

Minutes for 3-22-18

Board members in attendance: Afruza, Ann, Bill, Michelle, Jacob, Tori, Erik, Ganesh, Rachel, Mike, Joanne.

Bill: I want to congratulate Afruza for being chosen for the Hazel Hughes award for community activism by the Somerville Community Corporation. The award will be given next Wednesday night at the annual meeting of the SCC at the Armory.

Minutes from the last meeting were unanimously approved.

A summary of the Dan-Bartman-led site visit from the previous Saturday ensued:

Tori: Lovely tour of the D blocks. 20 people showed up. A nice walk and then Dan fielded questions regarding zoning. Dan addressed the Union Square zoning overlay: how could this be effective? How could the zoning overhaul affect overlay?

Andy: The overhaul is currently not expected to affect overlay. Once a CDSP is issued for US2, if zoning is changed, US2 doesn't have to follow it if they don't change the permit. Except for certain things such as inclusionary, environmental, certain sustainability things. However, if US2 has to get a change to the CDSP which has to get revoted on, they will have to follow any new zoning. Dan Bartman did mention that their D1 plans are not consistent with the current zoning, so if they want to build there according to plan they'll have to apply to change the CDSP. In zoning there's midrise, highrise, also block. If they want to make a building next to D block, having a whole lot instead of two separate buildings, then I believe they have to change the permit. Otherwise they can change their plans and make a lot line through, but would be very inefficient for them.

Erik: Did Dan say what the implications are of a CDSP that doesn't conform to the zoning that has been approved?

Andy: Dan said this doesn't have to be consistent with zoning until the site plan. Might want to get confirmation from Dan.

Jacob: Did preferences for what should be on which lot come up during the site visit?

General: People don't like the idea of skyscrapers going up.

Simon: There was actually. When you go up Prospect Street, at Prospect and Webster...

Discussion of what to call this. People begin calling it the "triangle space."

Tori: I think it's buildable. I mean, we can build something there. I think they're currently seeing it as a welcome to Union Square kind of installation.

Bill: Everyone is aware that Dan is the go-to guy for zoning in the city?

Ann: I met with him for four hours (had a meeting with him afterwards). Seems very genuine. The other thing they mentioned were elevators, two big buildings, people were very concerned about steps on the prospect side.

Michelle: Meaning escalators?

Bill: Coming out of the station to the square?

Tori: People from the community near the triangle were concerned about getting from the neighborhood to the T station. I think you'll be able to access it from that side of the street. I think there'll be an alleyway – Dan seemed to give assurance on this.

Simon: The biggest disruption in center of Union Square will be sewer work (obviously there will be some interaction between US2 and sewer work). Going to get kind of noisy down there. There was a meeting a week ago last Tuesday, when the next one comes up, worth going. Interesting to see what they're up to. Going to be six days a week worth of work.

Tori: I'd propose that we get a meeting with Dan on a weekday, or have him come to USNC, so he can field our questions. Can I do that? Reach out to him?

Bill: Sure.

Erik: I had cup of coffee with a couple of people from US2 over last weekend. The MBTA is agreeing to give back to Somerville the 50 million dollars at the end of the project, once that's close (2025; once we get to the end of the line). Assuming 75 left over, 25 to Cambridge, 50 to Somerville, or some kind of pro rata. US2 has agreed to let the city keep its GLX contribution (so they will not try to get their contribution back). Things like [blank] over at Prospect and Webster left out. Certain things like [blank] currently left out, as more and more things come back (bells and whistles into the station plans), this will come out of future things that might be funded with this money. I just want to make sure that people realize this. This has nothing to do with US2, it's contingent only on MBTA's total project coming in below budget.

Joanne: When would we like to meet with Dan?

Tori: Would encourage a group of us to go during a weekday.

Jacob: Let's generate a bunch of questions beforehand to see if he can answer in writing, maybe easier for him.

Erik: For him, a lot less-time consuming to explain it in person, because it's so complicated.

Joanne: The sooner we can get him here the better for us, especially with the zoning not official.

Michelle: Went to a meeting with Ben Ewen-Campen. Seemed Dan really was happy to meet in person.

Tori: Also very amenable to having people go to city hall. Agree we shouldn't waste his time although he seems to be willing to talk.

Joanne: I propose we create a list of questions by next week, send an invitation to Dan Bartman by the following meeting, where he can come and answer the questions, so we don't ask the questions over again when he comes. If someone has a follow-up question or something, then we're all available.

Bill and Michelle seconded. No opposition.

Joanne agrees to make the list of questions. Everyone to send her questions about zoning and followup and anything else that was discussed, and she'll put it on the forum [?].

Simon: Find out where the generated interest will go from the \$50 million.

Bill: CBA report has been revised. Jacob, if you could summarize the changes that have been made from the draft that was presented last week.

There followed a discussion of and vote on the revised CBA report.

Jacob: We submitted a draft last week for approval. Mike Firestone had suggested we open it up for comment on Tuesday evening, comment would be closed for a little while, we sent it out for this meeting, the board would have the opportunity to provide feedback... I got a bunch of feedback which I compiled in a document for my own use. I didn't send out the compilation of feedback. But much of the feedback went out via public list. Some of the feedback is in the form of specifics, can you change this sentence, some was extra contributions (from Green and Open Somerville, from Fossil Free Somerville). Erik also helpfully gave a full edit of the draft at the sentence level. A fair amount of feedback about the Community Center part. People felt that talking about the degree to which people disagreed about what they wanted to see in the Community Center was not really the right interpretation of the variety of ideas presented, so this was rewritten to reflect the overall vision: **people want a multi-modal community center**. People really want to see a lot of community space. We rearranged the order, alphabetizing the sections. Some parts people took exception to, certain contrasts of different positions, we tried to take out the objectionable parts. We added an appendix that Erik contributed: what are the public benefits that US2 has agreed to, and what are their obligations under zoning. Those are the main changes. There are also more hyperlinks in the document.

The idea of this report is to give a history of what has happened in the past and what happened in our meeting, what is available to take into account for the rest of the CBA process. It's a summary, so we did try to avoid recommendations or prioritizations. We did put an emphasis where it seemed a lot of people got behind a particular idea; not meant as a prioritization.

Jess: How many dots are there in general? Could you give a total, to provide context?

Jacob: We didn't always go into detail in each category, what is the number of dots, that level of granularity will not necessarily give extra information. Sometimes information came from a process without dots. But I think that giving a sense of general interest between categories is a good thing to include.

Father Richard: I was away until last Friday, but I did read the first version. I thought a lot of work went into this and it was a good summary of the history. I did have a followup about the dots – I was here for the summit, and others were as well. Obviously everyone wants to lobby, I did submit my own thing about 9 items which I considered for a CBA. We're really talking in the first version about jobs and affordable housing. We wouldn't want to give the impression that the people at those summits represent all the people in the community. I'm happy to see that [blank] is now covered, important to me. Wouldn't want it to seem like there had been a vote on these issues, based on attendance at the summits.

Jacob: I'd like to close this section, as a description of what has happened, and move onto the next thing, of which a lot may fall to the CBA committee, either driving recommendations, organizing negotiation training sessions, proposals on negotiating committee selection. Those proposals can come from anyone but I imagine the CBA committee will definitely be involved. This report is intended to put a pin in what we already have and hopefully we can move on from there.

Tori: I sent out another list of edits in the most recently sent version, some of my concerns were addressed but some were not. I can tell you what page they are and the suggestions.

Bill: how many concerns would you say you have?

Tori: Five or six.

Joanne: I will abstain from any vote because I haven't had a chance to read the report (either version).

Tori: Page 1, brief history of redevelopment. Where it talks about the selection of the developer. At the end it says how The SRA chose Chicago-based developers. I want to add that both the city and the public were disappointed in the result. From what I understand the city was actually really upset. To clarify, the mayor was upset with the selection. I was skeptical of this, but George said the mayor was yelling.

Bill: How essential is this change? If we leave it out, is it really not an accurate description of the history?

Rene: We need to be careful how we frame it because I haven't seen any formal document from the administration showing disappointment.

Jacob: We did our best to always cite evidence of what we said.

Erik: I highlighted things that were speculative and should be removed; this about the mayor would certainly fall under that.

Tori: I withdraw the amendment.

Tori: Next one, page 2. Engagement process. Union United, Locus Process; I felt they were weighted a little differently, Union United was described as an ongoing community coalition, Locus was established by the city, organized as a consultancy, etc. This section leaves out that the reason LOCUS was formed was to help empower communities to make CBAs. Leaving this out makes it sound like it was a city decision with the developer. Also, the section says LOCUS appointed 30 local strategy leaders. Say the city appointed them instead. Say out of 50 applicants. These 50 represented a very large cross-section, everybody, different activist groups, people from school system, architects, parents. I felt that Union United got more weight here for being more of a community process.

Peter: We cite LOCUS continually throughout the report. As a kind of foundational opinion. I don't think anyone reading the whole report would think we didn't give weight to LOCUS.

Simon: LOCUS: a lot of people continued over into working group, and into this group.

Jacob: I would object to the sentence "LOCUS was created to empower communities". We don't know why LOCUS was created. So far as I know they're not really about CBAs, more about public benefits.

Bill: I think it's understandable why Union United might have more weight since their main ask was a CBA. I'm not sure I object to any wording that suggests it's more effort to get a broad-based community input.

Erik: The main thrust of Union United was a CBA. The main thrust of LOCUS was creating this very group.

Jacob: What I've heard from people who were involved is that people did not feel empowered through LOCUS.

There was a brief discussion here in which Jacob suggested adding city staff to the list of LOCUS members. The group determined that there were city staff members (Irma Flores) on LOCUS, and to include them in the report.

Jacob: I would move to accept Tori's edits here without the sentence about the Locus empowering communities.

Michelle seconds.

Michelle clarifies: Just cut the line from the edits about LOCUS and the CBA, leave the rest.

Tori opposed. Two abstentions, Ann and Rachel. Thus 7 in favor, 1 opposed.

Erik: Some people have not had a chance to read the reports. Before voting to accept the report, we should drop some of the partial details about the path forward to negotiations. We need time to actually process this, rather than one piece of it at a time at a line-item level.

Bill: If it's OK with the group, I'd like to continue going through the changes Tori has surfaced and then see where we are. Any objections?

No objections to this.

Tori: Thanks everyone. Next point: the report says that LOCUS focused on an overall strategy for Union Square as opposed to specific asks for CBA negotiations. LOCUS focused on a strategy for tax incentive program and other worker rights. Some of what was considered strategy could be considered for CBA benefits.

Peter: Tax incentives cannot be in a CBA; these are legislative matters.

Tori: But worker rights and others could be in a CBA.

Jacob: People writing this report did their best to go through the LOCUS report and really extract what was specific to a CBA, as opposed to things that meant working with the city etc. When I went through this I saw a lot of great things that were not necessarily relevant to this particular process. Some people going through this will not find something specific that was in LOCUS. That is not to say that people in LOCUS did not worry about worker's rights.

Bill: Does anyone else want to speak to this? Motion?

A brief discussion of whether this is a comment or a suggested change.

Tori: No suggested change... the change was for the previous version of the report.

Tori: Next, on top of page 5, the formation of Union Square Neighborhood Council and CBA summits. Where it says beginning of July 2016 working group began meeting and generating proposals. I want to add that it was a LOCUS working group.

No one objects to adding this change.

Tori: Where it says parking garage... [blank] A recommendation is missing here from this section.

Jacob: Not necessarily a CBA idea... between the city and whoever builds a parking garage to negotiate. Well, CBA could say if you want to build a parking garage it has to be between us and the city.

Bill: That could be an ask. I don't see any problem there.

Richard: Can add ... [blank]

Michelle: Let's add it.

No objection. The amendment is added.

Bill: We will have to move on at some point.

Tori: There are three more lines.

Bill: Let's hear it.

Tori: A Community Center ask. This ask is acknowledged on page 20 in the middle, under Community Center. Ask for a rooftop [cafe?] on the Community Center.

No objection. The amendment is added.

Tori: Page 21, under arts. Second summit, under small businesses. Encouraging or obligating businesses to display works of art in their office spaces in Union Square, art gala, sharing space in the lobby. [blank]

No objection. The amendment is added.

Tori: About the negotiating team and representation. The report talks about the importance of representation across a variety of dimensions. It says we should include a mix of homeowners, businesses, workers, etc., like we did for the board members. That did not result in getting a mix of stakeholders. So I'm moving that the negotiating team represent the active stakeholder groups in the community, or that if we have dimensions, those dimensions represent people who have represented active interest groups who have worked on this, not just how we have divided up ourselves. I would be very sad if the negotiating team turned out to have the same result as how the board is comprised.

Erik: I'd motion to table this since it's part of a larger conversation.

Rachel seconds. Passes without objection.

Bill: Right.

Bill: Do we have enough to vote on this report? If we're going to move forward, we have to move forward. A vote on this report is an acknowledgment that it is a fair approximation of everything that has come before around Union square and leading up to negotiations with the developer. Not a report that recommends any one thing over another thing, just trying to get as close as possible to what has happened up to this point. And then the next steps have to be taken.

Erik: I have one concern with voting on this, that is, it defines a timeline which is driven by undefined processes. What we want on the negotiating team, how we're going to set the negotiating team, etc. I've generally been supportive of aggressive timelines, but for instance in last week's meeting someone said we already set the timelines so we have to stick with

them, so my level of comfort with these kinds of deadlines has been reduced... if we're looking to get the history etc., let's strip out for the time being the last section.

Erik moves to table section 6 until later. Seconded.

Discussion:

Jacob: We should keep that section, try to keep the timeline in it, knowing there may be things that interfere with our ability to hold to that timeline. Nothing on that timeline is unknown. It just requires our coming to a decision. The only thing truly out of our control is when the city amends the Covenant, beyond that it's up to us.

Mike: Erik, I don't want to have unrealistic timelines, but this group has a responsibility to put timetables forward to allow others to react to them. That's how we get in the mix. If we don't put something on paper, even if not entirely achievable (off by a week or two or three), who else is going to drive this forward. What we're saying is that we would love it if in two months we were in a position to be able to negotiate with US2. I'm in support of keeping this section.

Andy: What keeping this section entails is that within two weeks everyone has to apply, we have to send this out immediately and everyone has to apply. Assume everyone has two weeks with Easter Holiday. Then one meeting to decide, who knows if with 10, 40, 3 people submitting. We still haven't agreed on how the voting or the selection will go. Does it have to be at a public meeting? Is there a mechanism to do this otherwise? There has to be some sort of mechanism which is not so rigid so we have to stay here 5-10 hours some night to sort this all out. Also, what does it mean to vote on this timeline but then say it's not binding?

Erik: I agreed with everything Mike said. I'm willing to withdraw what I was saying, just use it in the future to acknowledge the need to be flexible in the future if people are being too focused on adhering to these dates in the face of unbending reality. A number of details may come up that are not being considered, we may have to work through these things.

Simon: Only possible start date for them is the fall. To put a timeline on us in a microcosm, when there is all this time available, would be bad.

Michelle: Mike is right, in order to be part of this we need to be in the mix. However, Erik is right as well. In the meetings, if someone says we need another week, we should be able to get another week, or two.

Tori: April 8th or 9th would be the deadline for nominations. If this is going to be inclusive, there has to be a lot of notice. This is an ambitious timeline especially after a holiday. Either we give a range of deadlines, or we move... I want to acknowledge that this is not a hard deadline. April 15th for the negotiating team.

Afruz: This is not about the date, but it says the negotiating team should be ideally homeowners, renters, workers. Why not other people who care about this community? Other

people who have the time, and prior experience? Working here and coming here every time without money...

Bill: What was meant by naming some groups was "at least these."

Bill: I'm closing the discussion. Is there a strong feeling that the wording there in Section 6 should be tabled?

Tori: The motion is to hold off on approving everything but the last section.

Michelle: There's no motion.

Erik: There's no motion.

Jacob: On the table is my motion to approve the report with what we approved of Tori's edits, not striking section 6. If people are in favor of that, support the motion.

Jessica: I've been concerned with when to offer my one suggestion on one particular section... is this the time? I want to offer before the report in its entirety is approved.

Bill: I think we should move on. I'm sorry, but there comes a point when you have to move on, and what we're voting on is the report as it currently stands.

Discussion of process for Jessica's suggestion. It is agreed that she can still contribute her suggestion.

Jessica: Last sentence on second six, third paragraph section 6. Where it talks about interest-based versus adversarial, saying we will move to adversarial if necessary.

Jessica quotes the sentence.

Mike motions to remove the sentence. Tori seconds. Unanimous to remove.

Tori: Point of clarification. If we approve this document, are we setting those timelines in stone?

Erik: I'm offering an amendment to Jacob's motion. It says "The deadline will be April 8th" so that the negotiating committee shall be appointed by April 15th. This is the strongest time wording in the document. Soften this to should.

Mike: Add "unless the board determines otherwise"

Jacob agrees.

The board votes on accepting the report with the above amendments.

Two abstentions: Erik, Joanne. All else in favor.

A discussion of the website launch ensued.

Bill: Let's skip the website section, I don't think we can proceed without Ben Baldwin here.

Gary: That means that the site will not have to be launched on Monday?

Bill: Yes. We'll put it off until the next meeting.

An update on the formal recognition process ensued.

Mike: Mixed news on the Board of Aldermen. I got a tonally apologetic email from Mark Niedergang saying sorry we can't do [it] this Thursday, followed by a commitment to do it next Thursday. Nothing new from city or law department regarding conversations with US2. We should get our language or hearing date by the 29th. Best thing is just to push for a hearing, public hearing, early in the month of April. We can take one proactive step towards accomplishing this, compile the documents that need to be provided to the city now and send them in. Say we're still waiting on you guys for the meeting on the 29th. In the meantime, here's everything you need from us. So let's make sure to get all those materials to the city and the members of the board by 5 o'clock on Tuesday.

Erik: Regarding covenant (from my run-in with US2 at Bloc 11), they said their lawyers had been addressing it and the hold up was that removing the CBO removes the mechanism by which US2 can give money to the city. So they're dealing with the logistics of transferring funds. They're expected to give the city updated language by end of this week.

Mike: Good to hear. I do think this is consistent with what we've been hearing. I do think we've been falling victim with slipping from Thursday to Thursday to Thursday.

Michelle: I think Mike's suggestion is a good one, but how many Thursdays are we going to let slip?

Mike: We don't have much of a response, they're not behind by that much. If they get really far behind, then we need to go to the board and say it's time for you to say you are committed to a robust, neighborhood process behind a community benefits agreement. You set out reasonable timelines and those are being frustrated by the developer. Mark Niedergang has said this is on the agenda for the 29th, we're going to set the language at the hearing then, etc.

Jacob: We don't really need US2 to be a signatory to a revised covenant. The Board of aldermen could set the date, this group has all the materials in line. Let's make sure we have gone through all the hoops. We should pressure them to set that date.

Mike: Our contingency, just in case, is that we just set the date and go ahead with the public hearing regardless of what US2 does.

Mike: I do need help putting together our materials. A map of the area, current bylaws, a few other things.

Bill: Do we need some statement of where we are on the road to incorporation, to presenting this by Tuesday 5 o'clock?

Mike: I'd like to remind everyone that right now we're functioning as an unincorporated organization. Pursuing incorporation by 501-3c process, that will take some time.

Michelle proposes that if US2 does not agree to the change in the covenant, USNC will ask the Board of Aldermen to have a hearing anyway. Mike seconds. This passes unanimously.

There ensued a discussion on the selection of the negotiating committee.

Bill: We won't have time for all of this tonight.

Jacob: I want to send an email just giving a description of what the idea is, if people are interested, are they prepared to throw their hat in the ring. It will give maximal lead time if we can do this right after the meeting.

Erik: I already made this motion last meeting. A two step process, we announce our intentions, then send follow-up information subsequently. It was voted down at the last meeting, I don't remember why.

A motion is made to put in the tiny newsletter that nominations are open for the negotiating team. (Erik and Jacob propose the motion together.)

Unanimously approved.

Andy: By approving the report, unless the board subsequently votes otherwise, April 8th is the application deadline. That means you have to advertise immediately. Does anyone know how many people are on the tiny letter? The discussion needs to happen about how we do the outreach now, or certain stakeholders will get upset.

Mike: There are 530 subscribers to the letter.

Simon: You should vote to modify the date based on what Andy said.

Jacob: It's the 22nd now. Our goal is April 8th. If we move this to April 12th, that's 3 full weeks. That seems like plenty of time. In terms of reviewing the applications, we could review on a weekly basis what is submitted, without necessarily voting on it, just to make sure we're up to speed. Then, a week after the 12th, we'd be ready to select a committee by the 19th.

Joanne: Rolling review can get a little fuddled. [People reviewed early may get precedence over people reviewed late?] Something I suggest is that people being nominated have line of work or experience listed as well as groups, etc. That gives us control because we know what

generalized group of experience we need, and what we should include in the committee. Then we can break these down so we're not reviewing all at once.

Jacob: We can do this in a week, if the board takes the process seriously, we can do an intense period of review.

Joanne: However, the MEPA report is coming out in April. This will be a substantial time conflict.

Jacob: The CBA committee could take on this part of the board's duties here. It can deal with all the submissions and provide summaries, similar to the style of report of we just voted on, so the board is equipped to deal with this stuff when the deadline is closed, so the board can look at it all at once. Then the board could come up with a decision in a week.

Michelle: I'm not comfortable with that idea. I think it's an important decision that should be made by all of us, all board members should look at all applications. A lot of interpretation is involved, and I'm not comfortable with it.

Joanne: I'm also not comfortable with this. I'd expect two to three weeks. We should set a number, we could do ten applications per week and go for as long as it takes.

Bill: I thought the experience with the election was very informative. There were 11 people who submitted names at the deadline, when we extended by 3 days, 44 more people applied. This suggests you have to stick to a deadline.

Andy: I don't think the question was rolling the deadline. If we see more, you'll take just longer to review them.

Erik: There's a fundamental question of the order in which we do things. We have to determine the size of the negotiating team, their skills, representation, etc. This can be done before the final solicitation of applications, can be done after solicitation but before review, or after applications in light of the applications we've received. Going into the application process before we decide on this structure is an invitation to trouble.

Bill: You're not arguing for delaying putting this into the Tiny Newsletter?

Erik: No, my point was that somebody might need time to put in a resume.

Michelle: There are a tremendous number of people who are not represented currently who feel that they will need to be represented. Are we going to have 5? 7? 8? Once we've figured out what the response in the applications was, then we figure it out.

Jessica: Aside from two week training period, is there any way to gauge the time commitment that will be involved?

Bill: There probably is, and we should figure that out, but we don't have time right now.

Simon: What electoral process exists without a fixed number of slots.

Michelle: It's not an election.

Bill: Let's narrow this down next week.

(The time was 9:04).

There ensued a discussion of the next meeting place and time:

Bill: Next Thursday?

Mike: I'll be at the board of aldermen.

Jacob said Pennie will not be available on Thursday. Michelle may not be here. GLX was rescheduled to Wednesday. Afruza is at the armory on Wednesday. Jacob can't be there on Tuesday. Bill decides to schedule the meeting for next Thursday, given the absence of large support for any other day.

Andy: Are applications going to be publicly viewable? I don't know that there's anything in the bylaws about this. I can't be at the next meeting so I want to make sure it's discussed.

Bill: We'll put it on the agenda for next week.

Meeting scheduled for next Thursday at Argenziano.

Meeting adjourned.