

**Union Square Neighborhood Council  
Built Environment Committee Meeting  
February 4, 2018, 1-3 pm**

**Attendees:**

Tori Antonino  
Michèle Hansen  
Ann Camara  
Joanne Berry  
Andy Greenspon  
Philip Parsons  
Simon Hill  
Gary Trujillo  
Tim Talun  
Mike McNeley  
Ali Ringenburg  
Wig Zamore  
Father Richard Curran  
Lhadon Tethong

**Meeting Minutes:**

*Approve minutes from meeting of January 28, 2018.*

Philip: Express urgency of getting engaged in development that is coming now, less focus on process.

Simon: USNC has Paul's letter about engaging with USNC. Need to figure out what we want to talk about.

Joanne: BoA moved forward on USNC recognition process. Now we can re-approach moving forward with City Staff and US2 and achieve goals we are setting in this committee. Hope to get approval from the Board in the next meeting to communicate with City Staff and US2 and work with them on design plans.

Tim: Can this Committee do anything on its own.

Andy: Needs approval by Board to engage.

Simon: Get Paul involved, talk to him, figure out parameters and what can be up for discussion, get the process going. For example, meet with him every 2 weeks. Thinks BoA said they won't recognize the Board, so this independent group can do what it wants to reach out to US2 and figure out what possibilities are available and to dialogue.

Michele: What would we be negotiating with US2? I think we can get approved to get a dialogue with the City Staff (George Proakis), but not necessarily with US2 as it conflicts with CBA process. Need to wait for CBA negotiating team, which can be more people beyond the Board. Difference between talking with City and US2. We need to build trust in the USNC Board first.

Joanne: We also have the CBA summits coming up. Reviewing CDSP suggestions and requests, LOCUS documents, CBA requests from the community. We should consolidate all of these to figure out what we want to start talking to with US2. Summit will occur and then next USNC meeting a week later, to develop a plan for how to approach a meeting with US2, figure out how we want to be involved with the designs of the buildings. We should be prepared for any meeting with US2.

*Wig Zamore arrives.*

Philip: Two separate things. Issues that relate to negotiating CBA with US2. Other issues in district that are more immediate such as design of the Prospect Hill Park. These issues need response. It will be cumbersome to get 50 member approval for such things. Other organizations in City may be more effective at negotiating such things and many of us are involved in other community groups as well. To be effective in negotiating CBA, more effective to be unified rather than negotiating independently. Given the BoA decision, no legitimacy conferred on this organization compared to others in the City. Being unified thus becomes incredibly important.

Michele: Agree CBA is a separate issue that will go before BoA and that process, and other things Philip mentioned can be handled by this committee, and we should separate those things. But it's not as cut and dry what the BoA decided on at Thursday's Legislative Matters meeting. But still, both things can be done at the same time.

Simon: Summer St. going around Stone Ave, was that planned to be a project that no longer exists.

Philip: More specific discussion not right now, but definitely an example of a concern to deal with.

Tim: Is this the committee that should be weighing in more broadly on these issues, to act on behalf of the community, or just focused on built environment issues with regard to the CBA?

Michele: There is a BEC and CBA committee, so they are separate. So if we want to be a strong force for the community, we need to be united. Otherwise divide and conquer. People who disagree can come together on issues like the BE in Union Square.

Ali: What committee other than this or USNC overall will be negotiating CBA with US2? Is US2 planning to agree to negotiate CBA?

Philip: City and US2 signed Covenant last year where US2 will negotiate CBA with a neighborhood council. Discussion of Labor and Union Workforce City cannot get involved in, so has to be private.

Joanne: CBA separate committee. BEC to maintain integrity of the buildings and the space. Affiliated with CBA but that is separate issue involved in CBA committee and a full CBA agreement.

*Father Richard arrives.*

Philip: BEC involved in what gets build, CBA involved in the conditions under which things get built. Development is long term thing about how things are built block by block. CBA is short term thing to be negotiated for immediate benefits. Things are also evolving all the time as this is a new group.

*Tori recites section of Covenant involving Neighborhood Council, CBA, and US2.*

Tori: Covenant assumed a community benefits ordinance and community benefits committee. Assumed CBA would be negotiated in this context, but no ordinance has been passed. They will have to negotiate rewriting of Covenant.

Wig: Covenant is actually between Somerville Redevelopment Authority and US2.

Tim: Come back to whether this committee is right to act on built environment issues in Union Square. Enormous amount of work already done with 100s of residents and thousands of pages of documents on built environment. Feels like we are starting from scratch here. Thinking back to CAC, bringing together people with various expertise including design, planning, construction, transportation planning, etc. with different stakeholders from Union Square, with the goal of acting in a similar function. Would a broader committee like that be more suitable for this role?

Tori: What are you suggesting should be done? Bring more people into this committee or another committee be formed?

Tim: CAC has been formed but is defunct. City-appointed committee.

*Lhadon arrives.*

Wig: Break stages into 3: CAC process - covers broad array of issues BEC would cover. LOCUS process - attempted to broaden the equity representation and covered same broad array of issues, which pre-formed slant from Smart-Growth America, which didn't have breadth of CAC focus. Focused on walkable communities, not balance of land uses, etc. USNC third phase - prestart didn't have that many people involved, was not very efficient. Working Group was well facilitated with broad participation. Most recent phase of USNC is the post-election and is most narrow group working on this so far. How do you cover the important territory, development and fiscal impacts. Not the perception of the USNC. If USNC will show leadership in BEC, need to get involved very quickly. Need to bring in much broader array of community. Cannot physically cover all the issues and be representative as they are perceived in the community.

Tori: So next push should be to get more people involved?

Joanne: Make a separate Working Group to focus on broader things beyond this development?

Wig: The CBA is small compared to the broader issues at work in Union Square.

Andy: Agree focus of BE must be broader.

Michele: USNC and USNC Board was not only created to work on CBA. Not what I ran for. Do people think the Board is focused only on the CBA? I think this BEC is working to go way beyond that, which is why I am on this committee. I see the importance of a CBA, but that it will still be a small part of what happens in Union Square. Other people can be involved in whatever they want, but we as a membership and board should be involved in all of this and invite others to join and help.

Simon: This is the only group this afternoon meeting to discuss the future of Union Square, so we have legitimacy in that sense because we are an organized group in this room talking about this now. I still want to talk about these two parks and a community center, for example.

Ann: We didn't ask for this Board to be formed - it was asked to be formed. I went to all the CAC meetings, and we talked about outreach. I don't understand why we cannot all come together now. It's not about power - it's about all of us getting together and using our expertise.

Tim: For a lot of people who have busy lives and have a lot to contribute but limited time, they want to make sure the time they put in will be effectively used and those who have attended USNC meetings so far, (specifically the Working Group more), it's been mired in process and lack of discussion about anything specific related to the development. We just went through CDSP process - there should have been real consideration of built environment, and there wasn't.

If this working group is subject to review by the Board, then that will dissuade people from working with this group. Slate said issues related to BEC were less important than other issues, so people who want that impact on BEC why participate in a committee of a group that said that is not that important.

Andy: Working Group still had to get USNC up and running to be a legitimate group while CDSP process was happening. Now USNC is established.

Gary: Hear from Tim to clarify on the issue of

Tim: Focus on how do we best accomplish goals of BEC, whether in this group or other ways. One issue is what kind of expertise do we need to weigh in on these issues. For example, Wig and Philip have many years of experience on this, would want them involved on all these issues.

Joanne: That's why we had the discussion last time about who we need to reach out to and when, and when to get involved with City Staff and US2 on designs. Several opportunities for reach out to those people, the CAC, etc, and make it completely in an effective manner. For example, Summer St and Prospect Hill Parks. If it's possible to forward any data that has been collected at this point for us to assess. We also have a Committee dedicated to community outreach to help bring attention to these issues and make sure they are followed in an adequate manner. Not starting from scratch but jump in and see where the community is at and see how we can help.

*Andy motions to discuss the BEC slides for the CBA summit to get that finished first and then return to these issues. Motion agreed to.*

*Tori explains parameters of the CBA summit.* Quick presentations from USNC followed by more breakout sessions for the community to brainstorm. BEC will get ~10 minutes to present on description of built environment and its importance. For example, what the indoor and outdoor civic space will look like, what the feel of the space is, transportation issues, etc. Explain the importance of these issues and that we need expertise and people to get involved and educated on these issues, as they will affect us for the next 50+ years.

Gary: What is the overlap between the BEC and CBA committees? Aren't many of these things involved in the intersection of the two such as parks. Identify the things that are common.

Philip: Agreed, let's list them.

Wig: Don't want to miss big categories, so hard to focus on single line details first. SomerVision has the broad list of categories, CAC covered broad list of categories. LOCUS covered a similar list of categories broadly important. CBA is often talked about as what can be extracted from

developer on their excess profits instead of focus on broad BEC and how valuable various land uses are for the next 50 years for the community, whether park space, civic space, etc. Does the broader land uses combined give a deficit or a surplus for the City's treasury that can be used to address equity issues. Somerville currently doesn't do that.

Michele: I don't think this is that hard to understand if we just explain it. More commercial tax base is more money for the City in the simplest terms.

Wig: Yes, so stick to the broad categories. Example - mixed use housing fits in with cities diversity of income, education. A lot of people don't come with a breadth of knowledge of land uses and what not, so are drawn to extraction discussion - how much affordable housing can we get out of the developer vs. how commercial tax base can fund more affordable housing in the long term.

**Tim: How do we not just extract community benefits but make sure the development itself is beneficial?**

Tori: we want to get people excited about this.

Joanne: Let Tori give her presentation and then give constructive criticism and fine tune it.

Philip: What I've seen so far regarding CBA Summits is list from Union United - a lot of that has already been settled in the Covenant.

What needs action fairly short term is acting on the CDSP notes from the City on the need for a professionally run workshop to resolve the parks issue. Huge issue for the community that needs to be moved forward. City and US2 are not in any hurry to resolve it, but we need to push for it. The other issue people care most about that are unresolved in agreement with the developer are open space and a community center of some kind. Both are concrete things that all people without expertise can understand and advocate for. Park workshop required in CDSP conditions.

Are there other concrete things to work on? We need to work fast.

Simon: Looking at diagram of development from parks meeting, we are short two pieces of land for park and community center, and it needs to be resolved.

Joanne: This need suggests the USNC should go forward and meet with City and US2 to address these issues immediately.

Ali: Can a few key members of this committee meet with other neighborhood groups to unite around these issues? When working with City or a developer, we need everyone from the community to agree on key issues to push forward on the key issues.

Wig: People need to check on the consistency of the local discussions about CBA and the comprehensive plan. To start from the discussions at the USNC and Working Group level without comparing to the SomerVision plan would not be the best approach. The last time the City did the financial accounting to BoA on SomerVision, were on track with housing, completely behind on open space and halfway there on commercial buildings. Need to do homework on these issues before going forward. The last USNC meeting happened during one of the most important zoning meetings in 20 years was discussed. People need to be at the zoning meetings from last week's and Feb 13, and March 13. That is the best interface with the BoA as it was last year regarding Union Square Zoning Overhaul - we got ~50% of what we want in my opinion. Current Zoning Overhaul is 600+ page ordinance that has not been done in MA before. Document that will dictate what can be built in the city for next 30+ years.

The likelihood of any developer completing their document

Fan pier - 6 developers before shovels in the ground as an example with vastly different plans.

Tori: Propose at next meeting that we form a Zoning Working Group and a Working Group to focus directly on Parks and Community Center.

Wig and Tim: need to also deal with broad categories first before narrowing down.

Tori: there are other broad things but we need to focus on a few things that are in CDSP conditions now

Ann: Are there any other lists besides Union United's?

Joanne: Does LOCUS count as a list?

Philip: Yes, LOCUS has many of these things to address.

Gary: Two questions - 1) Make a sub-committee to specifically focus on community center? *(Tori suggested this above.) [Tori suggested combining the two - Gary suggests two separate sub-committees, which have good communications (and perhaps overlap in membership) with one another; the community center ("indoor civic space") is an important enough area of concern in itself that it deserves consideration in its own right]*

2) Clarification from Wig: Where is the City in its SomerVision plans? *(Housing on track, open space way behind, commercial halfway.)*

Ann: This might satisfy what Tim was saying to have people with specific expertise to work on specific areas?

Simon: Precedent for two parks and community center from work by the community in general already independent of this group. There are already people who will fight for those areas alone - we should harness that focus. They will make a big impact on the space use in the community.

Michele: Did planning board specifically ask in CDSP contingencies for input from USNC?  
(*Check actual document.*)

Tori: Want feedback on what slides to include. It's only going to be a few slides. Want to see if the goals we set out in SomerVision are being accomplished. For example 125 acres of new open space.

Andy: We have the broad areas from CAC/LOCUS and related years process. Use those broad categories to reach

Wig: Consistency is key - do we know consistency between the broad goals and tactics to be used in the community to achieve those goals. Cannot just cherry pick on recent discussion and not look to see whether the issues are on track, over track, under track with regard to community process that is statutory (SomerVision). Example, what is list of CBA things to put in vs broader issues to address. Community is way behind on knowing these issues before talking to City or US2.

Simon: Can you bring these things on two pieces of paper to see where we are on all this?

Wig: SomerVision is the statutory thing. CAC/LOCUS was broad categories without quantitative discussion. US2 and current framing of Union Square by this group, is it consistent with SomerVision? The numbers in SomerVision are simple to look through.

Tim: Planning has already gone on - we are in execution phase. To evaluate execution, we need to know the basis for that execution. Maybe in reading through all this, everyone make a list of 10 most important priorities, evaluate how they have been implemented or not implemented compared to Union Square Neighborhood Plan and SomerVision.

Wig: SomerVision is tied to transformative developments - we know how many square feet of those are and land-mix uses. Take US2 land use proportions and compare to SomerVision comprehensive goals.

*Michele and Tim and Philip leave.*

Joanne: MEPA update - setting up meeting with Somerville Board of Health and current initiatives in Somerville. So that when US2 sends report to MEPA, can compare those thresholds compared to Board of Health expectations. *Explains MEPA process involving US2.*

US2 may ask for a waiver on MEPA for partial construction. We should not allow this especially if commercial lab space with possible biohazards is built first. We will divide up the MEPA document based on the parcels everyone wants to focus on and do data report and be prepared if we need to fight a US2 waiver and make sure all conditions are met. Also have environmental lawfirm on stand-by to help if needed.

Wig: CAFEH research group has done a lot of this work in Somerville. Many people with doctorates on health and environmental engineering from local universities involved. The City and State agencies are not that aware of the real environmental and health issues. For Somerville, primarily transportation and ultra-fine particles generated by highways and car traffic. Direct tie to health issues and biggest issue to address. If only talking to Somerville Board of Health, won't address this key issue. Board of Health more focused on communicable diseases that have been address. But we need to focus on lifestyle and environmental health issues.

Joanne will invite people to join those working on MEPA when document comes out.

Tori: Next agenda item 3-5 Summer St development for Workforce housing (middle income people). Not part of US2 development but still is a development happening in Union Square.

Simon: Similar to the Biel of making low income and middle income housing.

Wig: Charlie Baker initiative to address medium income housing.

Ann: Beacon St - can we put electrical transmission wires underground?

Wig: Water and Sewer are combined in Somerville. They must now be separated. Arterial road projects are largely Sewer and Water projects, not really Road Projects. Road project could be done much faster if you didn't need to separate Sewer and Water. Electrical underground would cost hundreds of millions. Need an income source.

Ann: Is Beacon St - would this fall under this group?

Joanne: Related to Commercial Development in Union Square - commercial tax base to do these infrastructure improvements.

Mike: Statewide initiatives on energy resiliency - power lines are a weak link in that. In terms of revenue, we can get state funds for some of this. Dept public works already has initiatives with Eversource.

Wig: biggest bond request was \$50 million Somerville has to pay. Northpoint large redevelopment in Cambridge, part in Somerville. Divco West developing rapidly. Miller's River was there and has been buried. MBTA largest destroyer of natural systems there due to railroad

tracks. Legal obligation to fix large sewer and water infrastructure that collects from Somerville and Cambridge and sends to Deer Island. MBTA is finally working on this to allow Northpoint to be finished. MBTA is building oversized big pipes to take storm water overflow and Union Square can use that excess capacity to some extent - MBTA "gave this back to Somerville".

Tori: This is an example of a good BEC project. Can we direct the City to more possible funds for large projects?

Mike: State is encouraging price controlled institutions like Eversource and National Grid developing resiliency issues - smart meters, redundancies in transmission. They will do this but ask for rate-payer increases to compensate. Can we make part of the resiliency plan to bury the wires. Those institutions have an incentive to do this. Where the funds come from is TBD - could be State, rate-payers.

Joanne: Currently it is in US2's interest in placing fiber-optic cables underground - could this be coordinated?

Mike: Martha's Vineyard did this - combined putting fiber-optics underground with electrical wires. Comcast shared work with utility.

Tori: Can you keep track of this on your radar?

Mike: Yes.

Andy: Figure out what we need to do this week and between now and next committee and USNC meeting. Example - next BoA zoning meeting March 13.

Wig: Structure of zoning code will be discussed Feb 13. Giant community input from community on March 13, but already accepting community feedback now online. Follow-up on infrastructure meeting. East Cambridge is angry about dig-up of Gore St to connect to Somerville water and sewer. (Was either Gore St or digging up parts of McGrath.) Follow-up on sustainability. Head of the MA Water Resources Authority is thoughtful, knows what he can and cannot do. Used to run Dept of Revenue. Good person to reach out to regarding issues like Mystic River cleanup. MWRA documents on East Cambridge anger over Gore St dig-up. Found an old document on underground infrastructure of sewer and water for reference. Regional sewer system would be a constant source of heating and cooling if properly utilized.

Tori: Related to Heat smart, cool smart program in Somerville?

Wig: Not sure - this is large wholesale.

Mike: Tori, referring to converting to heat pump systems in houses in Somerville.

Wig: Work together with other communities on issues such as transportation and traffic and sustainable projects.

Tori: CBA Summit Slides. Taking SomerVision and making sure it is kept on as reference as guide for this development to create what was said to be created.

Andy: Tori, make Google Slides for presentation, we can all help.

Tori: Action Items:

- 1) Have some people focus on Zoning issue. Joanne already has report printed out Zoning report from City, reading through it.
- 2) Philip focusing on civic space and open space contingencies in CDSP to push that forward to make sure City and US2 deal with it sooner rather than later.
- 3) If we have to look at one particular document for everyone, everyone should look through SomerVision to understand it - well-designed to be skimmed through. There are appendices with quantitative details for all the SomerVision areas. And if ambitious, look at Union Square Neighborhood Plan.

Gary: Please, everyone, take a look at the demonstration *Joomla!*-based NC web site at <http://usq.webruary.org/> which I am now in the process of developing, in fulfillment of the resolution adopted at our most recent membership meeting regarding an upcoming decision about what web development technology to employ for a new site to replace the current one.