



SOMERVILLE REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

MEETING MINUTES

Location: Virtual meeting via Zoom Webinar

Date: Tuesday, February 18th, 2025

Time: The Chair convened the meeting at 5:35pm.

Meeting recording:

ATTENDANCE:

SRA Members Present: Philip Ercolini (Chair), Iwona Bonney (Secretary), Courtney Brunson, William Gage, Patrick McCormick, Christine Stone.

SRA Members Absent: Ben Ewen-Campen (City Councilor).

Staff Present: Catherine Lester Salchert (Special Counsel), Dana Whiteside (Deputy Director of Economic Development), 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 the minutes of the January 14th general meeting.

No edits to the minutes were recommended.

I. Bonney moved to approve the minutes. Seconded by C. Brunson. Approved 6-0-0 (yes-no-abstain) by roll call vote.

2. Public comment period.

No public comments were made.

3. 90 Washington Street Demonstration Project Plan—General planning and communications update.

Staff provided an update to SRA Board members regarding the disposition of 90 Washington Street. The Mayor's Office announced officially on January 29th that the disposition strategy for 90 Washington was shifting due to the additional ~\$30M that the SRA needed to pay for the land and interest from what was initially intended. The primary goal of the disposition will now be to recoup funds to repay the additional costs. This means that a combined public safety headquarters for the Police Department, Fire Department, and 911 Dispatch team will not be financially feasible on the site. Staff are still weighing other public benefits, such as a potential fire station for Engine 3, against this goal of recouping costs. Staff are working to update the scope of their real estate advisor, HR&A, related to this project to provide additional guidance.



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Staff also reviewed touchpoints for the SRA moving forward and reiterated that the SRA has the ultimate decision-making authority regarding the disposition of the site. The SRA will review the request for proposals (RFP) or other disposition instrument used to select a developer for the site, will review purchase proposals, and will execute a final disposition to a developer. Staff will also update the SRA regularly on how the disposition process is progressing. Staff will also continue to confer with the 90 Washington Street Demonstration Project Plan Civic Advisory Committee (CAC) at these critical junctures in the process.

P. Ercolini asked if this timing is in line with staff's goals, and when the next payment was due to the plaintiff. Staff answered that the final payment to the plaintiff would be made this month. Staff are on track with their intended planning timing. C. Stone asked if staff could provide a timeline with milestones. Staff responded that they are aiming to work with HR&A to understand how long each step in the process should take so they can provide a more accurate timeline.

P. Ercolini asked if the bond could be renegotiated during the two-year period. Staff responded that this is not possible from their understanding. They affirmed that the City retains a AAA bond rating, which allows them access to lower interest rates for the bond.

C. Brunson asked the plan to rezone the site. Staff answered that this is also something they are exploring with HR&A. They understand the goal to maximize value on the site while having clarity for both the neighborhood and a potential developer.

4. Winter Hill Urban Renewal Plan—Implementation update regarding acquisition of civic space at 299 Broadway.

Staff updated SRA Board members that they were looking to use a \$2.5M MassWorks Infrastructure Program grant from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Economic Development to purchase a portion of the civic spaces being built at 299 Broadway, within the Winter Hill Urban Renewal Plan. Because the grant needs to be spent prior to the anticipated finish of the civic space development, staff recommended that the SRA purchase the land up front with intended improvements and hold the land while the owner/developer finish the improvements. The land would then be conveyed from the SRA to the City to hold in perpetuity as a park. This agreement would all be outlined in a Land Development Agreement (LDA) between the SRA and the owner/developer of the site, which staff are currently drafting. Staff will return to the SRA in the coming months with additional details to review.

C. Stone asked which portion of land staff are recommending the SRA purchase. Staff are intending that the SRA only purchase the portion of the land that will become the future Sewall Park.

C. Stoned asked who the land would be purchased from. Staff responded that the land would be purchased by the current owner, which is the development partnership between Mark Development and Beacon Communities.

C. Stone asked why the SRA needs to get involved in this process. Staff explained that because of the timing in which the grant needs to be spent, the purchase will need to happen prior to the completion of all improvements to the park. For the development team to complete the improvements, it is easier for the SRA to hold the land, since if the City held the land it would trigger



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the need for additional procurement steps. Staff explored many options with the MassWorks team, and this was the path forward that was simplest for achieving the goal of the grant.

C. Stone asked how the Sewall Park would be connected to the other civic spaces on the site, and what the ownership of those other spaces would be. Staff explained that the other civic spaces will remain under ownership of the development team. Part of the work of the development will be to level out the grade change from the future Broadway Plaza to the future Sewall Park, so the public can easily walk through the site.

P. Ercolini asked if the developer could have applied to the grant. Staff explained that they could not have, from their understanding.

P. McCormick asked if the source of the funding is federal and if that is where the timing issue arises. Staff's understanding is that it is not federal. The State applies a three-year timeline to the grant in its guidelines to ensure the funds are spent, but staff are unsure why this is the specific timeline.

C. Brunson asked if the SRA has other options if the SRA is not able to grant this land to the City ultimately. Staff do not foresee this scenario but can consider this in the LDA and in their review of MassWorks grant documents.

C. Stone asked if there was a contingency if the development team did not finalize the improvements on the site, since the grant funding would be spent up front. Staff have discussed this and will have language in the LDA protecting against this scenario.

P. Ercolini asked if the land could be acquired for any reason other than the park. Staff explained that the grant needs to be used for public infrastructure, of which a park is an example.

A member of the public, Chris Autera (48 Morrison Ave), asked how the small piece of land on the eastern portion of the 299 Broadway development was going to be used. Staff explained that the land would be an access drive from Grant Street into the site. Staff also offered that members of the public who are interested in talking in more detail about the 299 Broadway project may be interested in attending a Winter Hill Urban Renewal Plan Civic Advisory Committee meeting as well.

5. Items not reasonably anticipated by the Chair.

No items were brought forward.

8. Meeting adjournment:

W. Gage moved to adjourn at 6:20pm. Seconded by C. Brunson. Approved 6-0-0 by roll call vote.