



SOMERVILLE REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

MEETING MINUTES

Location: Virtual meeting via Zoom Webinar

Date: Tuesday, January 14th, 2025

Time: The Chair convened the meeting at 5:34pm.

Meeting recording: <https://youtu.be/KMguMizhJzI>

ATTENDANCE:

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

SRA Members Absent: None.

Staff Present: Catherine Lester Salchert (Special Counsel), Rachel Nadkarni (Director of Economic Development), Ben Demers (Senior Economic Development Planner).

AGENDA ITEMS:

Staff presented virtual meeting house rules to the Board.

1. Approval of the minutes of the November 12th general meeting and December 12th and 19th special meetings.

No edits to the minutes were recommended.

I. Bonney moved to approve the minutes. Seconded by W. Gage. Approved 7-0-0 (yes-no-abstain) by roll call vote.

2. Public comment period.

No public comments were made.

3. Annual presentation from Groundwork Somerville regarding their use of SRA-owned land at 100 and 138 South Street.

The SRA currently manages one lease of its landholdings, with an urban agriculture nonprofit, Groundwork Somerville (GWS). GWS leases land from the SRA at 100 and 138 South Street for the South Street Farm and to host programming and events.

The SRA was joined by GWS staff Kenzie Ballard (Director of Community Engagement and Climate Resilience) and Leah McCarthy (Urban Agriculture and Green Spaces Director) to provide a biannual update on the organization. K. Ballard and L. McCarthy reviewed programming including youth education and empowerment, urban growing / community gardens, and climate resiliency education.



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The South Street Farm is integral to many of these programs. The organization is also creating a strategic vision for the coming year.

C. Brunson asked how much youth engaged in GWS programming are paid, how they recruit members to be a part of those programs, and what career skills they gain. GWS staff answered that there are three groups of youth placed with GWS, which each make different amounts: The Somerville Mayor's Summer Job Program pays the livable wage of Somerville, \$17.72; the Cambridge Mayor's Summer Job Program pays \$15/hour; and GWS recruits and pays some youth directly a rate of \$17.09. GWS's youth programming gives youth exposure to partner organizations, direct connections with staff at those organizations, and specific learnings about how those partners reached where they are in their careers.

C. Brunson asked how GWS collaborates with other food organizations across the Boston area. GWS discussed partnerships with the Mystic River Watershed Association, the City of Somerville's Mobility Division, and Riverside Community Care.

P. McCormick asked how GWS will prioritize systematically disadvantaged groups for the community garden plots at South Street Farm. GWS staff noted that they plan to work with the Somerville Housing Authority to advertise in their housing community, and will create an application through which they gather more information about people interested in having a garden bed. The organization also wants to build several accessible beds.

P. Ercolini asked if the space meets GWS needs, and if the organization has a 5-10 year plan in which they envision larger space elsewhere since this land may not remain available. GWS staff answers that the space has been great in many ways and provides room for garden beds, but the space is also somewhat tucked away so many people do not know they are there. Ideally they would expand into a space that feels more integrated into the community. The organization is planning programs to make the best use of the space that they do have but ensuring that programs are mobile.

B. Ewen-Campen expressed that his understanding was that the Boynton Yards Master Plan shows Civic Space 2 as housing an urban agriculture operation, and asked whether this was sufficient for GWS's needs. GWS staff noted that the northeast side of a tall building next to train tracks is not an ideal space to grow food, and the space is fairly small and tucked away. GWS staff also understand that they will need to bid for that space through a public procurement process, so they do not want to assume that the space is a guarantee. SRA members asked how much space would GWS ideally want. GWS staff responded that they would ideally not have less than an acre, but too large of an area would be difficult to manage sustainably. Somewhere between 0.25-0.5 of an acre would be ideal. They would likely work with an awkward shaped parcel that would not work for other types of development.

4. Request for approval of an easement over SRA-owned land at 0 Windsor Place in Boynton Yards.

City staff requested review and approval of a sidewalk ramp and platform easement over SRA property at 0 Windsor Place for sidewalk development adjacent to 808 Windsor Street in Somerville. Staff noted that items like this are administrative because of small pieces of SRA-owned land left over from past development, and helps facilitate the development of the public realm in Boynton



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Yards. SRA members discussed and requested an update of the document to discuss this as a license over public land rather than as an easement.

C. Brunson moved to approve a license to the owner of 808 Windsor Street (Building 2) in the Boynton Yards Master Plan, consistent with the easement and license agreement shared, provided that Paragraph 1 is amended to state "Grant of a License" rather than "Grant of Easement." Seconded by C. Stone. Approved 7-0-0.

Iwona Bonney left the meeting.

5. Union Square Revitalization Plan—Quarterly presentation from Union Square Station Associates (US2) regarding progress of Plan implementation.

The SRA was joined by Greg Karczewski, President of Union Square Station Associates (US2), which is the master developer selected to implement the Union Square Revitalization Plan. G. Karczewski provided a quarterly update on Plan implementation. This included Life Alive opening on the ground floor of 20-50 Prospect and several closeout items for D2. The team is now focused on leasing 10 Prospect Street and moving prep work along for D4.3, an affordable housing development being completed with Preservation of Affordable Housing (POAH) and Somerville Community Corporation (SCC), and D3.1, which will be another commercial building south of the MBTA station.

SRA members did not have any questions for G. Karczewski.

6. Review of a draft of the Somerville Redevelopment Authority 2024 Annual Report, and request for approval to send a final version to the Mayor, Somerville City Council, and Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities.

B. Demers presented the draft Somerville Redevelopment Authority 2024 Annual Report to SRA members, including project overviews for projects under the SRA's purview. The SRA is required to produce an annual report each year that is sent to the Mayor, Somerville City Council, and the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities. City staff also aim to use this as a transparency measure to help Somerville community members understand the work of the SRA.

SRA members had no edits for the annual report and expressed appreciation to staff for the format of the report.

P. McCormick moved to approve the annual report and share the document with the Mayor, Somerville City Council, and the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities. Seconded by C. Brunson. Approved 6-0-0.

7. Items not reasonably anticipated by the Chair.

Not items were brought forward.



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8. Meeting adjournment:

W. Gage moved to adjourn at 6:48. Seconded by C. Brunson. Approved 6-0-0 by roll call vote.