

Dear Select Board, Planning Board and Town Manager,

I am writing to urge you to put forth the Base Plan and send it to a Special Town Meeting immediately. Needham has been in a state of conflict and division for several months now. It is time to put an end to it. The town cannot sustain another four months of the acrimony, anger and dissent. It is in the town's best interest to begin the repair process immediately.

Town Meeting was asked to adopt the base plan at the October town meeting. That plan was adopted with a nearly unanimous vote. While the plan may not be the first choice of everyone, it is a plan that is essentially unanimously agreed upon as acceptable.

Town Meeting was also asked to adopt the NHP. In a much more contested debate and vote, the NHP was adopted by town meeting. As is permitted by our charter, thousands of voters pushed the NHP to a citizen vote. Nearly 7000 voters voted to, and did in fact, repeal Town Meeting's adoption of the NHP.

Because the base plan was thoughtfully created by years of work by committees and boards with significant public input, and because Town Meeting resoundingly adopted it, that is the plan that should stand. It is only because of a quirk of warrant writing that the base plan is not in effect today and the citizen repeal of NHP did not end the process. If the two plans were each a separate overlay, the nearly unanimous affirmative vote of Town Meeting adopting the base plan would be in effect today and Needham would be in compliance with the MBTA act.

While there is a desire within the town to increase housing in Needham, it is not appropriate to react to that desire by hastily creating yet another plan under the MBTA act. Needham has the power and ability to add housing via its own bylaws using the normal lawmaking processes. I urge you to adopt the base plan immediately and to use the normal process to consider more housing. This action will quell the acrimony that has swelled in reaction to the adoption of the NHP and allow for more thoughtful, respectful debate. It will also begin to repair the anger and distrust of town government that was created by the adoption of the NHP and the campaign to reject the referendum.

The inclination to compromise should start with the compromise that has already been struck during the already completed process. The public indicated via a survey that it desired a plan with the least number of new housing units possible for compliance. The HONE pushed that out to the Base Plan which goes above and beyond compliance, but less above it than the NHP. The base plan compromise was accepted by nearly all members of Town Meeting who voted to adopt the base plan; it was accepted by the words of the vast majority of the voters who spoke out against the NHP; and it was accepted by the consistent framing by those who forced the election as the vote being a choice between the NHP and the base plan and the votes that were cast on that basis.

I urge you to seize upon that consensus. Let us adopt the base plan and go on to debate any further housing through the normal course of our town bylaws and procedures.

The MBTA act is extremely controversial. Voters in Needham feel so strongly about it that it sparked the use of a petition and referendum process that has not been called upon for decades. Scrapping the agreed upon plan, pushing a resolution out to May and coming up with a new plan subjects the Town to the risk of not being able to comply with the MBTA law.

There is no body in Needham that can negotiate with authority on behalf of the thousands of NO voters. There is no body that can confidently say what would be acceptable to NO voters in terms of the next plan. The number of NO votes during the election equals almost double the amount of voters required to petition for a referendum. This leaves a real possibility that any new plan could trigger another petition and referendum process because, even if half of the NO voters are sufficiently satisfied with a new plan, there still remains enough voters who could reject it via petition. The high emotion created by the past few months significantly increases the likelihood of voters being charged enough to dig in and go through the effort of triggering another referendum. Even if that referendum ultimately failed, the process will risk funding by putting us over the new deadline for passage.

We know for certain that the base plan will NOT trigger a petition. Please do not throw that away significant win. Please do not take a gamble on increasing the size or scope of the MBTA compliant plan at the risk of triggering another several months of acrimony and vitriol, another potential petition, and another nail-biting flirt with non-compliance.

Please. Put forth the base plan at the Planning Board meeting next week, call a special town meeting as soon as possible, and work on any additional housing through the normal course of our bylaws.

Sincerely,

Margaret Abruzese
30 Bridle Trail Rd

From: [Andrea Dannenberg](#)
To: [Planning](#)
Subject: Fwd: MBTA Communities Act timeline
Date: Thursday, January 16, 2025 10:22:08 AM

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Andrea Dannenberg** <ardannen@gmail.com>
Date: Thu, Jan 16, 2025 at 7:40 AM
Subject: MBTA Communities Act timeline
To: <selectboard@needhamma.gov>

Good morning,

I saw the announcement from the Town Manager of the proposed timeline to put a new MBTA Communities Act rezoning plan before Town Meeting in May. I am very concerned that this timeline puts us against a deadline of “must act or face non-compliance” and provides no leeway for contingencies should the Town Meeting vote fail or the measure face another recall.

Please don't delay.

Andrea Dannenberg
TMM Precinct C

From: [Andrea Okerholm Huttlin](#)
To: [Planning](#)
Subject: Zoning
Date: Thursday, January 16, 2025 10:40:56 AM

NRTZ reminded us to send you emails so I figured I'd better reiterate my support for the Neighborhood Plan. Or whatever bigger-than-Base plan you think can get through.

Don't let those NIMBYs undermine solid town governance with their petitions and lawsuits. It's a dangerous precedent, right out of the MAGA playbook. Let's make sure they get the message that those games aren't welcome here.

From: [Paul Bennett](#)
To: [Selectboard](#); [Planning](#)
Subject: resolving MBTA compliance
Date: Thursday, January 16, 2025 11:39:48 AM

Dear Select Board and Planning Board:

I encourage you to please move forward quickly with MBTA compliance by raising a new vote to accepting the Base plan at Town Meeting asap (preferably in February). I worry that the recommendation by the Town Manager to delay voting until May as well as hints and discussion of possibly developing new alternatives to the base plan will lead to further delay and complication as well as more divisiveness in the community. While there are interesting issues this discussion has raised regarding the health of the community and affordable housing, I believe it will be more effective to address those issues directly with the full flexibility of options that the town can pursue rather than be constrained by MBTA policies and weighed down by the acrimony attached to the MBTA legislation. Thanks to each of you as well as to TMMs and everyone else involved in the hard work of this process, and thank you for your time in reading this.

Thanks,
Paul Bennett
(16 Fair Oaks Park)

p.s. If you care to hear my additional topics that I think should be addressed head on that were raised by the debate in my awareness, these are my top three:

- Addressing the higher commercial tax rate. In particular solutions that might grow new small businesses in Needham without putting overall town revenue at risk.
- Affordable housing initiatives that prioritize access and increase the percentage to those working in Needham (especially teachers, police, firefighters, and other civil servants) and retirees who are already Needham residents.
- Considering other locations in Needham of mixed use affordable housing development that may not fall within the MBTA targeted zones.

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From: [Zachary M. Wallack](#)
To: [Marianne Cooley](#); [Kevin Keane](#); [Heidi Frail](#); [Joshua Levv](#); [Catherine Dowd](#); [Planning](#)
Cc: [Kate Fitzpatrick](#)
Subject: Post-Referendum Next Steps
Date: Thursday, January 16, 2025 12:18:32 PM
Attachments: [image006697.png](#)
[image070339.png](#)
[image841742.png](#)
[image647708.png](#)
[image984598.png](#)
[image993987.png](#)
[image159594.png](#)
[image842473.png](#)
[image389185.png](#)
[image374167.png](#)

Dear Chairperson Keane, Vice Chairperson Frail, Chairperson Espada, Vice Chairperson Crocker, and members of the Select Board and Planning Board:

I am writing regarding the next steps that the Select Board and Planning Board must take in order to act in accordance with the will of Needham's residents. To that end, I urge the Select Board and Planning Board to put forth the Base Compliance Plan ("Base Plan") and send it to a Special Town Meeting forthwith.

As you know, on Tuesday January 14th, Needham unequivocally and resoundingly rejected the so-called "Neighborhood Housing Plan". At this point, any attempted effort to increase the Base Plan would run contrary to the voters' will. And, any attempted effort to delay the February 24 Special Town Meeting—which was already thoroughly discussed at a prior Select Board Meeting on December 17, 2024—would run contrary to the expectations of the voters and the statements of the Select Board.

The Base Plan has already been resoundingly (if not unanimously) adopted by Town Meeting. It is beyond debate that the Base Plan must stand. Sending the Base Plan to a Special Town meeting immediately will go a long way in healing the division in our town, and repairing the distrust that so many now have in our town government as a result of the actions that certain members of the Select Board and Planning Board took in actively rejecting the referendum.

The time for compromise has long-since passed. Any attempt to expand upon the Base Plan will surely set off another fight. It would be entirely inappropriate for the Select Board and Planning Board to recommend this course of action. Now, it is time for our elected leaders to act upon the consensus of the people. The people have spoken, and they have spoken clearly. The divisiveness must end. It is incumbent upon you as elected officials to represent the will of the people. To do anything but put forth the Base Plan would only fan the flames of the division in Needham. Taking any other course of action risks provoking many more months of resentment and hostility.

I look forward to hearing your confirmation that the Base Plan will be put forward at the Planning Board meeting on January 21, and that a Special Town Meeting will be called for February 24 so that Town Meeting can vote on the Base Plan.

Best,

Zach



Zachary M. Wallack

Member

Eckert Seamans Cherin & Mellott, LLC
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✉ zwallack@eckertseamans.com

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From: elwallack@gmail.com
To: [Selectboard](#); [Planning](#)
Subject: Special Town Meeting in February
Date: Thursday, January 16, 2025 12:30:13 PM

Dear Select Board and Planning Board,

I grew up in Needham, attended Needham Public schools (Carter Avery, Elliot, Pollard, NHS) and raised 2 children who attended Needham Public schools and now my granddaughters are in the system. I have been a resident for over 65 years and love my town.

Never have I seen such division, animosity, utter lack of respect and common decency and enmity between residents and it saddens me. Nor has the distrust of our local elected officials been so vocal and pronounced.

Our town needs to heal. There is no need to prolong the agony and rhetoric that has and continues to take place by delaying voting until May.

It seems the Base Plan is a compromise that everyone agrees with and was desired by the majority of HONE survey participants. Now is time to set egos aside and respect the clear will of the Needham voters.

For the good of our town, please put forth the Base Plan for a vote at the Special Town Meeting in February.

In good health,
Ed

From: [Jim V.](#)
To: [Planning](#)
Subject: Needham Housing Plan
Date: Thursday, January 16, 2025 12:40:07 PM

To whom it may concern:

I'm reaching out to let the Board know that I am in full agreement with the Town's decision to address the Housing Plan at the May Town Meeting. Given the number of people who claimed to be uninformed or excluded from the process over the past 3 years, It's important that we allow for a time of robust community engagement and feedback. I appreciate the Planning Board's focus on ensuring that anyone who wants to be heard on this issue can indeed be heard.

Thanks very much for your service.

Jim Van Dyk
Town Meeting Member Precinct G

From: [Marcus](#)
To: [Planning](#)
Subject: The will of the people do not want overcompliance
Date: Thursday, January 16, 2025 1:05:47 PM

Hello Members of the Planning Board,

After the recent town referendum that definitively said "No" to overcompliance, I expect the Planning Board to follow through on the town petition to "forthwith" comply with the requirements of MGL Ch 40A s.3A. Forthwith means immediately and does not mean by May. It is clear the will of the people do not want an overcompliance plan. It should not be controversial at this point to accept the Base Plan for minimum compliance and move on.

Best,

Marcus Loveland
26 Rivard Rd
Needham, MA

From: [Michael Kelly](#)
To: [Selectboard](#); [Planning](#)
Subject: Needham MBTA Zoning - Resident Request - Move forward with the Base Plan
Date: Thursday, January 16, 2025 1:11:07 PM

Greetings, kind select board, and planning board communications representative,

Mike Kelly here, Needham Heights resident and father of three 3rd generation Needham elementary school students, writing today to respectfully ask that you please do not delay in moving forward your approval of the (already approved) "Base Plan" with regard to the MBTA zoning issue.

Embrace the Base Plan. Respect the election and voters of Needham.

Thank you for your commitment to our town. Happy to discuss if you'd like.

Best,
Mike Kelly
508.277.7055

From: [DONNA MEYER](#)
To: [Planning](#)
Subject: MBTA Communities Act
Date: Thursday, January 16, 2025 3:03:10 PM

Dear Planning Board Members,

My name is Donna Meyer. I am a Town Meeting Member from Precinct H. First, thank you all for your dedicated service to the Town. I can't possibly imagine the number of hours you have spent on this and other issues and it is appreciated.

I understand it is up to the Planning Board to submit a Plan. I write to strongly encourage the you to re-introduce the Base Plan at Special Town Meeting. This Plan was the result of years of planning was endorsed by:

Finance Committee
Select Board
Planning Board
Town Meeting (almost unanimous)
School Committee
EOHLC

The spirit of the No campaign was to reject the Neighborhood Plan and approve the Base Plan. That was what the election was about. The voters spoke clearly on this issue. To go back and try to create another Plan or a hybrid Plan would be a shocking rejection of the voters will and would only deepen the divisions created by the Neighborhood Plan, the petition and the Special Election.

I understand that the Yes voters feel the Base Plan does not do enough. I never understood why, if it wasn't good enough, it was developed and presented to the Town. I promise to be more involved going forward and to support targeted zoning to address additional Town needs.

Please listen to the voters and re-submit the Base Plan for approval.

Sincerely, Donna Meyer

From: [Jean Higgins](#)
To: [Selectboard](#)
Cc: [Alexandra Clee](#); [Alison Steinfeld](#); [Amy Haelsen](#); [Clayton Hutchinson](#); [Daphne Collins](#); [Deb Anderson](#); [Elisa Litchman](#); [J.P Cacciaglia](#); [Lee Newman](#)
Subject: Base Plan for Housing required by MBTA
Date: Thursday, January 16, 2025 3:57:06 PM

Dear Board Members,

After an unprecedented controversy and grueling time in our town, the majority of voters have spoken, and we wish to have the base plan put into place. Please do not stretch this out any further to May Town Meeting. The Town Meeting Members did not follow the will of the Needham voters and went against the finance committee this fall. Please do not start this all over again in May. It will only serve to cause heated arguments on Needham Facebook to prolong the pain of a divided community. Please let us heal.

The voters have spoken and we urge you to not prolong this any further.

Please work with the MBTA and give them whatever paper work they need to show that we will comply with the base plan that they have required.

Kind regards,
James and Jean Higgins
293 Webster St. 02494

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Catherine Spalding](#)
To: [Planning](#)
Subject: The Path Forward for Compliance with the MBTA Communities Law
Date: Thursday, January 16, 2025 7:58:58 PM

> Dear Planning Board,

> In the wake of the January 14, 2025 referendum vote in which Needham voters resoundingly rejected the more aggressive Neighborhood Plan as the means to achieve compliance with the MBTA Communities Act, I would encourage the Planning Board to give every consideration to resubmitting the Base Plan for approval at a Special Town Meeting on February 24, 2025. The most expeditious means to compliance is to adopt the Base Plan that both the Town Meeting previously approved and that the State previously confirmed would satisfy the requirements/guidelines of the MBTA Communities Act. Deferring the Town Meeting vote on this zoning issue until the annual May 2025 Town Meeting, with no clear path to developing a new plan that both the state will approve and both the Yes and No camps can embrace, seems fraught with peril. This seems to be a situation in which the Select and Planning Boards would be making “the perfect the enemy of the good” by going back to the drawing board and reopening a debate that lasts well into May, not to mention through a campaign and April election cycle and with a July 14, 2025 compliance deadline right around the corner from the May meeting. The voters have spoken. Your first obligation now is timely compliance with the MBTA Communities Act to ensure that nothing further jeopardizes any potential sources of funding for Needham, most especially for the current residents of the existing affordable housing at Linden Chambers which are long overdue for their renovation project. If you are sincere in your desire to serve the needs of those needing good affordable housing, isn't your first obligation not to jeopardize the status of the people for whom you have an existing obligation?

>

> The time following a February 24, 2025 vote on the Base Plan, can be used more productively working on plans to serve the needs of the groups both Yes and No camps have expressed a mutual desire to serve-affordable housing for town employees, downsizing Needham seniors on fixed incomes, police, firefighters, first responders, nurses, hospital workers, and teachers, without the threat of a draconian deadline and without the restrictions of the MBTA Communities Act.

>

> If you insist on deferring the vote until the May town meeting, at a minimum, given the division and rancor that this zoning issue has revealed, I would encourage you to promptly, fulsomely and transparently explain to Needham voters the process of getting to a February 13, 2025 Action Plan submission with the state and the EOHLC. This should include a plan to actively engage all Needham voters in the time between now and May, so that their voices and concerns are reflected in whatever new plan you propose before such May town meeting vote. A good start would be adding an expedited Information Session next week from the Town of Needham in Powers Hall.

>

> Thank you for your consideration.

>

> Sincerely,
> Catherine Spalding

>

> Sent from my iPhone

From: [Gabi Gutierrez](#)
To: [Selectboard](#); [Planning](#)
Subject: Concerned citizen feedback after 1/14/2025 election
Date: Thursday, January 16, 2025 11:54:47 PM

Dear Select Board and Planning Board Members,

In light of the results from the January 14, 2025, Town Election, I strongly encourage you to revert to the "Base Compliance Plan" and present it to Town Meeting for a vote as soon as possible—perhaps at a Special Meeting in February 2025. This plan, which was adopted at the October 2024 Special Town Meeting, has the support of a majority of Needham's residents.

Please consider the risk of delaying further by pursuing another "over-compliant" plan, which may ultimately face rejection and prolong the process. Such a plan would waste valuable time and resources, and could jeopardize state funding, while potentially exacerbating divisions within our community.

The Base Compliance Plan offers a solid foundation, and additional plans can be developed in the near future without interference from the state. These future plans can be crafted by Needham's government and citizens, with careful attention to the diverse needs of our community, including the desire for varied and abundant housing options.

I trust that our voices will be heard in this important matter.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Gabi Gutierrez

12 ANDREA CIR
NEEDHAM, MA 02494

From: [Riley Hastings](#)
To: [Selectboard](#); [Planning](#)
Subject: Proposed May Vote
Date: Friday, January 17, 2025 9:05:45 AM

Dear Select Board and Planning Board Members,

I hope this message finds you well. I am writing to express my concerns regarding the Town Manager's recommendation to present the new housing plan at the May Town Meeting. Additionally, I am concerned that there may be an interest in presenting a plan that exceeds the Base Plan.

Given the importance of getting Needham into compliance, I strongly encourage you to move forward with the Base Plan as soon as possible, ideally at the Special Town Meeting in February. My concern is that if this item is delayed until May, and a larger-than-base plan is introduced, we could jeopardize compliance with the new July deadline.

While I fully recognize the significance of addressing the housing crisis in Massachusetts, I believe it would be most effective to approach this issue with the full range of options available to the town, rather than being constrained by the requirements within the MBTA legislation.

Thank you for your continued hard work and dedication to this process. I appreciate your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Riley Hastings (318 Greendale Ave)

Sent from my iPad

From: nathan.levin3@gmail.com
To: [Selectboard](#); [Planning](#)
Cc: [Louise Miller](#)
Subject: Special Town Meeting
Date: Friday, January 17, 2025 11:15:05 AM

Dear Members of the Select Board and Planning Board:

On January 14, 2025, the citizens of Needham voted, in an overwhelming mandate, to not over comply with the MBTA Communities Act, and to adopt the Base Plan. According to the timeline set forth in the December 17, 2024, Select Board Package, the “earliest possible Special Town Meeting in the event that the October 21, 2024, zoning is repealed” was stated to be February 24, 2025. I urge you to adopt said date to allow our Town Meeting Members to vote on the Base Plan, for which all the work has been completed, and which was already approved unanimously. To do otherwise would go against the mandate of close to 7,000 voters, and any delay would risk exacerbating the divisiveness that has already negatively impacted our beloved town. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Nathan Levin
39 Lantern Lane

From: [Jackie Kiley](#)
To: [Marianne Cooley](#); [Kevin Keane](#); [Heidi Frail](#); [Joshua Levy](#); [Catherine Dowd](#); [Planning](#)
Cc: [Kate Fitzpatrick](#); [Louise Miller](#)
Subject: Fwd: Next steps for Needham's town leadership
Date: Friday, January 17, 2025 12:49:25 PM

To the leadership and members of the Needham
Select Board and Planning Board:

I am Jackie Kiley, a resident of Needham for 26 years,
and a member of the NRTZ. I am writing to urge you
to endorse and approve the Base Plan to allow
Needham to comply with the MBTA Communities Act.

As an NRTZ volunteer, I spent countless hours
collecting signatures and subsequently holding a "Vote
No" sign in front of Sudbury Farms and in other
locations around town. In the course of these efforts, I
spoke with hundreds – possibly thousands – of
residents of Needham who sided with us and voted No
in the January 14 election.

The petition my fellow residents and I signed stated
explicitly that our intention in challenging the NHP was
for Needham's Town Meeting to reinstate the Base
Plan. Subsequently, when the special election
ensued, the Yes for Needham proponents commonly
accused the No side of being "NIMBY" extremists who
were "against housing." Further, they accused us of
wanting Needham to be out-of-compliance with the
MBTA Communities Act. We patiently explained that
we are not at all opposed to compliance, and that we
strongly favored the Base Plan.

Despite a vigorous campaign by the Yes proponents to
discredit us, the fact that the NRTZ supported the
moderate Base Plan became clearer to voters over
time, and as a result, more and more Needham voters
came to our side. This shift is evident in the vote tally
published after the January 14 election. As you no
doubt have seen, the early voters were somewhat
more evenly split between "Yes" (1796, 46%) and "No"
(2116, 54%). In contrast, the voters who waited till
January 14 to vote were more decidedly in the No
camp. Among January 14 voters, Yes received 3086
(39%) votes, while No received 4750 (61%) votes. (I

computed these numbers based on a tally I saw published late on January 14.)

Needham voters understood that by voting No, they were voting for the Base plan. And overwhelmingly, they chose to support us.

The people of Needham have spoken. You, the elected leaders of our town, owe it to the voters to adhere to the mandate you have been given. To this end, we call on you to resurrect and endorse the Base plan, which was already passed nearly unanimously by Town Meeting on October 21, 2024.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Jackie Kiley

From: [Steven Maxwell](#)
To: [Planning](#)
Subject: Volunteer to participate in the crafting of new options to replace the NHP
Date: Friday, January 17, 2025 1:46:08 PM

Hello - I am a Needham resident and former TMM who would like to volunteer to participate in the crafting of new options to replace the NHP building on the strong foundational work that has already been done. What are some of the ways I can be involved?

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Steven Maxwell
234 Brookline Street
781 449 9876

--

Steven Maxwell
O: +1 (781) 449 - 9876

From: [Ken Buckley](#)
To: [Marianne Cooley](#); [Kevin Keane](#); [Heidi Frail](#); [Joshua Levy](#); [Catherine Dowd](#); [Planning](#)
Cc: [Kate Fitzpatrick](#); [Louise Miller](#)
Subject: Jan 14th Referendum Follow Up
Date: Friday, January 17, 2025 3:18:19 PM

Dear Chairperson Keane, Vice Chairperson Frail, Chairperson Espada, Vice Chairperson Crocker, and members of the Select Board and Planning Board:

Through the January 14th referendum election, the town has delivered a decisive message as to the desired direction on rezoning under the MBTA Communities Act. Throughout the petition drive and the election campaign, NRTZ (Needham Residents for Thoughtful Zoning) has maintained that the so-called “Base Plan” should be instated forthwith, if the so-called Neighborhood Plan were repealed. Now that this situation has come to pass, it is incumbent upon the Planning Board and Select Board to enact the Base Plan quickly, through a special town meeting.

There has been an incredible amount of attention paid to this issue, and too much divisiveness. Waiting further to enact the democratic vote of the town will only serve to leave open the rifts that have formed and further distract from other important matters the town must take up. This last point is most important to the timing of when this vote should take place.

Since the May town meeting typically has 10’s of articles to attend to, leaving this important matter as one of those issues, would give short attention to many others. Additionally, this is what the citizenry has been expecting, regardless of which side of the repeal vote they may have occupied. We have all been expecting that if the town voted no to the rezoning act of October’s town meeting, we would rapidly bring the Base Plan to a vote. The expectation being it would be enacted, since it was passed by a near unanimous vote in October, 2024.

So, in conclusion, I implore you to schedule the special town meeting you presented during the December 17th (2024) select board meeting. Let’s conclusively listen to the will of Needham voters.

Thank you.

Kenneth Buckley - 221 Warren St, Needham

From: Zachary M. Wallack
To: Kate Fitzpatrick; Marianne Cooley; Kevin Keane; Heidi Frail; Joshua Levy; Catherine Dowd; Planning
Subject: RE: Post-Referendum Next Steps
Date: Friday, January 17, 2025 5:06:06 PM
Attachments: [image002.png](#)
[image003.png](#)
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[image524304.png](#)

Thank you, Kate. I look forward to hearing the discussions of the SB and PB next week.

I understand the procedure that you have outlined below. However, it seems that the procedure does not contemplate the Base Plan being brought to a Special Town Meeting on February 24, 2025. It is concerning that town leadership is not moving quickly to ensure that the Base Plan is brought to a Special Town Meeting on February 24, 2025. Certainly, cost is not a factor. A Special Town Meeting on a single warrant article should not be a financial burden to the town. The harm done by prolonging this until May—which will only further sow division and distrust—is far greater than the minimal financial impact of a Special Town Meeting. There is an option at your disposal to end the division, to end the distrust, and to begin a path forward. That option is to call for a Special Town Meeting on February 24, 2024, and put forth the Base Plan for a vote. Town leadership must seize on this option. Doing so is not only in the best interest of the town, but it is in line with the expectations of nearly 7,000 voters and the prior statements of the Select Board on December 17, 2024.

Best,

Zach



Zachary M. Wallack

Member

Eckert Seamans Cherin & Mellott, LLC
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From: Kate Fitzpatrick <KFitzpatrick@needhamma.gov>

Sent: Friday, January 17, 2025 11:26 AM

To: Zachary M. Wallack <zwallack@eckertseamans.com>; Marianne Cooley <mcooley@needhamma.gov>; Kevin Keane <kkeane@needhamma.gov>; Heidi Frail <hfrail@needhamma.gov>; Joshua Levy <jlevy@needhamma.gov>; Catherine Dowd <cdowd@needhamma.gov>; Planning <planning@needhamma.gov>

Subject: [External] RE: Post-Referendum Next Steps

Zach,

Thank you for your e-mail. The agendas and packets for both the Select Board and Planning Board meetings on January 21, 2025 are available on the Town's website here: <https://needhamma.gov/archive.aspx>.

The recommendation before both Boards is to support the submission of an action plan for interim compliance to the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities, which shall consist of advancing the Base Compliance Plan to the 2025 Annual Town Meeting. The second recommendation before the Planning Board is to submit to the Select Board the set of zoning amendments known as the Base Compliance Plan to initiate the process of bringing these bylaw changes back to Town Meeting.

All are welcome to attend either/both meetings to hear the discussions of the Select Board and Planning Board in person or via Zoom.



Kate Fitzpatrick, ICMA-CM
Town Manager
Town of Needham
Needham Town Hall
1471 Highland Avenue
Needham, MA 02492
www.needhamma.gov
Office: (781) 455-7500 ext. 0

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From: Zachary M. Wallack <zwallack@eckertseamans.com>

Sent: Thursday, January 16, 2025 12:18 PM

To: Marianne Cooley <mcooley@needhamma.gov>; Kevin Keane <kkeane@needhamma.gov>; Heidi Frail <hfrail@needhamma.gov>; Joshua Levy <jlevy@needhamma.gov>; Catherine Dowd <cdowd@needhamma.gov>; Planning <planning@needhamma.gov>

Cc: Kate Fitzpatrick <KFitzpatrick@needhamma.gov>

Subject: Post-Referendum Next Steps

Dear Chairperson Keane, Vice Chairperson Frail, Chairperson Espada, Vice Chairperson Crocker, and members of the Select Board and Planning Board:

I am writing regarding the next steps that the Select Board and Planning Board must take in order to act in accordance with the will of Needham's residents. To that end, I urge the Select Board and Planning Board to put forth the Base Compliance Plan ("Base Plan") and send it to a Special Town Meeting forthwith.

As you know, on Tuesday January 14th, Needham unequivocally and resoundingly rejected the so-called "Neighborhood Housing Plan". At this point, any attempted effort to increase the Base Plan would run contrary to the voters' will. And, any attempted effort to delay the February 24 Special Town Meeting—which was already thoroughly discussed at a prior Select Board Meeting on December 17, 2024—would run contrary to the expectations of the voters and the statements of the Select Board.

The Base Plan has already been resoundingly (if not unanimously) adopted by Town Meeting. It is beyond debate that the Base Plan must stand. Sending the Base Plan to a Special Town meeting immediately will go a long way in healing the division in our town, and repairing the distrust that so many now have in our town government as a result of the actions that certain members of the Select Board and Planning Board took in actively rejecting the referendum.

The time for compromise has long-since passed. Any attempt to expand upon the Base Plan will surely set off another fight. It would be entirely inappropriate for the Select Board and Planning Board to recommend this course of action. Now, it is time for our elected leaders to act upon the consensus of the people. The people have spoken, and they have spoken clearly. The divisiveness must end. It is incumbent upon you as elected officials to represent the will of the people. To do anything but put forth the Base Plan would only fan the flames of the division in Needham. Taking any other course of action risks provoking many more months of resentment and hostility.

I look forward to hearing your confirmation that the Base Plan will be put forward at the Planning Board meeting on January 21, and that a Special Town Meeting will be called for February 24 so that Town Meeting can vote on the Base Plan.

Best,

Zach



Zachary M. Wallack

Member

Eckert Seamans Cherin & Mellott, LLC
2 International Pl #1600 | Boston, MA 02110

📞 617-342-6815 | 📠 617-342-6899 | 📱 617-694-7193

✉️ zwallack@eckertseamans.com

BIO: 🗂️ VCARD: 📄 | 🌐 [in](#) [ln](#) [tw](#)

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From: [Robby Petrie](#)
To: [Planning](#)
Subject: Concerned voter
Date: Friday, January 17, 2025 5:40:41 PM

My name is Gary Petrie and I live at 60 Dana Place. First off, I want to acknowledge the remarkable job the HONE committee did presenting 2 plans to the State, both of which were approved with minimal changes, putting the Town in great shape to comply with the MBTA Act. In light of the results of Tuesday's vote, coupled with rumblings I hear about compromise, hybrid plans, and about another proposal in the works only "slightly less" than the NHP, I feel compelled to speak out. While I preferred the Base Plan from the start, I was not against the NHP. I thought it had its merits, too.

But please propose the Base Plan at your next meeting. The Tuesday vote rejecting over-compliance was just that. It wasn't rejecting the NHP, only to be replaced by a watered down version of it. It was rejecting the concept of over-compliance. As elected members in our constitutional republic, I will hope you abide by the wishes of the majority of your constituents. I believe deviating from that will lead to further divisiveness.

Thanks for your hard work, I know it isn't easy, and thanks for reading.

Gary Petrie

From: [David Greenes](#)
To: mcooley@needhmama.gov; [Kevin Keane](#); [Heidi Frail](#); [Joshua Levy](#); [Catherine Dowd](#); [Planning](#)
Cc: [Kate Fitzpatrick](#); [Louise Miller](#)
Subject: Please pass the Base Plan
Date: Sunday, January 19, 2025 3:55:39 PM

Hello Town leaders,

I am a long-time resident of Needham, for almost 27 years now.

Like the majority of people who voted on January 14, I voted No. This is not because I don't want to comply with the MBTA Communities Act, but rather because I want Needham to meet but not exceed what the State requires. For that reason, I support the Base Plan that was passed nearly unanimously by Town Meeting on October 21.

I strongly urge the town leadership to reinstate the Base Plan now. This will fit what the majority of Needham residents want, which is to comply with the State. The NRTZ -- the voice of the No proponents -- clearly stated their intention to comply with the State. It goes without saying that Yes proponents also want to comply with the State, so there should be few people in Needham who oppose Base compliance.

Supporting Base compliance does not preclude adopting a more expansive zoning plan later. Based on some comments posted on social media, I know that some NHP proponents expect town leaders to bring back a new proposal, which will be "slightly smaller" than the NHP, to Town Meeting in the spring. I suspect the many Needham residents who opposed the NHP may also be dissatisfied by a token reduction in the scope of NHP 2.0.

Passing the Base Plan now will allow Needham residents to be confident that we will be in compliance with State law, regardless of how the debate about a more aggressive plan may go.

So, I urge you, please put up the Base Plan for approval at the proposed February 24th special Town Meeting.

The NHP proponents will still be welcome to use the spring Town Meeting to try to convince the townspeople that a more aggressive plan is in the best interests of Needham, but they will not be able to use the hardball tactic of painting the rest of us as obstructionist extremists who do not want to comply with State law. That's not fair to the Town and puts all of us at risk.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
David Greenes

From: [Paula Dickerman](#)
To: [Planning](#)
Subject: MBTA-CA Compliance Zoning
Date: Sunday, January 19, 2025 8:21:24 PM

To members of the Planning Board,

As you consider the next steps in bringing Needham into compliance with the MBTA Communities Act, I ask you to consider the entirety of the message sent by Needham referendum voters on January 14, 2025.

As we all know, the majority of those who voted rejected the multifamily housing zoning plans approved by Town Meeting in October, 2024. While there is no conclusive data for why voters voted Yes or No, it seems clear that many thought that the amended zoning approved would allow for more multifamily housing development than they would like. That message should have weight as a new zoning plan is crafted for presentation to Town Meeting.

However, we are not bound by a “winner-take-all” result in this case and can choose to apply the concept of proportional representation. For national elections in the United States, this concept unfortunately is not applied, so, for example, the votes of Republicans in Massachusetts or Democrats in Texas simply don’t count; it’s a “winner-take-all” situation.

You, on the other hand, are in a position to listen to the 59% of Needham voters who voted No, while not completely ignoring the 41% of voters who voted to keep the Neighborhood Housing Plan.

I urge you to do that – to listen proportionally to the desires of all of the voters, and develop a new compliant plan that incorporates voters’ desires to see thoughtful zoning that will encourage more housing choices in Needham.

Thank you,

Paula Dickerman
Town Meeting Member, Precinct J

From: [Cathy Mertz](#)
To: [Planning](#)
Cc: [Catherine W. Mertz](#)
Subject: Letter re: MBTA Compliance
Date: Sunday, January 19, 2025 10:20:36 PM

To Members of the Planning Board:

As you consider the next steps in bringing Needham into compliance with the MBTA Communities Act, I ask you to consider a few points.

As many of us have emphasized, the effect of the referendum was only to repeal the Neighborhood Housing Plan accepted by Town Meeting in October 2024. The results do not provide insight into how the majority of voters would have voted had the choice been between the Base Compliance Plan and the Neighborhood Housing Plan. In fact, the ranked choice poll that was conducted at the second HONE Community Workshop indicated that two thirds of the people wanted something more than the smallest plan. Given the choices of Scenarios A, B, and C, 37% of those polled selected the smallest plan as their last choice. In other words, 63% preferred a plan larger than the smallest.

I strongly believe that, without the impetus of something like the MBTA-CA, we are unlikely to pass any significant, effective multifamily zoning anytime soon. Going with the Base Compliance Plan now would just kick the can farther down the road than ever before, given the measure of resistance at this time. Now is the time to act to begin solving the housing shortage in Needham and in our region, and the Base Compliance Plan will not do enough.

I urge you to consider developing and supporting a plan that is compliant with the MBTA-CA, but that also goes beyond, allowing for the possibility of meaningful, effective, and thoughtful development of housing of various types and price points in order to take the first step toward housing attainability in Needham.

Sincerely,
Cathy Mertz

Cathy Mertz
Town Meeting Member - Precinct I
67 Rybury Hillway
Needham, MA 02492
339.225.0835
cmertz.precinct.i@gmail.com

From: [Amy Mercer](#)
To: [Selectboard](#); [Planning](#)
Cc: [Office of the Town Manager](#); [TownClerk](#)
Subject: Needham Referendum Vote
Date: Monday, January 20, 2025 7:13:05 AM

Dear Members of the Select Board and Planning Board,

I write to urge you to move the Base Compliance Plan (“Base Plan”) forward for a Special Town Meeting without delay. On Tuesday, January 14, Needham voters rejected the “Neighborhood Housing Plan,” sending a clear mandate from the community. Elected board members should not disregard the will of the voters. The “Base Plan” was overwhelmingly supported at the Fall Town Meeting and should be enacted as approved. We look forward to confirmation at the January 21, 2025 select Board and Planning Board meetings. A Special Town Meeting should be scheduled for February 24, as promised. As your constituents, we trust you will uphold the will of the voters.

Sincerely,
Amy Mercer

From: [Nicholas Kourtis](#)
To: [Selectboard](#); [Planning](#)
Cc: [Office of the Town Manager](#); [TownClerk](#)
Subject: Needham Referendum Vote
Date: Monday, January 20, 2025 7:29:51 AM

Dear Members of the Select Board and Planning Board,

I write to urge you to move the Base Compliance Plan (“Base Plan”) forward for a Special Town Meeting without delay.

On Tuesday, January 14, Needham voters rejected the “Neighborhood Housing Plan,” sending a clear mandate from the community.

Elected board members should not disregard the will of the voters.

The “Base Plan” was overwhelmingly supported at the Fall Town Meeting and should be enacted as approved.

We look forward to confirmation at the January 21, 2025 select Board and Planning Board meetings. A Special Town Meeting should be scheduled for February 24, as promised. As your constituents, we trust you will uphold the will of the voters.

Sincerely,
Nicholas Kourtis

Nicholas Kourtis, Esq.
21 Surrey Lane
Needham, MA 02492
781.492.1233

This e-mail and any attachments are confidential and may be attorney-client privileged. If you are not the intended recipient please immediately notify Nicholas Kourtis and delete this message and any attachments.

From: [Vincent Mastro](#)
To: [Selectboard](#); [Planning](#)
Cc: [Office of the Town Manager](#); [TownClerk](#)
Subject: Needham Referendum Vote - Neighborhood Housing Plan
Date: Monday, January 20, 2025 7:38:27 AM
Attachments: [NeedhamBoard_Mastro_1.pdf](#)

January 20, 2025

Subject: Needham Referendum Vote - Neighborhood Housing Plan

Dear Members of the Select Board and Planning Board,

We write to urge you to move the Base Compliance Plan ("Base Plan") forward for a Special Town Meeting without delay.

On Tuesday, January 14, Needham voters rejected the "Neighborhood Housing Plan," sending a clear mandate from the community.

Elected board members should not disregard the will of the voters.

The "Base Plan" was overwhelmingly supported at the Fall Town Meeting and should be enacted as approved.

We look forward to confirmation at the January 21, 2025 select Board and Planning Board meetings.

A Special Town Meeting should be scheduled for February 24, as promised.

As your constituents, we trust you will uphold the will of the voters.

Sincerely,

Vincent Mastro

Janet Mastro

Victoria Mastro

Lucas Mastro

From: [Janice Klein](#)
To: [Planning](#); [Selectboard](#)
Cc: [Office of the Town Manager](#); [TownClerk](#)
Subject: Needham Referendum Vote
Date: Monday, January 20, 2025 8:17:09 AM

January 20, 2025

Dear Members of the Select Board and Planning Board,

We write to urge you to move the Base Compliance Plan (“Base Plan”) forward for a Special Town Meeting without delay.

On Tuesday, January 14, Needham voters rejected the “Neighborhood Housing Plan,” sending a clear mandate from the community. Elected board members should not disregard the will of the voters.

The “Base Plan” was overwhelmingly supported at the Fall Town Meeting and should be enacted as approved. We look forward to confirmation at the January 21, 2025 select Board and Planning Board meetings.

A Special Town Meeting should be scheduled for February 24, as promised. As your constituents, we trust you will uphold the will of the voters.

Sincerely,

Janice & Robert Klein

From: [tracy.rubin](#)
To: [Selectboard](#); [Planning](#)
Cc: [Office of the Town Manager](#); [TownClerk](#)
Subject: Special Town Meeting
Date: Monday, January 20, 2025 8:49:24 AM

Good morning,

I'm writing in response to the change of date for the town meeting that was originally scheduled for Feb. 24 and is now changed to May. Since we risk missing the new MBTA deadline by meeting later, is there a significant reason for moving the date later by over two months? Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Tracy G. Rubin

From: [Asher Schachter](#)
To: [Selectboard](#); [Planning](#)
Cc: [Office of the Town Manager](#); [TownClerk](#)
Subject: Needham Referendum Vote
Date: Monday, January 20, 2025 9:36:47 AM

January 20, 2025

Dear Members of the Select Board and Planning Board,

I'm a Needham resident of 25 years. My wife and I raised our children here and both attended Needham public schools. We are all proud to be Needham residents.

I write to urge you to move the Base Compliance Plan ("Base Plan") forward for a Special Town Meeting without delay.

On Tuesday, January 14, Needham voters *resoundingly* rejected the misguided "Neighborhood Housing Plan," sending a clear mandate from the community.

Elected board members should not disregard the will of the voters. This should go without saying. Your personal agendas and interests must be put aside in the name of democracy, and you must respect the majority will of the voters.

The "Base Plan" was overwhelmingly supported at the Fall Town Meeting and should be enacted as approved.

We look forward to confirmation at the January 21, 2025 select Board and Planning Board meetings.

A Special Town Meeting should be scheduled for February 24, as promised.

As your constituents, we trust you will uphold the will of the voters.

Sincerely,

Asher Schachter, MD, MMSc, MS

From: [JT](#)
To: [Selectboard](#); [Planning](#)
Cc: arthur.cantor@cbrealty.com; [Office of the Town Manager](#); [TownClerk](#); traubsimon0@gmail.com
Subject: Needham Referendum Vote - Respect Your Constituents
Date: Monday, January 20, 2025 10:47:38 AM

January 20, 2025

Subject: **Needham Referendum Vote**

Dear Members of the Select Board and Planning Board,
We write to urge you to move the Base Compliance Plan (“Base Plan”) forward for a Special Town Meeting without delay.

Please "reply all" to the three voters sending you this email. If you do not reply, then we know you are not listening to your voters.

On Tuesday, January 14, Needham voters rejected the “Neighborhood Housing Plan,” sending a clear mandate from the community. Elected board members should not disregard the will of the voters. The “Base Plan” was overwhelmingly supported at the Fall Town Meeting and should be enacted as approved. We look forward to confirmation at the January 21, 2025 select Board and Planning Board meetings. A Special Town Meeting should be scheduled for February 24, as promised. As your constituents, we trust you will uphold the will of the voters.

Sincerely,

Julie Traub & Arthur Cantor, Simon Traub
17 Hasenfus Circle
Needham, MA

From: [N McQuade](#)
To: [Planning](#); [Selectboard](#)
Cc: [Office of the Town Manager](#); [TownClerk](#)
Subject: Needham Referendum Vote
Date: Monday, January 20, 2025 10:54:25 AM

January 20, 2025

Dear Members of the Select and Planning Boards:

I write to urge you to move the Base Compliance Plan (“Base Plan”) forward for a Special Town Meeting without delay.

On Tuesday, January 14, Needham voters rejected the “Neighborhood Housing Plan,” sending a clear mandate from the community. Elected board members should not disregard the will of the voters. The “Base Plan” was overwhelmingly supported at the Fall Town Meeting and should be enacted as approved.

We look forward to confirmation at the January 21, 2025 select Board and Planning Board meetings.

A Special Town Meeting should be scheduled for February 24, as promised.

As your constituents, we trust you will uphold the will of the voters.

Sincerely,

Noreen McQuade

From: [James](#)
To: [Selectboard](#); [Planning](#)
Cc: [Office of the Town Manager](#); [TownClerk](#)
Subject: Disturbing Town Governance
Date: Monday, January 20, 2025 11:05:15 AM

Dear Needham Government

The recent behavior of the Town last year and the start of this year is reprehensible, disturbing, and disgusting- "Democracy dies in darkness."

NO votes won a resounding historic victory. Select Board had previously agreed to hold a special town meeting on Feb 24, 2025 where the previously approved "base plan" would be voted in and Needham would be in compliance.

On Wednesday Jan 15th, the board 'chairs' met behind closed doors, outside the view of open meeting laws. What emerged was a statement by the town manager:

The Town Manager is recommending (see below). "... *Select Board and Planning Board **advance zoning** to the May 2025 annual town meeting.*"

Q. What does the statement "**advance zoning**" mean?

Q. Why should Needham wait until May to vote back in the base? We voted for the so-named "Base Plan" on Oct 21, 2024. The Base plan **is 25% more than required to comply and is essentially a compromise plan. Frankly, it's disturbing that the base plan itself is 25% more than what is required!!**

The Select Board published a timeline on Dec 17, 2024, stating "*should the NO's win the special election, for a special town meeting to be held on February 24th*"

Petition stated the town shall act forthwith. Waiting until May 2025 town meeting, is not acting forthwith. No delay is necessary, the base plan articles are already created and approved,

Statement from the town manager on Wed, Jan 15, 11:02 AM:

"At the Special Election held on Tuesday, January 14th, Needham voters repealed the Multi-family Overlay District zoning adopted at the October 21, 2024 Special Town Meeting. The town manager will recommend that the Select Board and Planning Board.

Needham government owes the denizens an explanation, transparency, and implementation of their will.

Sincerely

James Blackwell
130 Tower Avenue

From: [James](#)
To: [Selectboard](#); [Planning](#)
Cc: [Office of the Town Manager](#); [TownClerk](#)
Subject: Re: Disturbing Town Governance
Date: Monday, January 20, 2025 11:17:54 AM

PS: No means "NO."

1

a

chiefly Scotland : **NOT**

b

used as a function word to express the negative of an alternative choice or possibility
shall we go out to dinner or *no*

2

: in no respect or degree used in comparisons
you're *no* better than the rest of us

3

: not so used to express negation, dissent, denial, or refusal
no, I'm not going

4

used with a following adjective to imply a meaning expressed by the opposite positive statement
in *no* uncertain terms

5

used as a function word to emphasize a following negative or to introduce a more emphatic, explicit, or comprehensive statement
it's big, *no*, it's gigantic

6

used as an interjection to express surprise, doubt, or incredulity

7

used in combination with a verb to form a compound adjective
no-bake pie

8

: in negation
shook his head

On Monday, January 20, 2025 at 11:05:08 AM EST, James <jamesneedhamarea@yahoo.com> wrote:

Dear Needham Government

The recent behavior of the Town last year and the start of this year is reprehensible, disturbing, and disgusting- "Democracy dies in darkness."

NO votes won a resounding historic victory. Select Board had previously agreed to hold a special town meeting on Feb 24, 2025 where the previously approved "base plan" would be voted in and Needham would be in compliance.

On Wednesday Jan 15th, the board 'chairs' met behind closed doors, outside the view of open meeting laws. What emerged was a statement by the town manager:

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Q. What does the statement "**advance zoning**" mean?

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Needham government owes the denizens an explanation, transparency, and implementation of their will.

Sincerely
James Blackwell
130 Tower Avenue

From: [Kimberly McCollum](#)
To: [Planning](#)
Subject: Immediate support for The Base Plan
Date: Monday, January 20, 2025 12:13:58 PM

Dear Planning Board,

In light of the recent overwhelming victory of the NO campaign, I write to urge you to support the Base Compliance Plan (“Base Plan”) immediately and recommend its acceptance at the next Town Meeting. That meeting should be held next month as has been widely discussed by other town bodies, including the Town Manager's office.

The rejection of the “Neighborhood Housing Plan” (Bonus Plan) is a clear mandate from the community. As elected board members, I urge you not to disregard the will of the voters.

The “Base Plan” was overwhelmingly supported at the Fall Town Meeting and should be enacted as approved.

Sincerely,

Kimberly McCollum

843 Great Plain Ave

January 20, 2025

Members of the Select Board and Planning Board,

The 2024 Presidential Election was quite contentious. The outcome of the election delighted many and also disappointed many. But, we, as Americans, are extremely fortunate, that we live in a democracy, and that we know that the majority rules, and that we accept the election results, knowing that sometimes our candidates win and sometimes they lose.

And analogous to the Presidential Election, was our January 14th town vote on zoning. Needham voters had very strong feelings for both the NO side and the YES side of the question. And like the Presidential Election, many Needham voters were delighted with the results and many were disappointed.

And as was true with the Presidential Election, the voters of Needham must accept the results, and adhere to the tenets of our democracy.

The vote on zoning brought many residents to the polls (12,000) and the results were not close, the NO votes winning by almost 2000 votes.

Now, **it is of utmost importance**, that our elected officials accept the election results and put their personal feelings aside. The 7,000 NO votes indicate that zoning plans must not exceed the 1784 multi-family units that are required by the MBTA Communities Act.

I do want to remind you, as elected officials, that you **represent the voters** and you should not assume that your judgment is superior to the judgment of the 7000 Needham residents who voted NO.

Since compliance with the MBTA Communities Act has unfortunately divided our Town of Needham, we need to quickly put this controversy aside and schedule a special town meeting in February and certainly not to wait until May, during the annual town meeting. The annual town meeting is packed with numerous articles (51 in 2024) and there is certainly not enough time to adequately discuss such an important topic as compliance with the MBTA Communities Act.

Note that the wording in the petition that was voted upon said, "The town shall act **forthwith** to comply with the requirements of MGL Ch 400A s.3A."

The meaning of **forthwith** from the dictionary is: “(especially in official use) immediately; without delay.

Sincerely yours,

Jane Volden

133 Brookside Rd, Needham, MA 02492

jane.volden@gmail.com

To: Needham Select Board and Planning Board

Fm: Oscar Mertz

Re: MBTA Compliance Plan Process

Date: January 20, 2025

With the outcome of the recent referendum vote, Needham is revisiting the MBTA compliance process. I am writing to the boards to ask that the town and community use this as a great opportunity for Needham to come together to focus on addressing the housing needs outlined in our 2022 Needham Housing Plan. With the extended deadline for compliance now in July, Needham has time to refine an even better compliance plan and address the concerns voiced by residents who voted for the repeal. We must remember that the campaign to repeal the Neighborhood Housing Plan clearly stated support for housing, but with “thoughtful zoning.” The town now has a chance to do just that as the Select Board and Planning Board, with community input, undertake the drafting of a new compliance plan to bring to the Annual Town Meeting in May.

Following are some suggestions for a more thoughtful and effective zoning compliance plan:

- Use the Base Compliance Plan as a zoning foundation that satisfies the requirements of the MBTA Communities Act.
- Create a modified version of the Neighborhood Housing Plan with thoughtful upper zoning limits that can now have more community input and developer commitments for larger projects using a special permit process.
- The incentives for the taller and more dense development can now be free of MBTA restrictions on mixed-use and can target specific housing needs for our seniors and our local workforce.
- Allow smaller infill development projects to be by-right, with site plan review, to bring a broader range of smaller developers to the table for a more diverse range of housing projects.

The urgent challenge ahead is to help Needham STAY Needham! The cross section of people who used to be able to find a starter home, a fixer-upper, a larger home, or even a condo or apartment 20 to 25 years ago are still out there. The variety of housing choices to serve that range of ages and incomes is NOT. That has changed the character of this town and we need to be thoughtful about how we use this opportunity from the state to make it possible for more housing options to serve these folks and keep Needham a healthy and welcoming community.

I am grateful for all the hard work that you, the town, and the community have undertaken over the past few years to understand the housing needs and business concerns that the town and the Commonwealth are facing. I look forward to the coming weeks and months as Needham makes the best use of this MBTA Communities Law as an opportunity to set the framework for Needham’s future.

Sincerely,

Oscar Mertz

From: [RALPH WINTERS](#)
To: [Selectboard](#); [Planning](#)
Cc: [TownClerk](#); [Office of the Town Manager](#)
Subject: Needham Referendum Vote
Date: Monday, January 20, 2025 2:44:03 PM

To: Needham Select Board

The majority of Needham voters have voted NO with respect to initiating a proposed almost doubling of the states mandated MBTA Communities Act. To that end, I believe it is in the towns best interest to move move the Base Compliance Plan (Base Plan) forward for a Special Town Meeting without delay. It is my understanding that a special town meeting was promised to be scheduled for February 24, 2025 to vote on implementing the Base Plan and iron out the particulars for same. It seems to me that the state would like to get as many of the named MBTA communities in compliance ASAP. THERE SHOULD BE NO NEED FOR DELAY. THE MAJORITY HAS SPOKEN.

From: [katie doonan](#)
To: [Planning](#); [Selectboard](#)
Cc: [Office of the Town Manager](#); [TownClerk](#)
Subject: Needham Referendum Vote
Date: Monday, January 20, 2025 5:50:28 PM

January 20, 2025

Subject: Needham Referendum Vote

Dear Members of the Select Board and Planning Board,

We write to urge you to move the Base Compliance Plan (“Base Plan”) forward for a Special Town Meeting without delay. On Tuesday, January 14, Needham voters rejected the “Neighborhood Housing Plan,” sending a clear mandate from the community.

Elected board members should not disregard the will of the voters. The “Base Plan” was overwhelmingly supported at the Fall Town Meeting and should be enacted as approved.

We look forward to confirmation at the January 21, 2025 select Board and Planning Board meetings. A Special Town Meeting should be scheduled for February 24, as promised.

As your constituents, we trust you will uphold the will of the voters.

Sincerely,

Katie Doonan

Jay Doonan

32 Oakhurst Circle, Needham, MA 02492

From: [Bruce W](#)
To: [Selectboard](#); [Planning](#)
Cc: [Office of the Town Manager](#); TownClerk@needham.gov
Subject: Letter to Select Board and Planning Board
Date: Monday, January 20, 2025 6:51:38 PM

January 20, 2025
Subject: Needham Referendum Vote

Dear Members of the Select Board and Planning Board,

I am writing to urge you to move the Base Compliance Plan (“Base Plan”) forward for a Special Town Meeting without delay.

The Select Board published a timeline on Dec 17, 2024, stating, “...should the NO’s win the special election, ...[schedule] ...a special town meeting to be held on February 24th.”

News Flash: The NO’s won by an overwhelming majority!

On Tuesday, January 14, Needham voters rejected the “Neighborhood Housing Plan,” sending a clear mandate from the community. Elected board members should not disregard the voters' will.

The “Base Plan” was overwhelmingly supported at the Fall Town Meeting and should be enacted as approved. We look forward to confirmation at the January 21, 2025, select Board and Planning Board meetings.

As promised, a special town meeting should be scheduled for February 24. As your constituents, we trust you will uphold the voters' will.

Sincerely,

Bruce Wolfeld
brw917@gmail.com
617-901-5662

From: [Charles Hogan](#)
To: [Selectboard](#); [Planning](#)
Cc: [Office of the Town Manager](#); TownClerk@needhamma.com
Subject: Support for the Base Plan being scheduled for the Special Town Meeting on 2/24/2025
Date: Monday, January 20, 2025 8:37:26 PM

Dear Members of the Select Board and Planning Board,

I urge you to move the Base Compliance Plan forward for a Special Town Meeting without delay.

Voters rejected the Neighborhood housing plan by a significant margin. Please do not disregard that vote.

The Base Plan was overwhelmingly supported at the Fall Town Meeting and should be enacted as approved.

A Special Town Meeting should be scheduled for February 24 as promised.

On a separate note, beyond your authority, I was bewildered by the number of Town Meeting Members who abstained from their votes being cast. If ever there was a moment when participation is essential from elected representatives of the people it is now. I can only hope that those Town Meeting Members who abdicated their responsibility will gather the courage and resolve to fully and actively participate in this process.

I am grateful for your attention.

Very truly yours,

Charles H. Hogan

Charles H. Hogan,
Precinct I

From: [Rich Epstein](#)
To: [Planning](#)
Cc: [Louise Miller](#)
Subject: Next step for HONE zoning change
Date: Monday, January 20, 2025 8:45:31 PM



Rich Epstein <richepstein10@gmail.com>

8:41 PM (1 minute ago)



to selectboard, Louise



Hi,

I am writing as a registered voter that the planning board should take the step of pushing forth the base plan which was approved by town meeting.

Now it's time to fulfill the promise made on December 17th to follow the predetermined timeline and schedule a special town meeting on February 24th without delay.

By proposing to push this vote to May, the planning Board is knowingly placing the town at risk. It will also affect how people in town view the planning board since it was never discussed that there would be another plan besides the base plan.

Sincerely,

Richard Epstein

From: [Catherine A. Hogan](#)
To: [Selectboard](#); [Planning](#)
Cc: [Office of the Town Manager](#); TownClerk@needhamma.com
Subject: Base Plan and Special town meeting
Date: Monday, January 20, 2025 8:49:13 PM

Dear Members of the Select Board and Planning Board,

I am writing to ask that you move the Base Compliance Plan forward for a Special Town Meeting which should be scheduled for February 24 as promised.

On January 14 Needham voters rejected the Neighborhood Housing Plan sending a clear mandate from our community.

The “Base Plan” was overwhelmingly supported at the Fall Town Meeting and should be enacted as approved. I look forward to confirmation at the January 21, 2025 Select Board and Planning Board meetings.

Again, a special Town Meeting should be scheduled for February 24, as promised and NOT delayed until the Spring!

I am confident that you will do the right thing and adhere to timeline that was committed to on December 17, 2024 as well as the will of your constituents.

Respectfully yours,

Catherine A Hogan
140 Tower Ave
Sent from my iPad

From: [Donna Mulrenan](#)
To: [Selectboard](#); [Planning](#)
Cc: [Office of the Town Manager](#); [TownClerk](#)
Subject: Needham Referendum Vote
Date: Monday, January 20, 2025 8:52:38 PM

Dear Select Board and Planning Board Members,

Needham voters resoundingly rejected the Neighborhood Housing Plan. When this happened I naively assumed Needham would revert to the Base Plan. This does not seem to be the case and I do not understand why. The base plan was supported at the Fall Town Meeting. Let's submit the Base Plan to the state and be in compliance with the MBTA Communities Act. Needham voters have clearly voiced their opinion on this matter, please don't disregard the wishes of the voters.

Sincerely,

Donna Crescenzi

From: [Dustin Pevear](#)
To: [Selectboard](#); [Planning](#)
Cc: [Office of the Town Manager](#); [TownClerk](#)
Subject: Needham Referendum Vote
Date: Monday, January 20, 2025 9:36:20 PM

Dear Members of the Select Board and Planning Board,

As you know, on Tuesday, January 14, Needham voters rejected the “Neighborhood Housing Plan”. The “Base Plan” was overwhelmingly supported at the Fall Town Meeting and should be enacted as approved. We write to urge you to move the Base Compliance Plan (“Base Plan”) forward for a Special Town Meeting without delay.

Sincerely,
Dustin & Tiffany Pevear
Precinct C

From: [Eran Hollander](#)
To: [Planning](#)
Cc: [Office of the Town Manager](#); [TownClerk](#)
Subject: Needham Referendum Vote
Date: Monday, January 20, 2025 9:45:52 PM

Dear Members of the Select Board and Planning Board,

I (we) urge you to advance the Base Compliance Plan (“Base Plan”) to a Special Town Meeting without further delay.

On Tuesday, January 14, Needham voters decisively rejected the “Neighborhood Housing Plan,” delivering a clear and unequivocal message. It is imperative that elected board members honor the community's decision.

The “Base Plan,” which received strong support at the Fall Town Meeting, should be implemented as approved. We look forward to your confirmation of this next step at the January 21, 2025, Select Board and Planning Board meetings.

As previously committed, a Special Town Meeting should be scheduled for February 24.

As your constituents, we trust you will respect the expressed will of the voters.

Sincerely,

Eran

--

Eran Hollander

eran.hollander@gmail.com

Cell: 617-694-8127

From: [William Leahy](#)
To: [Selectboard](#); [Planning](#)
Cc: [Office of the Town Manager](#); [TownClerk](#)
Subject: Approving the compliance plan now
Date: Monday, January 20, 2025 10:16:19 PM

Dear Select Board and Planning Board members,

As longtime Needham homeowners, we urge you to approve the compliance plan that was approved unanimously or nearly so by Town Meeting in October, and to do so forthwith for speedy consideration by a special Town https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=https%3a%2f%2fMeeting.in&c=E.1.oxht4no3p8a-fHcBXB0tlyruVmeP0lms4W40a2Nd8MFs-JprnZZhS6fSzWMU8nAKgReyjM5OA8OT_ZdgRxSxgVqwdgOZtVf4_P6odK0918mwT_MK8g..&typo=1 February. The plan satisfies the state law, and it enjoys virtually unanimous support among Needham residents. Failure to re-approve it now would be divisive and, in our view, irresponsible.

In the past several months, the Town in which we have lived for 38 years has been subjected to false reporting by major media organizations, portraying it as willfully violating the state MBTA law. That false reporting has continued even after the recent referendum demonstrated that a clear majority of Needham voters a) support compliance with the law, and b) do not support its expansion.

Needham needs to speak now, and clearly, to honor the votes of its residents, and to clarify to all that it has consistently upheld its obligations under the state law. The integrity of the political process in our Town is at stake. The voters have spoken. Please respect their judgment.

Yours truly,

Bill and Kathleen Leahy
195 Nehoiden Street

From: [Sean Robbins](#)
To: [Selectboard](#); [Planning](#)
Cc: [Office of the Town Manager](#); [TownClerk](#)
Subject: Request for Special Town Meeting 2/24
Date: Tuesday, January 21, 2025 12:04:52 AM

Dear Select Board,

We write to you as concerned residents of Needham and urge you to schedule a special town meeting for February 24th. Any further delay is simply unnecessary as the Base Plan won nearly unanimous approval in the October 2024 Town Meeting. Based upon the results of the Special Town Election this month, the residents voted decisively against the Neighborhood Plan. It is apparent the town citizens want to comply with the MBTA Communities Act, but find it reckless and unnecessary to exceed the requirement at this time.

We urge you to not stall any longer, end the bureaucratic nonsense and listen to the residents whom you purport to represent. Please close the book on this tired issue on February 24th so we can heal the division in this town and enact what the majority of residents clearly voted for last week.

Thank you for your consideration.

Regards,
Sean Robbins and Ariel deBairos
138 Webster St

From: [Cindy Wolfe](#)
To: [Planning](#)
Subject: Referendum Vote
Date: Tuesday, January 21, 2025 1:31:47 AM

Dear Members of the Planning Board,

I represent Precinct E at Town Meeting. I would sincerely like to thank each of you for your work and commitment on the Planning Board. Your efforts are valued and appreciated.

Not a native New Englander, I find the Town Meeting form of local government unique and refreshingly civilized. Regardless of my own opinion on the zoning issue, I was impressed by the citizen appeal, signature drive and special election. The citizens of this town overwhelmingly disagreed with the passing of the Neighborhood Plan and took action. They worked to have their voices heard and with an overwhelming turnout the Neighborhood Plan was decisively rejected. I hope their voices were truly heard.

I understand there may be a new compromise zoning plan being formed now that the MBTA Communities deadline is in July. I write to ask you to submit the Base Plan for approval at a Special Town Meeting in February. Not doing so will be a blatant refusal to acknowledge the results of the special election. The Planning Board, HONE committee and a close majority of Town Meeting members shared a vision of the future of Needham that clearly did not align with a majority of the voters at this time. Putting forth a new plan in May would threaten the integrity of our Town Meeting process. It would be irresponsible and could create a repeat of what just occurred. We are supposed to be representing the people who elected us so we should be listening.

Please move the Base Compliance Plan forward at a Special Town Meeting in February. I realize this is not enough for the Yes campaign, but this was the original plan that was unanimously passed. It is a start in the right direction. Moving forward will bridge the divide this has created in town. It is the right thing to do.

Sincerely,

Cindy Wolfe

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NRTZ Leads Winning NO Vote to Oppose Overzealous Rezoning in Needham

Needham, MA – The grassroots citizens group, **Needham Residents for Thoughtful Zoning (NRTZ)**, led a decisive victory on January 14th, with nearly 60% of voters rejecting overzealous “by-right” rezoning. NRTZ empowered residents with facts and built a repository of unbiased information, standing by its principle: **“Our Town – Our Voice.”**

This nearly 2,000-vote margin is a clear signal to town leadership that the fully compliant **“Base Plan”** must be enacted immediately, reflecting the will of the people. Yet, recent actions suggest town leaders may not be listening.

In the face of widespread and vocal opposition to the “no” position from town leaders, press mischaracterizations, outside special interest group involvement and funding, and pushback from business and state political leaders, NRTZ consistently advocated against the extreme “Neighborhood Plan,” which proposed 85% more development than required. NRTZ highlighted the risks of larger rezoning, including school overcrowding, financial strain, and increased traffic congestion.

Now, town boards appear to be delaying enacting the Base Plan, contrary to the Select Board’s December 17th timeline for a Special Town Meeting in February. A closed-door meeting held immediately after the election has fueled concerns of further delays, with plans now reportedly pushed to May.

The articles for the Base Plan’s enactment are ready. NRTZ urges town leadership to honor the town-wide vote, close this tumultuous chapter, and prevent further political division. **The Base Plan must be adopted without delay.**

For more information, visit **NRTZ.org**.

From: [Catherine Carroll](#)
To: [Selectboard](#); [Planning](#)
Cc: [Office of the Town Manager](#); [TownClerk](#)
Subject: Do not ignore the referendum vote
Date: Tuesday, January 21, 2025 8:13:42 AM

Dear Members of the Select Board and Planning Board,

I most strongly urge you to move the Base Compliance Plan (“Base Plan”) forward for a Special Town Meeting without delay.

Needham voters rejected the “Neighborhood Housing Plan,” sending **a clear mandate from the community.**

As elected board members you should not disregard the voters.

The “Base Plan” was overwhelmingly supported at the Fall Town Meeting and should be enacted as approved.

We look forward to confirmation at the January 21, 2025 select Board and Planning Board meetings. A Special Town Meeting should be scheduled for February 24, as promised.

As your constituents, we trust you will uphold the will of the voters.

Sincerely,

Catherine Carroll

From: [Office of the Town Manager](#)
To: [Planning](#)
Subject: FW: MBTA Zoning Requirement
Date: Tuesday, January 21, 2025 9:08:16 AM

FYI

Myles Tucker
Support Services Manager
Town of Needham
Needham Town Hall
1471 Highland Avenue
Needham, MA 02492
www.needhamma.gov
Office: (781) 455-7500 ext. 204

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-----Original Message-----

From: Christofer Palasinski <christoferp@icloud.com>
Sent: Saturday, January 18, 2025 1:31 PM
To: Office of the Town Manager <OTM@needhamma.gov>
Subject: MBTA Zoning Requirement

Please forward to the appropriate board or committee that is working on the new plan.

I strongly urge you to not go beyond the minimum requirement of the state law at this time. We can work on going beyond that at a later time. Otherwise we risk non-compliance and going through another expensive process like we just had that ended with the vote on January 14, 2025.

Please learn from that vote how the majority of residents feel on this issue.

Thank you.

Christofer Palasinski
65 Walnut Street, Needham
Sent from my iPhone

From: [Gary Ajamian](#)
To: [Selectboard](#); [Office of the Town Manager](#); [Planning Board](#); [Planning](#)
Cc: [Louise Miller](#)
Subject: Reinstating the state approved Base Plan on Feb 24th
Date: Tuesday, January 21, 2025 9:24:37 AM

Dear Planning Board, Select Board, and All Town Boards,

Town Meeting, along with all town boards, has resoundingly approved the Base Plan. This plan has been endorsed by the EOHLC and, in fact, goes 25% beyond the state-mandated requirements.

We appreciate your leadership in helping to heal divisions and urge you to move forward together. Now is the time to unify by voting to reinstate this pre-approved Base Plan without delay. Doing so will ensure that Needham avoids losing funding and prevents any potential legal action by the Attorney General's office.

Let's put an end to this prolonged debate, reject the influence of outside groups, and stand firm against efforts such as One Commonwealth's \$10,000 voter influence campaign and the actions of the Charles River Chamber leadership. It's worth noting that neither Newton nor Wellesley overcomplied, yet they are part of the Charles River Chamber group.

Instead, let us uphold and represent the clear wishes of the people of Needham.

Sincerely,

Regards,

Gary Ajamian
TMM, Precinct F
47 Meetinghouse Circle

From: [Lynne Stratford](#)
To: [Selectboard](#); [Planning](#); [Louise Miller](#)
Subject: MBTA Zoning - January 14, 2025 Vote
Date: Tuesday, January 21, 2025 10:20:38 AM

To Whom it may concern,

The apparent disregard for the residents' preferences, as strongly expressed in the January 14, 2025 referendum vote, is deeply disheartening.

It has become increasingly evident that the HONE Committee and other town officials are prioritizing their own agenda over the will of the community. Rather than implementing the Base Plan, town officials appear intent on circumventing the residents' wishes by developing yet another plan. This approach seems designed to delay action and create a manufactured urgency, ultimately leading to scare tactics 2.0: "We will be out of compliance and lose funding."

The residents have spoken clearly, and it is your obligation to listen and act accordingly. Town officials must respect the expressed will of the community and demonstrate accountability to those they serve.

Lynne Collins Stratford

Realtor, GRI, SRS
Real Estate Broker MA # 128272
Condon Realty
399 Chestnut Street
Needham, MA
781-752-8622 Direct
781-449-6292 Office
781-455-8260 Fax
lynnes@condonrealty.com



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From: [Olga Batura](#)
To: [Selectboard](#); [Planning](#)
Cc: [Office of the Town Manager](#); [TownClerk](#)
Subject: Needham Referendum Vote
Date: Tuesday, January 21, 2025 10:33:05 AM

Dear Members of the Select Board and Planning Board,

I write to urge you to move the Base Compliance Plan (“Base Plan”) forward for a Special Town Meeting without delay.

On Tuesday, January 14, Needham voters rejected the “Neighborhood Housing Plan,” sending a clear mandate from the community. Elected board members should not disregard the will of the voters. The “Base Plan” was overwhelmingly supported at the Fall Town Meeting and should be enacted as approved. We look forward to confirmation at the January 21, 2025 select Board and Planning Board meetings.

A Special Town Meeting should be scheduled for February 24, as promised, not May.

As your constituents, we trust you will uphold the will of the voters.

Thank you,
Olga (Volha) Batura

From: [Pavel Bandarchuk](#)
To: [Selectboard](#); [Planning](#)
Cc: [Office of the Town Manager](#); [TownClerk](#)
Subject: Needham Referendum Vote
Date: Tuesday, January 21, 2025 10:39:16 AM

Dear Members of the Select Board and Planning Board,

I write to urge you to move the Base Compliance Plan (“Base Plan”) forward for a Special Town Meeting without delay.

On Tuesday, January 14, Needham voters rejected the “Neighborhood Housing Plan,” sending a clear mandate from the community. Elected board members should not disregard the will of the voters. The “Base Plan” was overwhelmingly supported at the Fall Town Meeting and should be enacted as approved. We look forward to confirmation at the January 21, 2025 select Board and Planning Board meetings.

A Special Town Meeting should be scheduled for February 24, as promised.

As your constituents, we trust you will uphold the will of the voters.

Sincerely,
Pavel Bandarchuk

From: [Aryn Patentas](#)
To: [Selectboard](#); [Planning](#)
Cc: [TownClerk](#); [Office of the Town Manager](#)
Subject: MBTA Communities Act
Date: Tuesday, January 21, 2025 10:59:29 AM

Dear Members of The Select Board and Planning Board,

Thank you very much for your service to our town and the time and effort you put in. This letter is to ask that you kindly hear and respond to the voters in our community who have said NO to OVERCOMPLIANCE. This has been a divisive issue in our town and it would be best to swiftly vote in the vetted and overwhelmingly supported "Base Compliance Plan". It is time for our community to move forward. I would ask you to do what's best for Needham and schedule the February 24th Special Town Meeting as promised.

Thank you very much,
Aryn Patentas
10 Stonecrest Drive

From: [Eileen Orscheln](#)
To: [Planning](#)
Subject: Fw: MBTA Communities Act
Date: Tuesday, January 21, 2025 12:52:28 PM

[Sent from the all new AOL app for iOS](#)

Begin forwarded message:

On Tuesday, January 21, 2025, 12:51 PM, Eileen Orscheln <eorscheln@verizon.net> wrote:

Dear Board members,
I am writing in support of the Base Compliance Plan. I urge you to recognize the vote of the town and honor their wishes for the “Base” plan. Residents voted “no” with the understanding a Special Town Meeting would be called on February 24 to vote on the “Base” plan. My constituents supported the “no” vote, and I believe it is important you listen to their voices and now support the base plan. It is not appropriate to hold the vote until May, or to introduce a “compromise”. The voters have spoken; whether or not you agree with them, it is time to advance the Base plan.

Sincerely,
Eileen Orscheln
Town Meeting Member, Precinct H

[Sent from the all new AOL app for iOS](#)