

Union Square Neighborhood Council - Meeting January 31, 2018

Attendance

USNC Voting Members:

Mike Firestone, Bill Cavellini, Ben Bradlow, Rachel Weil, Michele Hansen, Ann Camara, Pennie Taylor, Afruza Akther, Jacob Kramer, Tori Antonino, Ben Baldwin, Ganesh Uprety, Erik Neu, Joanne Berry

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Neighborhood Resident Members: 8

Co-Facilitators: Bill Cavellini and Rachel Weil

Agenda

1. Welcome and introductions
 - Bill welcomed the group and led introductions
2. Approval of minutes of 1/22/18 meeting (5 minutes)
 - Bill suggested an edit to item 2 in which he is quoted “don’t” and “Primary purpose”
 - i. change to “won’t” and “One of the primary purposes”
 - Ben Baldwin proposed to allow board members to edit minutes
 - i. Ben Bradlow disagrees
 - ii. Michele agrees with Ben Bradlow. Future meetings will be videotaped so we can confirm exactly what is said.
 - Bill made a motion to approve the minutes
 - i. Joanne seconds
 - ii. Vote: 11 “ayes” 1 abstention
3. Collection of Potential Conflict of Interest Disclosure forms
 - Not everyone received the form. Rachel Weil will scan and forward to the board.
4. CBA Committee report (35 minutes)
 - Discussion of preparations for CBA Summits – 2/7 and 2/10
 - i. 2 Canvasses on Saturday to spread the word.
 1. This is an attempt to reach people who may have voted or participated but aren’t linked in with email, TinyLetter, etc.
 - ii. There will be another canvass this Saturday.
 - iii. Membership sign up form is in use. So far over 60 residents have signed up.
 - Outline of presentation
 - i. Jacob Kramer outlined the structure of the meetings:
 1. Presentation
 - a. Erik Neu-Locus process
 - b. Van Hardy-Union United process
 2. Small group discussion

- a. Michele is coordinating facilitators and note-takers
 - 3. Report back - "dot"ocracy
 - 4. Affinity group discussion (focus on particular interests: ie affordable housing, economic development, public space)
- ii. CBA committee will draft a report with what was generated in the CBA summits and bring back to the board for approval
- Getting the word out – (with Comm. & Outreach Comm.)
 - i. Jacob is passing around a signup sheet for Saturday 2/3 canvassing
- Other
 - i. Erik Neu- What is going to be the outcome of this CBA process and how does it get translated into action.
 - 1. Jacob- This is something we should discuss
 - 2. Joanne- Reviewing the previous reports to determine key issues. Reviewing CDSP conditions - 90 stipulations before moving forward with development. US2 may already be required to do many of the things a CBA process may come up with.
 - 3. Erik Neu- The expectation for the LOCUS process was higher than what we got. We will need dollar estimates for asks- eg a civic center. We will need help prioritizing/determining trade offs all the needs coming from the process.
 - 4. Joanne- One condition of the CDSP is that a civic center can be created and US2 would work with a community representative such as the USNC.
 - ii. Ben Bradlow- In the bylaws, the board selects a negotiator but doesn't discuss how to do so. We should decide sooner rather than later, prior to CBA summits. How do we prioritize?
 - 1. Bill Cavellini- Many previously determined priorities are already in the zoning bylaws. We can at least eliminate these priorities as already in place.
 - iii. Mike Katz- One concern for Union Square Main Streets is that the dot-ocracy process has already been proven to leave out brick and mortar businesses. The need to lower the tax rate by getting more businesses in will be forgotten if people vote for their personal interests.
 - 1. Ben Bradlow- Would it be possible for USMS to make a written submission in addition to participation in summits?
 - 2. Peter Insley- addressing Mike Katz- what would you like to see in a CBA?

- a. A recognition that there is an issue with the way things played out and no carved out area for brick and mortar businesses. A written list of needs for businesses exists in one moment in time and is difficult to negotiate around as things change.
 - b. Revolving loan funds, benevolent landlord tax credits, technical assistance to small businesses, increased daytime traffic, access to parking, improved pedestrian access.
 - iv. Jessica Eschleman- Did any outreach happen for brick and mortar businesses?
 - 1. Joanne- Visiting businesses this week
 - 2. Ganesh- went canvassing around businesses last week. We should do more.
 - 3. USMS is trying to support the process. It's on USMS email blasts and Facebook.
 - 4. Jacob- CBA committee prioritized weekday outreach to businesses
 - v. Ann Camara- Focus of canvassing has been center of Union square- need to get Beacon St, Washington St, etc.
 - 1.
- 5. Communication and Outreach Committee Report - (15 minutes)
 - Method for getting more small business community input before Summits
 - i. Review of possible web site options
 - ii. Brainstorm for building local business buy-in
 - 1. Continuing conversation
 - Peter Levine from Somerville Media Center (SCAT) on one option for coverage
 - i. Two designated board members would create a script of topics covered in meetings and announcing upcoming events. SCATV could produce a biweekly show.
 - 1. Will it be reporting or editorializing?
 - 2. Goal is to keep it objective
 - ii. Jacob- O&C Committee is working on this and can continue generating scripts.
 - iii. Michele- Jessica suggested having longer form tours of the neighborhood, which could be a good way to loop in USMS and local businesses
 - Gary Trujillo- Propose that attempting to vote on a web site alternative at the next meeting is too much. Should form a task unit to make the decision.
 - i. Pennie- Maybe links to the site can be shared so folks have the ability to play with it on their own
 - ii. Erik- Let's write up the requirements of a web site

- iii. Michele- Proposal would be to have this discussion 2 weeks from now since next week will be taken up with CBA Summits.
 - iv. Pennie- Important that our web site be complete before these CBA summits. I move that this process move more quickly.
 - v. Gary- We have a web site that is working - Mike Gintz has been doing a good job.
 - Mike Firestone- Motion that the O&C committee be designated to transition to a new web site as soon as they can reach an appropriate agreement. The board can be notified as soon as a decision is made
 - i. Jacob - Seconded
 - ii. Bill- not sure we can enteratin a second motion
 - Michele- I think this needs to be done within 2 weeks. Can be left to the committee.
 - Vote to put it out to O&C Committee
 - i. 13 “ayes”
 - ii. Gary- wihtout sufficient discussion
6. Discussion and decision on whether to form a Funding/Finance Committee (15 minutes)
- Bill Cavellini- issues of costs for printing, renting space, web site hosting
 - Pennie- Proposes the founding of a finance committee. Steps to do so are pretty clearly laid out in bylaws.
 - i. Mike firestone- Seconded
 - ii. Discussion
 - 1. Mike Firestone- need to have some resources. Allow for small contributions to the USNC at the upcoming CBA summits.
 - 2. Andy Greenspon- will we need a bank account?
 - a. Pennie- Committee would be helpful in figuring this out
 - iii. Vote: unanimous “ayes”
7. Built Environment Committee Report (10 minutes)
- Joanne Berry- Motion to push this down the agenda because Tori is on her way
 - i. Michele seconds
 - ii. Vote: 13 “ayes”
 - Tori Antonino- Meeting Last Sunday at Canopy.
 - i. Seeking 10 minutes in CBA summit to describe the built environment committee
 - ii. Next meeting scheduled for this Sunday at 1pm
 - Joanne- We agreed to merge the MEPA working group with the Built Environment Committee.

- Andy Greenspon- Seeking to interface with US2 early in order to incorporate built environment demands. Seeking approval from board to reach out and meet with the city and developers to establish a positive dialogue.
 - i. Jacob- concerned that the built environment committee could independently meet with the developer.
 - ii. Michele- Ann, Joanne and I have participated in built environment committee. I am all for meeting with the city, but US2 should wait. I agree with Jacob's concern.
 - iii. Tori- I am not trying to undercut the committee. I want a better representative format. I don't think reaching out to businesses is equal to having a vote on the board. I don't anticipate meeting with the city or developers before the proposed membership meeting to address election issues and representation.
- 8. Discussion of BOA resolution about Neighborhood Council recognition (10 minutes)
 - Ben Bradlow- Board of Alderman took up a resolution in part responding to our letter, though it makes no mention of letter. This will be taken up in meeting held tomorrow.
 - Mike Firestone- Alderman Neidergang (chair of legislative committee) called with clarifying questions. Covenant is the only place where this USNC exists formally. Covenant predicted existence of a CBA ordinance by this point. Where does that leave USNC?
 - i. Extent of authority allowable for a neighborhood council without conflicting with the law- so far it looks good with respect to the goals of the council. Legal memo to the BOA relative to neighborhood councils appears consistent with the letter USNC submitted to aldermen.
 - Tori Antonino- Motion to have a discussion on the motion:
 - i. Mike Firestone seconds
 - ii. Vote - 14 "ayes"
 - Andy Greenspon-
 - i. Mike Firestone- there are many established neighborhood groups that have official opportunity to give feedback on development issues.
 - Tori Antonino- Propose a membership meeting for all candidates to discuss issues. Under bylaws, I am collecting signatures for a petition to discuss ___ at next legislative matters committee.
 - i. Mike Firestone- Nobody wants to derail the process of of the USNC getting recognized. If we have this meeting, would you be willing to allow the board of aldermen to take a vote to recognize the USNC tomorrow if we can have the proposed meeting?

- ii. Tori- I want to prevent recognition by the BOA until these issues have been addressed
- iii. Jacob Kramer- We have a position that we wrote, signed, and sent. It seems strange that we try to dictate what they are allowed to vote on. We should hold these meetings but not contravene our position
- iv. Michele- I agree that we should move forward while scheduling a forum to discuss the issues presented.
- v. Gary Trujillo- I agree with spirit of Mike and Jacob, but am persuaded that BOA should have their vote. How will the letter from USMS exec committee be dealt with?
- vi. Andy Greenspon- It is the BOA's right to vote on what they want. Letters from the community have been submitted and alderman will have their discussion with this in mind. Concern is - What is the legal force behind "recognition"
- vii. Pennie- Each member of the board is multifaceted and to imply that there is a group with monolithic interests is upsetting. The concept of "representation" means taking into account ideas that don't necessarily stem from one's own concerns.
- viii. Ben Bradlow- There's no decision before this board. USNC unanimously agreed to seek recognition. It would be impossible to hold this meeting before tomorrow's meeting before the BOA. We should have a meeting to address these issues, but it shouldn't affect aldermen decisions.
- ix. Mike Firestone- I can't agree to your proposal as is. Let's meet halfway: schedule a meeting, recognize that some people wanted to delay the vote, recognize that the board doesn't want to delay the vote but will have the meeting to address concerns. It would be a mistake to miss the momentum currently in the board of aldermen.
- x. Bill Cavellini- Provision in bylaws for some suggested discussion, provision 3.3.7 requires interim board to seek input from membership starting 6 months from day of election and start a process discussing membership. This also applies to the bylaws. The discussion we're having is contained in this provision. This is appropriately discussed in a bylaws committee. If 10 members of the council want to hold a meeting, co-charis must schedule it within 14 days.
- xi. Rachel Weil- We are interim, evolving as we go. To stop the momentum would be detrimental to the concept of the neighborhood council.
- xii. Andy Greenspon- Mike Firestone's compromise is good. Disagree with Bill- interim board has the significant role of negotiating the CBA, whether or not it is interim.

- xiii. Perception of issues with the election will continue to cause a split in the board and prevent proper work.
- xiv. Michele- There is a possibility for several people with diverse backgrounds to be on the negotiating committee. There is nothing preventing local businesses or unelected board candidates.
- xv. Pennie- This process relies on good faith of the developer. The board should be able to act in good faith for the neighborhood.
- xvi. Ben Bradlow- The board has made it clear that there is a commitment to reaching out to folks that don't feel represented. The election occurred according to the rules, nobody denies the legitimacy of the way the election was conducted. We must conduct ourselves as stewards of those who elected us.
- xvii. Erik Neu- The high point of community good faith in the process was the candidate forum. There is some need for catharsis and to regain the level of good faith we saw at the forum.
- xviii. The board could accept the suggestion of Philip's letter that the aldermen recognize the board with the understanding that it fix some issues in the next 6 months.
- xix. Joanne- This is an opportunity to fix errors. Those members of the board who are new to the process are "uncorrupted" by previous processes so can act as liaisons to those who feel left out.
- xx. Peter Insley- I object to the idea that something needs to be made right. The election happened and the board has made efforts to reach out to those who feel left out. If the USNC declines recognition of BOA there is no better representative of the Union Sq community to conduct negotiations with US2.

- Bill- is there a motion to extend the meetings?
 - i. Jacob- this seems to have served as a public comment period. Motion to strike the Public Comment agenda item from the agenda.
 - 1. Ben Baldwin - seconds
 - 2. Vote- unanimous "aye"

9. Date and time of next meeting after CBA Summits (5 minutes)

- Motion to extend the meeting to discuss more than scheduling the next meeting
 - i. Vote- 1 aye, 13 nay
- Rachel Weil- Fossil Free Somerville has Weds meetings. Doodle poll will be sent to membership to determine good days and times to conduct meetings. We have been operating under the meeting times of the working group but there may be a better time.

- i. Send to local business community
 - o Bill Cavellini- The date of the next meeting will be Wednesday
 - i. Many folks can't make it- change date
 - ii. Next meeting Thursday the 15th at 7pm
 - 1. Vote: 13 ayes, 1 nay
 - iii. Location: Jacob can schedule it at Argenziano Cafeteria unless it's not free, in which case it will be at the Public Safety Building.
- 10. Public Comment (25 minutes)
 - o Eliminated from agenda in item 8.