, Alan Christ, Cliff Brown, Carol Levin, Susan Houston.

EDAB Board members not in attendance: Don Warner

Staff present: Kara Brewton, Meredith Mooney

Guests included: Sandy Silk, Jeff Wachter, Janice Kahn, Max Tanguay-Colucci, John Van Scoyoc, Barbara Gutman

Materials provided ahead of time to the Board & via links in the agenda included: November 2, 2020 meeting minutes with revisions; October 14, 2020 Fiscal Impact Model Subcommittee meeting minutes with revisions; revised Fiscal Impact Study memo (11-26-2020) & related Data Input Spreadsheet (updated 12-1-2020); redline version of revised Fiscal Impact Study memo comparing 11-26-2020 version with November 2nd EDAB meeting materials.

Powerpoint presentation made during the meeting: Draft 2020 Storefront Survey & Local Rapid Recover Program Potential Initiatives, 12/7/2020, M.Mooney.

Meeting Minutes

The November 2, 2020 meeting minutes were approved with typo corrections offered by Anne Meyers and Marilyn Newman, by roll call vote (in favor: MN, CB, TN, PS, AR, AC, KL, AM, DC; abstained: SH, CL).

The October 14, 2020 Fiscal Impact Model Subcommittee minutes were approved, deleting the sentence on the first page under Inputs & Outputs that starts, “Ken added that the Harvard model basically...”, by roll call vote (in favor: KL, PS, CL; abstained: CB).

Fiscal Impact Study Memo & Input Spreadsheet

Paul Saner thanked Ken Lewis for leading this work and noted that the Housing Advisory Board may discuss this tool further as they discuss the scope of the Housing Production Plan at their next meeting. Ken reviewed the edits to the memo and noted that the recent Town Meeting action that updated the inclusionary zoning requirements have now been updated in the Input spreadsheet.

Comments and clarifications amongst board members and staff included:

- liked the differentiation between marginal and average cost

- the model and input data updates will live with [the](#) Economic Development Division and will be offered as a tool, not requirement for other Boards/Commissions to use
- The way the Harvard model works is that it reduces the proposed FAR by the existing building square footage. If there is a change of use (say all residential to all commercial), the value of that change during a significant rehab project would not be captured. That kind of detail is more likely to be effective when conducting a single property analysis rather than corridor-wide.
- The importance of understanding the limitations of the model so that people don't mistakenly assume that there is some predetermined desired ~~o~~[u](#)tcomes
- The IT Department is looking at ways to get the Python language to be hosted on a Town server; in the meantime staff can walk through [with](#) any board members in how to install the program locally on their own computer (or use the herocalc webpage as long as that is hosted by Harvard).
- Any tweaks to the Python code (including, e.g., combining the Input Spreadsheet into the user interface) would need to be done by Economic Development staff, board members, and/or consultants down the road.

Following further discussion of exact, clarification language versus broader statements, as well as incorporating acknowledgement of rehab values not being captured in this model, Marilyn Newman made a motion:

EDAB recommends that the FIM described in the memo from EDAB to the Select Board and other Town officials and Boards be further enhanced and be used as applicable by Town departments and boards as one long range planning tool (among others) to evaluate potential zoning and other overall growth policies.

There was then further discussion about which language should be in the memo as a preamble versus language in a motion. Derrick Choi then made a motion:

To send the Fiscal Impact Memo & Input Spreadsheet to the Select Board, Town Administrator, and Director of Planning & Community Development, including final wordsmith edits by Ken Lewis and Marilyn Newman.

Marilyn Newman suggested adding the word "Model" between "Impact" and "Memo"; EDAB then VOTED unanimously by roll call vote (in favor: MN, CB, AR, TN, PS, AC, KL, CL, SH, DC, AM):

To send the Fiscal Impact Model Memo & Input Spreadsheet to the Select Board, Town Administrator, and Director of Planning & Community Development, including final wordsmith edits by Ken Lewis and Marilyn Newman.

Staff & Committee member updates

Storefront Vacancies - Meredith Mooney presented draft results from the 2020 storefront study, looking for comments from EDAB to be integrated in a narrative of the final report to the Select Board.

She noted that:

- Study was conducted on Oct. 22 – 24
- Vacancy report increased up to 11.9% this year, compared to 10% in 2019
- In Brookline Village & Coolidge Corner, the largest commercial areas, new vac~~a~~ncies were offset by filled vacancies
- Chestnut Hill & Coolidge Corner are also seeing vacancies due to redevelopment

- Staff will likely do another survey in early summer which will likely more reflect full impact of COVID-19
- Interest in whether our areas may be more resilient as they are not as reliant on existing office space

Discussion amongst Board members and staff included:

- Needed clarification on charts that explicitly explained the survey is by storefront count rather than square footage
- Discussion that the length of vacant storefronts is also an important variable to consider, whether or not staff will be able to capture that additional data in the future
- Suggestion to add anecdotal information such as tax revenue receipt reductions from meals and room occupancy taxes
- Suggestion to on the bar chart, show a dotted line to separate out construction impacts and new inventory that is almost ready for tenancy
- Suggestion that it would be interesting to have more information on which types of businesses have closed in Brookline in the last year (e.g., food establishments more so than other businesses)
- Need to clarify how businesses were accounted that appear to be in hibernation (such as Matt Murphy's) versus those that have closed and have a "For Rent" sign in the window (such as Magnolia's)
- Liked the thought about Brookline versus downtown central business districts (CBDs). Another example might include tourists and business travelers that are more prevalent in downtown CBDs. And, curious whether to what extent commercial areas have been affected by any increase of traffic to the medical area as a result of COVID.

Additionally, Ken Lewis noted the vacancy rate is likely not going to reflect COVID impacts for a while, if you consider lease terms, security deposits, personal guarantees – these are all structural elements to leases that have deferred the full impact of COVID to date.

Grant Funding Opportunities (Meredith Mooney)

Technical assistance grant available through the Mass Downtown Initiative; this is a very short grant application. Staff ideas include Business Improvement District formation, permanent changes to regulations regarding outdoor dining and merchandising, façade improvements (especially architecture/ urban design suggestions), and standardized outdoor dining parklet design. Derrick Choi suggested packaging these initiatives as one idea, e.g., business resiliency. Meredith asked for members to give her individual feedback following the meeting; the grant application is due in a couple days.

Fall Town Meeting (Paul Saner)

- Warrant article further restricting tobacco by birth date overwhelmingly passed Town Meeting, but may not be approved by the Attorney General due to a state law prohibiting further local controls based on age.
- The short term rental warrant article was referred to a Moderator's committee [after it was known that if voted down enforcement would commence](#). Testimony was given both for and against this article citing concerns of affordable housing.

- The microunit warrant article was referred to the Planning Department as the petitioner's language would have permitted residential units on the ground floor of G- and L- districts. This referral motion prevailed over another calling for a Planning and Zoning Oversight Committee to step back and do comprehensive planning. The Planning Director indicated circumstances made that impractical. Paul added this would have impacted discretionary planning initiatives. He expects the Planning Department would also come back with an article that would permit age-restricted housing, which was also inadvertently banned by the Emerald Isle zoning.
- The housing production resolution was passed, modified by the Advisory Committee. Paul characterized this resolution as not requiring any additional work by the Planning Dept. - nothing more than wind behind the Housing Production Plan sails already underway. Town Meeting did affirmatively indicate their support that more interest in housing is needed, and the Housing Production Plan timely offers an opportunity for community engagement.

Chestnut Hill Village West – Boylston Street corridor west of Dunster Road (Ken Lewis and Paul Saner)

- Since last discussed by EDAB, Fred Margolis has reported back that the Salvatorre property owners as well as WS Development are interested in exploring a comprehensive master plan for the area. Paul has reminded property owners to reference both the Chestnut Hill Village West visioning as well as the Planning Board's Boylston Street design guidelines.
- WS primarily retains properties that they redevelop. The now empty building on the eastern edge of their property will have medical marijuana use in the near term. The health club & Citizens bank both have seven years left on their leases. WS believes their property would make sense redeveloped as mixed-use rather than retail, but life sciences would be challenging here. Paul reminded WS the importance the Town views gaining tax certainty for properties whenever possible. Stantec (hired by Fred Margolis and Salvatorre) would likely commence conceptual master plan work early in the calendar year. Property owners expect the Town to begin studying this area toward the end of 2021.
- Janice Kahn noted that EDAB's website mission statement is focused on commercial development, which unlike housing, is the only voice in Town working to promote commercial development. Vibrant communities depend on a vibrant commercial area. Allowing our commercial areas to erode in the service of housing is going to be a very poor choice. She volunteered to work with EDAB to incentivize commercial development.

Boylston Street Corridor Study Committee (Tom Nally & Kara Brewton)

- Davis Path bridge will need to be replaced, which is very expensive. The Committee is looking for redevelopment opportunities that could help with this funding.
- 10 Brookline Place will also likely be studied by the Committee, along with 6-8 opportunity sites in this corridor – probably a mix of commercial and residential development.
- Two subcommittees have been established, including outreach and urban design.
- Some would like to reinforce the viability of the Cameron Street neighborhood.
- The new 9th school building on the corner of Brington and Cypress will set a new visual reference point, but the Committee also doesn't want to overburden this side of the corridor.
- Hopefully will bring warrant articles for consideration at Spring Town Meeting.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 9:15 pm.

