



SOMERVILLE REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

MEETING MINUTES

Location: Virtual meeting via Zoom Webinar

Date: Tuesday, April 22nd, 2025

Time: The Chair convened the meeting at 5:32pm.

Meeting recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X1Z2JnDzkSU>

ATTENDANCE:

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

SRA Members Absent: Iwona Bonney (Secretary), Ben Ewen-Campen (City Councilor).

Staff Present: Catherine Lester Salchert (Special Counsel), Ben Demers (Senior Economic Development Planner), Ted Fields (Senior Economic Development Planner).

AGENDA ITEMS:

Staff presented virtual meeting house rules to the Somerville Redevelopment Authority ("SRA") Board.

1. Approval of the minutes of the March 11th, 2025, general meeting.

No edits were suggested for the minutes.

W. Gage moved to approve the minutes. Seconded by C. Brunson. Approved 5-0-0 (yes-no-abstain) by roll call vote.

2. Public comment period.

No public comments were made.

3. Winter Hill Urban Renewal Plan.

a. Review of draft Land Development Agreement for 299 Broadway.

This item was discussed in tandem with item 3(b) below. Notes for both items are included there.

b. Review of draft transmittal letter to send to the Commonwealth's Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities to request approval of an acquisition of the future Sewall Pocket Park, and a request for a vote to approve sending this letter.

Staff reviewed both the draft transmittal letter to send to the Commonwealth's Executive Office of Housing



SOMERVILLE REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

MEETING MINUTES

and Livable Communities to request approval of an acquisition of the future Sewall Pocket Park referenced in item 3(b), as well as the draft Land Development Agreement (“LDA”) that would outline responsibilities of both the SRA and the development team at 299 Broadway.

For context: 299 Broadway is a development within the Winter Hill Urban Renewal Plan (“WHURP”) that has received a Comprehensive Permit from the Somerville Zoning Board of Appeals (“ZBA”) to create 319 units of new housing across two buildings, including 136 income-restricted units. It will also add about 10,000 sf of new retail space, a 3,000 sf new community space, and two new civic spaces. The project team anticipated breaking ground in Summer 2025 with an 18-24 month timeline.

Staff shared that the City has received a \$2.5M MassWorks Infrastructure Program (“MassWorks”) to support civic space development at this site. Staff explored various options for how to spend the grant, and proposed a scenario in which the SRA would purchase the land for the future Sewall Pocket Park and the value of the construction of the park upfront, and then would hold the land while the development team finishes constructing the park. Ultimately the SRA would deed the land to the City to hold in perpetuity as a public park. Staff walked through various benefits of this scenario, and why they were requesting that the SRA hold the land during development.

Staff then reviewed the process to move forward with the acquisition, if approved. Staff had ordered the two appraisals needed for a redevelopment authority acquisition within an urban renewal area, which valued the land at between \$1.9M and \$2M. Staff prepared a transmittal letter to send to the Commonwealth’s Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (“HLC”) requesting approval to move forward with this acquisition. Staff were then requesting to use the additional MassWorks funds (\$490,375, which is the remaining \$500,000 minus the value of two City-ordered appraisals) to pay for the construction of the park improvements to create the final Sewall Pocket Park. This requires a waiver from HLC, which staff have included in the transmittal letter. Staff reviewed the criteria for the waiver, and why they believe the project meets these criteria.

C. Brunson asked the SRA’s negotiating power if the price exceeds what is available within the grant, and if the SRA or City had additional funds if the property owner asked for more than the MassWorks funding available. Staff noted that this would be a friendly acquisition, and the current owner is amenable to selling the land for the amount of the MassWorks grant. No addition City or SRA monies would be needed. Staff are also only requesting that HLC approve the SRA to spend the amount of the MassWorks grant, so there would be no possible negotiation above that value after receiving approval.

C. Brunson asked what the nature of the improvements to be made to Sewall Pocket Park are. Staff explained that the land will be leveled to connect to the rest of the site, and then all of the plantings, ground treatments, and other materials would be added to create the finished park as approved in the 299 Broadway development team’s Comprehensive Permit from the ZBA. The final deliverable is a finished park.

C. Brunson asked what process was used to determine what amenities should be included in the future Sewall Pocket Park. Staff noted that there was discussion in the initial outreach for the WHURP for what kind of civic spaces would be needed in this neighborhood, and members of the WHURP Civic Advisory Committee (“CAC”) have discussed the space. Staff also reviewed this as part of the development’s Comprehensive Permit application process. Staff also noted that they would look at any specific feedback that could be referenced in the transmittal letter.

Councilor Jesse Clingan asked whether changes to the design could be negotiated based on this funding, to



SOMERVILLE REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

MEETING MINUTES

include things like more children-friendly components. Staff noted that the development team is hoping to apply for their building and construction permits in June/July, at which time the park design should be relatively completed. They had not anticipated making additional requests regarding the design. Councilor Clingan noted that he does not want to hold up the process, and supports the letter being sent to the State. C. Stone noted that Foss Park nearby also has a playground and other resources for children.

C. Clingan asked if the City would be able to redesign the park in the future (on the usual timeline on which public parks are redesigned). Staff noted that the City would be able to redesign the space using our usual engagement process for a public park. The developer will be expected to maintain the space in perpetuity.

C. Stone asked what maintenance agreement is used moving forward between the City and the development team to ensure maintenance of the civic space. Staff explained that a Landscape Management and Maintenance Plan (LMMP) will be agreed upon prior to the start of construction. This is a requirement listed in the project's Comprehensive Permit.

Staff walked through a draft LDA that outlines SRA and developer responsibilities at 299 Broadway. This includes responsibilities around the development of Sewall Pocket Park, as well as items like Certificates of Compliance that show the project has been built to meet the goals of the WHURP and expectations of community engagement throughout the process.

C. Stone noted some edits for the document:

- The identity of the developer entities should be made clearer. Staff noted that they will have this language clarified in either the Background section or the section that notes a requirement for the developers to inform the SRA if the identities of the developers changes.
- The time period to produce an estoppel is currently listed at only twenty days, and should be a longer period of time. Staff noted that they will suggest changing this to forty-five days.
- The mechanism to ensure that the civic space development is completed should be stronger. Staff noted that requiring the development team to post a performance bond for the remainder of the work if not completed by May 2027 is intended to address this concern. Staff will discuss options with the development team to further encourage the work being completed by this date, including attaching the Certificate of Compliance process for the buildings to completion of the civic space.

Councilor Clingan noted that this project team is very invested in the project and has already bought the land, so there is a high level of trust in the project team. They helped the City and SRA avoid needing to do an urban renewal taking of this lot by paying for it upfront.

C. Brunson moved the following:

To authorize staff to send a transmittal letter to the Commonwealth's Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities with the following requests:

- 1) Approval to acquire a portion of a parcel of land currently known as Somerville Assessor's parcel 70-D-5, at the 299 Broadway development consisting of 7,936 s.f. as shown on the design for the future Sewall Pocket Park lot, and,**
- 2) A waiver from Regulation 760 CMR 12.04(1) to allow the SRA to pay 490,375 dollars more than the higher of two appraised values for the lots as permitted by 760 CMR 12.07 paragraph (3).**



SOMERVILLE REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

MEETING MINUTES

Seconded by C. Stone. Approved 5-0-0 (yes-no-abstain) by roll call vote.

4. 90 Washington Street Demonstration Project Plan—Status update.

Staff updated SRA Board Members that the City's on-call real estate consultant, HR&A Advisors, is currently working on a highest-and-best-use analysis of 90 Washington Street. This will conclude with a final report that will be shared with SRA members.

HR&A has also provided a draft timeline for the full scope of work, including this market analysis along with the development of the disposition instrument and the actual disposition of the land. Staff will now plug in a few internal steps including a zoning update, an amendment to the 90 Washington Demonstration Project Plan, and any additional environmental review that will give certainty to future buyers.

Staff will also meet with Corcoran Jennison next week regarding the draft license agreement to use portions of 90 Washington Street.

5. Union Square Revitalization Plan—Request for a vote to approve an Activity and Use Limitation (AUL) for Lot 5 of the D2 parcel.

Staff explained that Union Square Station Associates ("US2"), the master developer for the Union Square Revitalization Plan ("USRP") area, had requested that the SRA approve language of an Activity and Use Limitation ("AUL") for Lot 5 of the Disposition 2 ("D2") parcel within the USRP. This AUL outlines limits on future uses of the parcel, and is a standard step when developing previously contaminated urban lots. Staff reviewed language of the AUL and specific restrictions it places on this site. Staff asked that the SRA vote to approve the language, after which US2 would start a 30-day notice period to record interest holders and then execute the document.

C. Stone asked why the AUL needs to be executed at this time. Staff's understanding is that the goal is to have US2 complete this step rather than having the SRA need to do so in the future when they are ready to redevelop the site. Staff will request that US2 provide a more comprehensive response to this question for the next SRA meeting. Staff will also review if there is any relevant language within development agreements between the SRA and US2.

6. Items not reasonably anticipated by the Chair.

No items were brought forward.

7. Meeting adjournment:

C. Brunson moved to adjourn at 6:59pm. Seconded by P. McCormick. Approved 5-0-0 by roll call vote.