



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS  
SOMERVILLE REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

JOSEPH A. CURTATONE  
MAYOR

NANCY A. BUSNACH  
CHAIR

MINUTES

Thursday, February 23, 2017  
Library, Somerville High School  
81 Highland Avenue, Somerville, MA

Present from the Somerville Redevelopment Authority (SRA): Nancy Busnach (Chair), Iwona Bonney (Secretary), William Gage, and Phil Ercolini. Also present were Michael Glavin as Director of OSPCD, Eileen McGettigan as Special Counsel, and Emily Hedeman as Economic Development Assistant.

The special meeting was called to order at 5:30PM by Nancy Busnach, Chair. Open session commenced. A quorum was present.

**1. Master Land Disposition Agreement - Discussion:**

- Eileen McGettigan reviewed previously submitted comments on the MLDA.
- René Mardones, a member of Union United, inquired as to the reason behind the legal recommendation behind not including language regarding the Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) in the MLDA.
- William Gage requested that Mr. Mardones, who expressed experience with past CBAs, to send specific CBA comments to Emily Hedeman.
- Jefferson Scott, a resident of Washington Street, inquired regarding the specific phasing of the project and whether there was a guarantee of the desired phasing of the project and clarification over the 711,000 SF figure within the MLDA.
- Ms. McGettigan responded that the 711,000 SF figure was based on current zoning.
- Michael Glavin stated that within the D2 parcel, commercial is 150,000 SF and housing numbers are based on current approved zoning. The final square footage will change based on forthcoming zoning reviews. The 60/40-commercial/residential split is in regards to the totality of the parcels.
- Mr. Scott inquired what the total square footage is for all of the parcels.
- Mr. Glavin responded that the total square footage is 2.3 million square feet.
- Mr. Scott expressed concern that US2 would build residential development and leave.
- Ms. McGettigan addressed the concern that US2 will build residential and leave by pointing out a clause within the MLDA that requires US2 to build some residential, but then can do no more residential until the commercial component has been completed for job creating activity.



- Mr. Scott expressed concern that D2 and D7 residential construction would fulfill the majority of the residential requirement and leave commercial requirement for last.
- Mr. Glavin stated that the residential addresses the need for family housing.
- Mr. Scott inquired about the plans for the Union Square Post Office Site.
- Mr. Glavin stated that the plan allows for the SRA to take action on this site. Don Law purchased the site and made public plans for the use of the site. Mr. Law engaged with US2 and the plan for the Post Office site was deemed acceptable within the Urban Revitalization Plan. Mr. Glavin stated that if the plan does not proceed or if an adverse use was proposed, the SRA does have the authority to claim the site.
- Mr. Scott expressed concern that sites that are acquired might not be developed in a timely manner. Mr. Scott inquired if there is a requirement for plans prior to acquisition.
- Ms. McGettigan stated that the agreement does not extend authority beyond the seven D-parcels, and that there is a requirement to present a development plan and a timeline.
- Mr. Scott inquired whether the SRA is able to determine the reasonableness of the timeline.
- Ms. McGettigan responded in the affirmative.
- Phil Ercolini inquired whether the proposed zoning would provide a clearer picture of what is allowed and planned for each block.
- Mr. Glavin responded in the affirmative.
- Alderman Maryann Heuston inquired in regards to the relationship between zoning and the MLDA. Ms. Heuston stated that the zoning is not final and the Board of Aldermen is still committed to reviewing the zoning. Ms. Heuston stated that the BOA is looking to build specific items into zoning, including open space.
- Mr. Ercolini stated that there is significant concern regarding zoning not passing and that there are implications on the image that we are presenting to the MBTA.
- Ms. McGettigan reviewed the previous steps within the Union Square process. There was the creation of an urban renewal plan, which was reviewed and approved by the BOA and DHCD. Ms. McGettigan stated upon approval of the MLDA, the plan still requires additional review by DHCD.
- Bill Shelton, a resident of Boston Street, expressed concern in regards to the level of risk that the City is exposed to with the GLX and infrastructure expenses. Mr. Shelton expressed concern that the developer is not obligated to begin construction until years after a series of events, including entitlements. Mr. Shelton expressed concern that any suit could challenge the entitlement; meanwhile, the City is servicing the debt. Mr. Shelton expressed concern over the force majeure clause, specifically that if US2 is unable to perform, there are no benchmarks besides US2 having ten years to complete.
- Nancy Busnach stated that this is not the first LDA that the SRA has reviewed and that there was one for Assembly Square. Ms. Busnach noted that the MLDA is the beginning of the process and nothing begins before it is signed. Ms. Busnach commented that eminent domain did not cost the City any additional money, as the developer was able to negotiate privately.
- Ms. McGettigan stated that the reverter clause within the MLDA is a strong protection.
- Wig Zamore, a resident of Highland Avenue, stated that he has reviewed the zoning, but not the MLDA as thoroughly. Mr. Zamore provided some background on Somerville's manufacturing history and the eventual loss of jobs as manufacturing moved elsewhere. Mr. Zamore stated that the agreements between the Mystic Valley Task Force and the developer were done ten years ago. Mr. Zamore stated that there

were no major disputes or timing obligations and that the commercial is still on track. Mr. Zamore stated that residential first was a concern for him. Mr. Zamore recognized that Somerville is a diverse community and that he is concerned that the quality of life of median income people in median income housing would be challenged. Mr. Zamore recalled the robust process to select the developer.

- Steve Mackey, a resident of Somerville and President of the Somerville Chamber of Commerce, provided historical context of Somerville's development, highlighting population density, and historical transit options. Mr. Mackey stated that Boston and Cambridge have a larger job economy because of their transit options. Mr. Mackey stated that Somerville needs to get transit to get jobs back. Mr. Mackey stated that Boynton Yards, Brickbottom, and Union Square present opportunity for both residential and commercial development. Mr. Mackey stated that residential building will attract commercial tenants.
- Alderman Mark Niedergang expressed his appreciation for the ability to have an open discussion. Mr. Niedergang expressed that he was most concerned that the MLDA balances what the City gets and with the developer gets. Mr. Niedergang expressed concern over the price of the D2 block, the phasing, the share of residential for D2. Mr. Niedergang stated that he would like to review pricing for D2 block. Mr. Niedergang stated that US2 has the title of Master Developer and that the City should be able to ask for a lot. Mr. Niedergang expressed concern that the developer is directing the agreement. Mr. Niedergang expressed concern in regards to the total risk. Mr. Niedergang stated that the timing of zoning approval is unclear. Mr. Niedergang also expressed concern over the infrastructure spending, including the high school project. Mr. Niedergang expressed that he is not satisfied with the deal and that we need to go back for greater benefits for the City.
- Mr. Scott requested clarity whether a development plan is required and when a plan is required.
- Ms. McGettigan responded that for a taking by eminent domain, the SRA would need to see a development plan.
- Ms. McGettigan stated that all comments should be emailed to the SRA liaison, Emily Hedeman, [ehedeman@somervillema.gov](mailto:ehedeman@somervillema.gov).

## **2. Other Business Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair**

- No other business

## **3. Selection of Date for Next Meeting:**

- Special meeting for MLDA discussion and public hearing tentatively March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2017 at 5:30PM
- Next regular meetings will be March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2017, April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2017, and May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

## **4. Adjournment**

**Vote:** Adjourn the February 23<sup>rd</sup> special meeting.

- Motion to Adjourn made by Phil Ercolini. William Gage seconded the motion. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 6:59PM.