



SOMERVILLE REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

MEETING MINUTES

Location: Virtual meeting via Zoom Webinar

Date: Monday, October 7th, 2024

Time: The Chair convened the meeting at 5:33pm.

Meeting recording: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5j_2Wb3IPeY

ATTENDANCE:

SRA Members Present: Philip Ercolini (Chair), Iwona Bonney (Secretary), Ben Ewen-Campen (City Councilor), Christine Stone, William Gage.

SRA Members Absent: Patrick McCormick.

Staff Present: Ben Demers (Senior Economic Development Planner), Ted Fields (Senior Economic Development Planner).

AGENDA ITEMS:

Staff presented virtual meeting house rules to the Board.

1: Approval of minutes for the September 10th general meeting.

No edits were recommended to the draft meeting minutes.

I. Bonney moved to approve the minutes. Seconded by W. Gage. Approved 5-0-0 (Yes-No-Abstain) by roll call vote.

2: Public Comment:

No public comment was made.

3. Recruitment update.

B. Demers updated Somerville Redevelopment Authority (SRA) members that the Mayor's recommendation for the vacant position on the Authority, Courtney Brunson, was approved by the Confirmation of Appointments and Personnel Matters (CAMP) Committee of the Somerville City Council. The next step would be for the recommendation to go to the full City Council on October 10th, 2024, for a vote. If the Council approved, the paperwork would need to be signed by the Mayor and C. Brunson would need to be sworn in by the City Clerk before she could begin serving at SRA meetings.



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4. Union Square Revitalization Plan (USRP).

a. Certificate of Compliance process.

B. Demers walked through the certificate of compliance process with SRA members and provided an overview of a memo that had been shared with SRA members ahead of time on the topic. The memo can be found [here](https://s3.amazonaws.com/somervillema-live/s3fs-public/2024-10/Memo-for-SRA-regarding-D2-completion-Full-Appendices-20241007.pdf) (<https://s3.amazonaws.com/somervillema-live/s3fs-public/2024-10/Memo-for-SRA-regarding-D2-completion-Full-Appendices-20241007.pdf>).

Union Square Station Associates (US2), which is the SRA's selected Master Developer implementing the Union Square Revitalization Plan (USRP), submitted a request for a Certificate of Compliance for the "D2" parcel identified in the USRP. (The "D" in "D2" stands for "Disposition," which describes several parcels that the plan identifies to be redeveloped.) The Certificate of Compliance process is laid out in the Master Land Disposition Agreement (MLDA), which describes the responsibilities of US2 and the SRA in implementing the USRP. These Certificates essentially memorialize that US2 has developed the parcel to the SRA's expectations and in accordance with the MLDA. They also end the SRA's "right of reverter" for the parcels, which is essentially the right of the SRA to retake the property if not developed in accordance with the agreed upon documents. The request was submitted on September 3rd, 2024, which set off a 45-day timeline in which the SRA would need to vote to approve or deny that request. This gave a deadline of October 18th.

The process that staff are using to determine whether they would recommend that the SRA issue a Certificate of Compliance is that:

- (1) The phase of development has received its Certificate of Occupancy (CO) from the City, showing that it has met the conditions of its Planning Board approvals; and
- (2) SRA members have been able to tour the site and ask questions of US2 to their satisfaction.

B. Demers also reviewed some relevant phasing information for the Certificate of Compliance request. The MLDA lays out a process for US2 to submit a plan for sub-phasing for any of the Disposition parcels. For D2, US2 first submitted a phasing document in 2019, which split the parcel into three phases: D2.1 (now 10 Prospect), D2.2/D2.3 (now 20-50 Prospect), and D2.4 (initially planned as a 12,000 sf commercial building southeast of D2.2/D2.3). A map of the parcel can be found in the staff memo. In 2020, US2 then submitted a modification to this phasing plan that:

- noted that US2 would return to the Planning Board to obtain approvals to develop D2.4 as a neighborhood park instead of a commercial building;
- removed D2.4 as a phase within the D2 parcel development; and
- stated that when a Certificate of Compliance was issued for D2.1 and D2.2/D2.3, the SRA would also release their right of reverter for D2.4.

With D2.4 removed as a phase of development, US2 was therefore specifically requesting a Certificate of Compliance for D2.1 and D2.2/D2.3, and was looking to document the release of the SRA's right of reverter for D2.4.

Staff confirmed that the projects have met the conditions from their planning requirements, with one administrative item still outstanding from the City's end. The SRA was also able to tour the site on September 17th. Given that these were complete, staff stated that they were comfortable with SRA



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members issuing the requested Certificates of Compliance and releasing the right of reverter for D2.4, barring any concerns from SRA members that arose from their tour of the site.

b. Debrief of the SRA tour of 10-50 Prospect Street.

B. Demers opened the conversation to questions and comments from SRA members to debrief the tour. Kara Pellaton from US2 joined the call to answer any questions from SRA members.

W. Gage asked what US2's plan is for making D2.4 usable for the public prior to longer-term redevelopment as a neighborhood park. K. Pellaton answered that US2 planned to first clean up the property line with the adjacent property to the north, including putting up a new black fence. They would then provide a dog park space accessible from Milk Alley and Allen Street. Their goal is to implement this in Q4 of 2024 or early Q2 of 2025. They would then build a neighborhood park on the site with more community input in the future.

B. Ewen-Campen commented that his understanding of the original plan for D2.4 was that this parcel would be combined with adjoining properties and would potentially become affordable housing, but that this fell apart because of the refusal for an adjacent property owner to participate. He feels that this is why eminent domain exists, so asked staff if any steps had been taken to integrate this property into the process. B. Demers answered that he is unsure of where the conversation ended between City leadership and the adjacent property owner, so will ask and follow up with SRA members at the next meeting.

C. Stone asked if this vote was solely for D2.1 and D2.2/D2.3, or if it also included D2.4. B. Demers reiterated that the modification to the D2 phasing plan explicitly states that when the Certificates of Compliance are issued for D2.1 and D2.2/D2.3, the SRA would release their right of reverter for D2.4. C. Stone noted that she does not have major concerns about what has been built but is concerned about giving up the SRA's right of reverter for D2.4.

P. Ercolini asked if they can excise the decision around the right of reverter for D2.4 at this time. B. Demers responded that his understanding is that, because the SRA approved the updated phasing plan for D2 in 2020 that explicitly stated the right of reverter for D2.4 would be given up upon the issuing of Certificates of Compliance for D2.1 and D2.2/D2.3, they cannot excise the decision around D2.4 from the current decision to issue those Certificates of Compliance.

P. Ercolini asked if there was an impact of delaying issuing the Certificates of Compliance now. B. Demers explained that the SRA would need to formally deny the request and provide a reason for doing so to US2. He added that this would make it more difficult for US2 to refinance the projects.

B. Ewen-Campen expressed that, despite slight concerns in giving up leverage on D2.4, he is comfortable issuing the Certificates since they approved the phasing plan and the SRA will have many touch points with US2 in the future.



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c. Decision to issue/deny the Certificate of Compliance for 10-50 Prospect Street.

B. Ewen-Campen moved the following:

Pursuant to Section II. G-H of the Master Land Disposition Agreement (MDLA) between the Somerville Redevelopment Authority (SRA) and Union Square Station Associates (US2), the SRA hereby votes to affirmatively issue a Certificate of Compliance to US2 for the D2.1 and D2.2/D2.3 parcels of the Union Square Revitalization Plan, and to affirmatively release the right of reverter for the D2.4 parcel.

Seconded by I. Bonney. Approved 4-0-1 (Yes-No-Abstain) by roll call vote.

K. Pellaton left the meeting.

5. 90 Washington Street—DPW Memorandum of Understanding extension request.

B. Demers reviewed a memo that was shared with SRA members ahead of the meeting regarding a City request to extend a memorandum of understanding (MOU) for temporary use of 90 Washington Street, [here](https://s3.amazonaws.com/somervillema-live/s3fs-public/2024-10/Memo-for-SRA-regarding-extension-of-90-Washington-MOU-20241007.pdf) (<https://s3.amazonaws.com/somervillema-live/s3fs-public/2024-10/Memo-for-SRA-regarding-extension-of-90-Washington-MOU-20241007.pdf>).

The SRA owns 90 Washington Street, which it took by eminent domain as part of the implementation of the 90 Washington Street Demonstration Project Plan. In 2022, the City requested to put into place an MOU that would allow City departments to use the site for several temporary uses while awaiting long-term redevelopment on the site. These uses include a temporary civic space as well as snow and equipment storage by the Somerville Department of Public Works (DPW). This initial MOU lasted for one year. The City then requested in November 2023 that the MOU be extended by an additional year, which SRA voted at that time to approve. Staff were again requesting an extension of the MOU by an additional year until November 2025.

Eric Weisman, Director of Operations for the Department of Public Works, joined the meeting. He shared that, since meeting with the SRA in November 2023, DPW has added a portion of 350 Medford Street to its options for sites where snow can be stored, and they are exploring creating an MOU with a private landowner for a space to store snow. DPW also continues to explore options for snow storage external to Somerville and to request funding to purchase or rent snow melters. These strategies together should lighten the need for snow storage at 90 Washington Street, but DPW feels that it is important that 90 Washington remain an option for storage functions.

P. Ercolini asked what efforts DPW has made to improve 90 Washington Street. E. Weisman reviewed that DPW has done landscaping work on the site, replaced the gate on the fence, and replaced scrim. If the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development seeks to use a portion of the site for temporary civic space, then DPW would also support this function.

W. Gage asked if DPW can make the site more presentable. He is concerned that the site has not been well maintained. E. Weisman apologized that there had been a gap in maintenance, but assured SRA members that as soon as an issue was brought to their attention, they addressed that issue and have made the site a more frequent visit in DPW's maintenance rotation.



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C. Stone asked if the memo that staff provided accurately reflects what DPW plans to store at the site. E. Weisman answered that it does, yes.

C. Stone asked if DPW tries to work with its constituent taxpayers in the City of Somerville, or if it does its business without constituents in mind. E. Weisman answered that everything DPW does is with constituents in mind.

C. Stone moved to extend the memorandum of understanding between the SRA and the City for temporary use of 90 Washington Street by one year. Seconded by W. Gage. Approved 5-0-0 (Yes-No-Abstain) by roll call vote.

6. Items not reasonably anticipated by the Chair.

No items were brought forward.

7. Adjournment:

P. Ercolini added that the next scheduled meeting is Tuesday, November 12th.

W. Gage moved to adjourn at 6:16. Seconded by C. Stone. Approved 5-0-0 by roll call vote.