

Union Square Neighborhood Council - Meeting March 6, 2018

Attendance

USNC Voting Members:

Rachel Weil, Jacob Kramer, Pennie Taylor, Michele Hansen, Tori Antonino, Ben Baldwin, Ann Camara, Bill Cavellini, Joanne Berry, Mike Firestone

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Neighborhood Resident Members: Andy Greenspon, Simon, Jessica Eschleman, Gary Trujillo, Peter Insley, Wig Zamore

Co-Facilitators: Rachel Weil, Bill Cavellini

Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions
 - o Bill chaired and started off introductions
 - o Joanne passed out copies of a Boston Globe article about a new development proposed by DLJ Real Estate Capital Partners at Boynton Yards.
2. Approval of minutes from 3/1/18 meeting (5 m)
 - o Mike: motion to approve minutes
 - i. Joanne: second
 - ii. Vote: unanimous "aye" 10
3. Collection of Conflict of Interest Disclosure Forms
 - o 11 forms have been submitted
4. Report back from Thursday Board of Aldermen Legislative Matters Committee meeting (10m)
 - o Mike: Last Thursday, the BOA LM committee discussed proposed language to amend covenant btw city and US2 to allow USNC to negotiate a CBA with US2. We had provided language to the city. City tweaked it a little and presented it to the board. The city's language met in all respects the process that we had proposed so we agreed to it. Mike was asked to voice support for the BOA for their support of the USNC through our formation process. Expect that by this coming Thursday, to have heard back favorably that there is consensus on the language and the amendment can be adopted. Then we can schedule a hearing.
 - i. If it doesn't happen by this Thurs then we should ask that it not be postponed beyond next Thurs.
 - o Jacob- is anything contingent on formal incorporation? How does that timeline fit in
 - i. Mike- we are receiving our designation as a nonprofit organization, so we have a little work to do, which we should commence immediately, to actually incorporate.
 1. Register with Secretary of the Commonwealth Corporations Division

- 2. Apply for 501(c)(3) and get TaxID from federal govt
 - 3. Open bank account
 - ii. Mike-With board's approval I am happy to begin the application process.
 - 1. Bill- I believe orgs seeking a status from the state that has no assets does not have to go through 501(c)(3) and it's a shorter process
 - 2. Pennie- Started a financial report, including donations received. Proposal for incorporation presented at a public meeting.
 - a. Mike- I propose we put this on the agenda for the next meeting- discussion of incorporation. and Between Pennie and I we can produce a proposal to the membership
 - iii. Andy Greenspon- Are we sure we want to be a 501(c)(3) as opposed to other 501(c)s?
 - 1. Bill- Due to our lobbying we may need to be a ©(4). We will have to go through another, more official officer election at an annual meeting.
 - o Mike: Motion to have a public meeting on incorporation at the next meeting
 - i. Pennie - Seconded
 - ii. This, along with CBA report discussion
 - iii. Vote: unanimous "ayes" 10
 - iv. We should send out a notice to membership that these discussions will happen ASAP
5. Plan presentation of US2 site plan and March 17 site visit (10 m)
 - o Tori: Built Envi Committee is planning: Meeting up, quick presentation and review, walk around the parcels.
 - o Tori- 10am to noon
 - o Materials to include: relevant pages from CDSP
 - o Outreach- Sending notice out to USNC public Google Group, listserves, Tynyletter, Facebook
 - i. Mike- Are we asking someone from the city to come?
 - 1. Unlikely that anyone would be able to make a Saturday morning.
 - ii. Jacob- Evite and Facebook event will help us get an attendance estimate
6. Built Environment Committee Report (15 m)
 - o Status of planning for March 17th site visit and possible presentation of US2 site plan
 - o Draft of George Proakis letter
 - i. Tori is drafting the letter to US2 as well as one to the city. Things we might ask:
 - 1. Ask US2 to give an update

- 2. Ask the city to give an update
 - 3. Thoughts on CDSP?
 - ii. We want to make sure we aren't tipping our hand to US2
 - 1. Built Environment will work this out in committee
- Wig passed out a public information release form the city upon their acceptance of Somervision as the comprehensive plan for the city. BOA voted their support for it and planning board adopted it in a formal vote. US neighborhood plan was incorporated into it. For every 100,000sq ft of development requires 1 acre of open space.
 - i. Open space goals are almost nowhere. Percentage provided by US2 is a tiny fraction of requirements. This needs to be resolved in current zoning discussion or it will never happen.
 - ii. Somerville has 1/3 of the open space requirement for health.
 - iii. Letter that was approved at the last meeting needs to be revised and re-voted.
 - 1. Numbers were inaccurate, remove ceding statement, insert a demand that they stick to the original plan.
 - iv. Jacob- Because our purview is Union Square, I want to see contributions for Union Square.
 - v. Mike- The only letter to the city so far was the introductory letter- extensively circulated for feedback. We should note that htis hasnt received the same attention.
 - 1. Andy- This was included in the Tiny Letter and discussed at last week's meeting
- Michele- Motion that we retract the letter and bring it back for another vote after work in committee
 - i. Joanne- Seconded
 - ii. Discussion:
 - iii. Ann- I'm not sure who should be writing this letter or if we should write it.
 - iv. Joanne- We have already started the process of editing the original letter. Wig will have input, people will have oppportunity for further input when it is presented to the board.
 - v. Bill- Is this letter meant to influence the amount of open space US2 is providing in a transformational development area? Or is it meant to influence the zoning overhaul.
 - 1. Both
 - 2. Bill- So timing is critical.
 - vi. Wig- Comprehensive plan process involved 3 years of planning. All goals should be achievable. There should be a strategic committee to determine financial and space strategy to determine how to get open space.
 - vii. Vote: unanimous "aye" 10

- Next BEC meeting is at 9am on Saturday at the Public Safety Building. City may come and answer questions that the committee may have on zoning.
 - Joanne will be sending an email to those interested in the MEPA review. Review is coming up in the near future.
 - i. Wig- The process is nowhere near on track to the available timeline
 - ii. Research/pharmaceutical building needs special certifications so these will be additional considerations through the MEPA process. US2 is requesting a waiver on this which we cannot let happen.
 - iii. The lab development company is one of the largest. They also signed a large contract with the pentagon.
 - iv. Requesting help on the MEPA report if people are interested in reviewing it, potentially also taking action against a possible review waiver.
 - v. Bill- I do not want to see us support the waiver. Either neutral or adamantly oppose it. There is no way that a development of this size should receive such a waiver.
 - 1. Joanne- considering traffic and types of buildings, I strongly support the granting of any waiver.
 - 2. Michele- we could use the waiver to get something we want out of them if we are in CBA negotiations at that point.
7. Other committee reports (20 m)
- Jacob- CBA Committee- Making progress on reports. Received all input from outside groups that we expect to receive. Sample section exists for review.
 - i. Locus document- in section about CBA, most of it is not really relevant. Focused on city demands or something a neighborhood organization could organize around.
 - 1. Bill- Locus identifies identities of who may be involved in implementation, where money may come from
 - ii. Rachel- Can you get more specific
 - 1. Jacob- e.g. Work with the city to create a traffic commission. Many other requests to the city.
 - iii. Erik Neu is convening a group on Friday with the Bow St development
 - O&C Committee-
 - i. SCATV report happening Monday with Afruza
 - ii. Social event planning for mid-late April
 - iii. Next meeting 3/10
8. Citywide Zoning Overhaul Discussion (20m)

- Jacob- Alderman Scott hosted a zoning meeting over the weekend. It became clear that there are changes that will happen through zoning. The USNC board should take a position on this.
 - i. Neighborhood residents (1-2family homes)- Downzoning- Over time, some areas will become less dense
 - ii. How can zoning be used to encourage affordable housing?
- Pennie- The proposed zoning is smoother than neighborhoods are in reality. Aldermen can go through unit by unit and suggest changes, so it doesn't have to be quite that smooth.
 - i. Differentiate between "neighborhood residents" and "urban residents." New zoning allows for fewer triple deckers and "urban" style buildings.
 - 1. Andy- weird incentive to prevent developers from tearing down triple deckers, since they can only build two stories under the proposed zoning.
- Andy Greenspon- People who want to discuss this in more detail can come to the next Built Environment Committee meeting.
 - i. We don't have capacity to do lot by lot analysis. We should push people to get involved and contact their aldermen.
- Ann- plan removes parking from businesses along Beacon St.
- Peter Insley- Plans are a large step in the direction of lower population density
- Bill- zoning doesn't tear any buildings down or automatically take value away from property. One way to get affordability is to offer zoning relief
- Joanne- We should specify what we mean by affordable housing. CDSP includes 50-80-110% of median income. Inclusionary housing, section 8 housing, section 8 vouchers, sliding scale housing.
- Wig- 40R Smart Growth will include more affordability and put Somerville in the front of the line for state grants
- Jacob- Downzoning to prevent displacement is ok but there are other ways to do so.
- Simon- Transfer fee money - for low interest mortgages for people to go from renting to owning.
- Andy Greenspon- When zoning definitions were converted from old form to proposed forms, it mapped to the old forms which is why it looks haphazardly drawn. Special districts have their separate overlay development plans.
- Pennie- Nonconforming building section is the most illuminating.
- Wig- anybody except mayor and staff can propose zoning at any time
- Bill- We should keep this on the agenda for the next few meetings. Or should we refer it to BEC.
 - i. Joanne- good to discuss as a whole council, a

- ii. Bill- on agenda, along with CBA report, incorporation research

9. Next meeting time and place (10m)

- o Zoning public meeting is Tuesday 3/13. Wednesday 3/14 if Union Square infrastructure meeting. Board of Aldermen legislative matters meeting is on 3/15.
 - i. Our participation in the legislative matters meeting is limited. Mike Firestone could leave early to attend LM meeting
- o Continue with plan to meet 3/15 at Argezniano School 7pm.

10. Public Comment (25 m)

- o Jacob- 3/7 SHS students are walking out at 8:17am. They are meeting up with Cambridge high school students in Union Square.
- o Simon- GLX meeting 3/7 has been canceled.
- o Jessica Eschleman- 3/17 tour information is already going out to USMS but please forward materials
- o Wig- difference in this zoning from prior zoning. Our staff are national experts on form-based coding. Must specify shape of building but not necessarily use.
- o Wig- There are a lot of people working on open space outside of USNC. Simple desire is for city form a special committee to deal with it.

11. Adjourn