



Somerville Redevelopment Authority

Philip Ercolini, Chair
Iwona Bonney, Secretary
Ben Ewen-Campen
William Gage
Patrick McCormick
Christine Stone

Meeting Minutes

Location: Virtual meeting via GoToWebinar

Date: September 15, 2021

Time: The meeting started at 5:31 pm.

Attendance

SRA Members Present: Iwona Bonney, Ben Ewen-Campen, William Gage, Patrick McCormack, Phil Ercolini (Chair)

SRA Members Absent: Christine Stone

Staff Present: Eileen McGettigan (Special Counsel), Rachel Nadkarni (Urban Revitalization Specialist)

The Chair announced that Emily Hedeman had moved out of the City and so had resigned from the Board.

Agenda Items

1. Approval of the July 21, 2021 meeting minutes

- Mr. Gage mentioned that on page 2, Item 4, the sentence "However there are still a lot of unknowns about the project" is missing a period.

Motion to approve the minutes of the July 21, 2021 meeting, as amended, by Ms. Bonney. Seconded by Mr. Gage. The motion was approved by a roll call vote, unanimously, by all present members.

2. Public Comments

- Tori Antonino mentioned that she has been working with the prospective developer that is proposing the redesign of the Winter Hill site.
- Ms. Antonino expressed that she would like to see green roofs in the project, as pictured in the renderings shown by the developer. Ms. Antonino is concerned that the developers are not being clear whether the green roofs will really be part of the final design.
- Ms. Antonino also wanted to get an update on Assembly Square.

3. Groundwork Somerville South Street Presentation

- Ms. McGettigan reminded the SRA they own the land underneath the South Street farm. Groundwork Somerville has a license agreement with the SRA which allows Groundwork to undertake farm operations and things related to their general business purpose on the site.
- Ms. McGettigan also mentioned that once a year they have an event for which they need to apply for an alcohol license. She explained that this year Groundwork applied for an Alcohol License from the Licensing Commission without receiving prior approval from the SRA. The Licensing Commission conditionally approved the alcohol permit for their event, subject to SRA approval.
- Ms. McGettigan explained that Ms. Lennon-Simon, Groundwork Somerville Executive Director would be providing a presentation to the board. After her presentation, there will be two votes. One vote will be to ratify Groundwork's alcohol permit, and the second vote is to approve the use of SRA property for the event, conditioned upon the SRA being named as an additional insured.
- Ms. Lennon-Simon explained that she is the new Executive Director of Groundwork, and she apologized for not having obtained the necessary prior permission from the SRA for the event. She stated that this event is Groundwork's annual fund raiser. Right now there are 50 people attending the event, and there will be food and drinks. This is an event to celebrate the work that Groundwork Somerville has done this season.
- Ms. Lennon-Simon also mentioned that they will be serving food from Dave's Fresh Pasta and they have a catering license all set.
- Ms. Bonney asked about noise control and clean up. Ms. Lennon-Simon explained that Groundwork's staff and board members will be in charge of the clean up at the event, and the event will be from 6pm to 9pm. There will be no music at the event; it is just a gathering.

Motion to approve or ratify the Groundwork Somerville Licensing Commission special event alcohol license by Mr. Ewen-Campen. Seconded by Ms. Bonney. The motion was approved by a roll call vote, unanimously, by all present members.

Motion to approve Groundwork Somerville's use of the South Street land for a one day special event with the condition that they name SRA as an additional insured on their insurance policy by Mr. Ewen-Campen. Seconded by Ms. Bonney. The motion was approved by a roll call vote, unanimously, by all present members.

4. Union Square Update

- Ms. Nadkarni read a written update provided by Master Developer US2, while also sharing the document on her screen. The GLX project is estimated to be completed in December 2021. US2 is

coordinating with the MBTA/GLX contractor team on the delivery of the interim improvements, including the elevator.

- Ms. Nadkarni mentioned the Somerville Avenue streetscape and Utilities improvements are being completed at East Somerville Avenue and substantial completion is expected in the next 30 days.
- US2 is coordinating with the City related to the interface between 10 Prospect Street and new Somerville Avenue.
- The next update Ms. Nadkarni provided from US2 was about the marketing center created at 31 Union Square. This marketing campaign is to showcase the project to the neighborhood and potential commercial tenants.
- Mr. Ercolini asked if this space is open for the public to visit on a daily basis or if it is required to make an appointment to visit. Ms. Nadkarni responded that it is open to the public to go in and take a look.
- Ms. Nadkarni provided additional updates related to the D2 site, and stated that construction is underway on both the life sciences project at 10 Prospect Street and the residential project at 20-50 Prospect Street. Recent activities have been focused on foundations, site utilities, MBTA elevator, the MBTA interim improvements as well as the residential tower core.
- US2 created a website in order to keep business owners and residents apprised of the progress on the Union Square revitalization. The website is updated on a weekly basis.
- The design review process has started for 50 Webster Avenue (D3.1 parcel) and the first neighborhood meeting was held on August 25. On August 28, US2 also hosted a neighborhood meeting-Open House at the Union Square Farmers Market in order to receive feedback from local residents.
- US2 provided an update on property acquisition as required by the MLDA. US2 has initiated discussions with the following "D Block" property owners in an effort to privately acquire the respective fee interests of the D4.1 Parcel at 35 Prospect Street, D3.2-D3.3 at 56 Webster Street and 520 Windsor Street, D6 at 2-9 Union Square and 286-298 Somerville Avenue, and D7.1 at 1 Bow Street.
- US2 and the Union Square Neighborhood Council ("USNC") have met quarterly to discuss the implementation of their Community Benefits Agreement ("CBA") since April 2020.
- The CBA includes US2 prefunding some of its required Community Benefit contribution, which supported the hiring of a Union Square Main Streets business liaison and the Somerville Community Corporation's ("SCC") workforce development initiatives.
- US2 has contributed \$467,000 of Community Benefits funds to the City to date. US2, SCC First Source and US2's contractors hosted a Job Fair in April.

- US2 organized three “Learning Lab” sessions with Somerville High School seniors in Somerville High School Careers and Technical Education Program.
- US2 held quarterly meetings with the Small Business Construction Task Force with Union Square small businesses. US2 also supported local initiatives including COVID response in partnership with Union Square small businesses.
- Mr. Ewen-Campen asked if the presented document was sent to the SRA members before the meeting. Ms. McGettigan replied that it was not since the document was received not long before the meeting started. She stated that the document will be available on the City’s website.
- Mr. Ewen-Campen expressed concerns about the implementation of one of the agreements in the CBA that USNC and US2 were going to seek to advance a 100% affordable housing project on parcel D4.3. He mentioned that both of those parties are moving forward with the project, however, there have been some technical and legal issues with the zoning.
- Mr. Ewen-Campen asked the staff to express his concerns to the City, and to give priority to solving the zoning issue so that the 100% affordable housing building could be built.
- Ms. McGettigan mentioned that solving this zoning issue is being prioritized, and that there have been meetings to discuss the project. However, it is a zoning conundrum. Ms. McGettigan could not give more details since she is not a zoning attorney. She expressed that the group is trying to find a way to implement the project, but it is very complicated.
- Mr. McCormack asked if they could have someone come to the next meeting who can explain the zoning conundrum.
- Mr. Ewen-Campen then explained the zoning conundrum on D4.3. He stated that under the current zoning that controls the Union Square project, the previous City Council put in a requirement that no individual affordable housing project can have more than 50% affordable units. Mr. Ewen-Campen stated that this was to safeguard against a developer offshoring all of their required inclusionary units to an offsite property. This particular project, which is envisioning 60% affordable and 40% workforce housing, is technically not allowed.
- Mr. Ewen-Campen stated that the issue is that since that zoning was passed, the City Council has passed a zoning overhaul which changes the underlying zoning law. Therefore the current City Council cannot amend this requirement under a zoning ordinance that no longer exists. In order to make that change, US2 would have to reopen their existing coordinated development special permit under the new zoning.
- Mr. McCormack also asked if the board could get an update at the next meeting on the timing of the elevator for the station, since this is another conundrum in terms of timing.
- Mr. Gage asked if the parcels that US2 is looking to purchase could be shown on a map.

- Ms. Nadkarni presented a map to identify the parcels that US2 is looking to purchase.
- Mr. Ewen-Campen asked for an update about Royal Hospitality and their workers.
- Ms. Nadkarni explained that the Economic Development office has been meeting with Royal Hospitality around this issue, and an update will be provided at the next meeting.

5. Winter Hill Urban Renewal Plan Update

- Ms. Nadkarni mentioned that since the state Department of Housing and Community Development (“DHCD”) has approved the Winter Hill Urban Renewal Plan (“WHURP”), the next step is to set up the Civic Advisory Committee. The City is in the process to start recruiting members. The group would be a 12 member group and would include residents, business representatives, and two City Councilors, one of which will be the ward councilor and another who will be determined by the Council President.
- Mr. Ewen-Campen expressed that the City Council received an email about a court decision that involves 299 Broadway which is part of the WHURP.
- Ms. McGettigan said that this decision was part of the very long litigation between the City and the owner of the former Star Market site, and what the court determined is that the owner of the parcel has the ability to put a supermarket on the property.
- Ms. Nadkarni mentioned that there is a private entity that is looking at the site and trying to figure out a private sale with the owners of the Star Market and the Walgreens parcel. If the parties reach agreement on the sale terms, the developers will be coming to the SRA since the site is a significant part of the WHURP.
- Ms. Nadkarni stated that the developers have had two neighborhood meetings. Both have been very successful. She mentioned that there were 80 attendees at the first meeting, and 60 attendees at the second. Overall, the feedback was generally very positive and very in-depth.
- Mr. Ercolini asked what the potential project could be.
- Ms. Nadkarni showed the board the developer’s presentation. She showed the details of the layout of the portion that they are looking to acquire privately. They are not looking to acquire the corner right now which includes The Brazilian Times and the liquor store.
- Ms. Nadkarni stated that the developer’s plan looks similar to that envisioned in the WHURP. The developers are Principle Group, Utile, and Speck & Associates.
- Mr. Ercolini asked Ms. Nadkarni how many housing units are in the mix that they are considering. Ms. Nadkarni mentioned that at the second meeting they were looking at 190 units, with 14,000 SF of retail, and a 3,000 SF community center.

- Mr. Ercolini asked if there were more details addressing Ms. Antonino’s earlier comments. Ms. Nadkarni explained that at the moment there are none, but assuming that everything moves forward there will be a deeper conversation about the design details. Ms. Nadkarni mentioned that at this point the proposed project has gone through a community process but those meetings actually do not count towards the community meetings required by zoning.

6. 90 Washington Street Demonstration Plan Update

- Ms. Nadkarni explained that the Public Safety Building Committee and the City’s Infrastructure and Asset Management (“IAM”) Department are continuing to develop a plan for the new public safety facility. As far as the private development parcels that are part of that site, the Economic Development Department is leading that process and right now they are finalizing the schedule for public meetings and community engagement.
- Ms. Nadkarni mentioned that there will be more details about this project at the next meeting when Mr. Galligani is back.

7. Assembly Square Update

- Ms. Nadkarni stated that there are some new businesses that have opened. There are also some openings anticipated this Fall such as Parla, Le Macaron, Totto Yakitori, Union Square Donuts, Sav-Mor Liquors, Vineyard Vines, and Lululemon.
- Ms. Nadkarni mentioned that Puma has relocated their headquarters to Assembly Square, and they have 450 employees.
- Ms. Nadkarni mentioned that the residential building on Block 8 is now named Miscela. They launched a grand opening this summer, and there are 180 units occupied.
- Mr. Ercolini asked how many units and how many residents are there now in the Assembly Square neighborhood. He would like someone to address this at the next meeting.
- Ms. Nadkarni mentioned the temporary activation site at Block 9 opened by Night Shift Brewing in the summer has been very successful. There is also a new 20,000 SF green space for people to enjoy.
- Ms. Nadkarni provided a brief update on the Kmart site. She mentioned that the space is being built out for three different tenants, all of which will open this fall. First is Tulip, a software company. They are moving from Boynton Yards and will be taking 30,000 SF. Second is DMG Mori, a manufacturing company. Lastly is Ashley Furniture with an additional 20,000 SF.
- Ms. Nadkarni expressed that Federal Realty will be reactivating this site in the next five to seven years.

- Mr. McCormack thanked Ms. Nadkarni for all of the presentations.
- Ms. McGettigan mentioned that the building on 5 Middlesex is being constructed. They are trying to lease the City space for a branch fire station in the garage on the first level. That long term lease would be for 30 years and requires City Council approval and is scheduled to be discussed at the next Finance Committee meeting on September 21.

8. Next Meeting: October 20, 2021 at 5:30 pm. Location: Virtual Meeting- Software GotoWebinar

9. Meeting Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 6:33 pm by Mr. McCormack. Seconded by Mr. Gage. The motion was approved by a roll call vote, unanimously, by all present members

Meeting Documents

- [US2 Status of Union Square Revitalization Project](#)
- <https://discoverusq.com/>
- [Winter Hill Renewal Plan Website](#)