

## **Union Square Neighborhood Council - Meeting April 12, 2018**

### Attendance

USNC Voting Members:

Rachel Weil, Ann Camara, Michele Hansen, Pennie Taylor, Afruza Akther, Ben Baldwin, Ben Bradlow, Mike Firestone, Tori Antonino, Jacob Kramer

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Neighborhood Resident Members: 11, Barbara- Mystic View Task Force, Wig Zamore, Sam, Gary Trujillo, Jessica Eshleman

City of Somerville OSPCD: George Proakis, Sarah White

Co-Facilitators: Rachel Weil

### Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions
  - o Rachel led of introductions and started the meeting.
2. Approval of minutes from 4/5/2018
  - o Mike Firestone- I compliment the taker of the minutes
  - o Ben Bradlow- Motion to approve minutes
    - i. Mike Firestone- Second
    - ii. Vote: 9 aye, 0 nay
3. Update on CBA Negotiation Committee nominations
  - o Ben Baldwin- There are currently 4 applicants to the negotiating committee. 3 board members and 1 non-board member
  - o Ben Bradlow- And the deadline for submission is midnight April 15
  - o Barbara- We should reach out to people who ran for the board but didn't get elected. Many strong community members there
  - o Pennie- I'd like to take up a conversation on Boynton Yards if it's relevant to the CBA negotiating committee
    - i. Ben Bradlow- My proposal is to deal with US2 now and Boynton Yards separately since they are different developments
  - o Resident- Is there a minimum size for the committee?
    - i. Rachel- 5-7 people
  - o Mike Firestone- We could do a special email to the candidates of the board to notify them of the negotiating committee
    - i. Ben Baldwin- I will send a special email
  - o Jacob Kramer- Reiterate what Bill said- I expect them to come in quickly over the weekend
  - o Tori- I dont want to be on the committee but I'd like to have an advisory role on zoning and permitting. I want to make sure that committee members read through the relevant material. I want to make sure that the negotiation is made up of asks that havent already come up in design review an CDSP process. We could support by doing homework that the committee may not have time

for.

- i. Ben Bradlow- Point well taken. The section of the CBA report, and in some of the discussions leading up to it, it was envisioned that the negotiating team would be reporting to the board at meetings. Not sure we need an extra advisory group. In a way the whole board serves that function.
  1. It will be good to have a list of docs that the committee should be familiar with
  2. Make sure there is regular reporting by the negotiating team to the regular meetings
- ii. Tori- I may apply to be on the committee, maybe that's the answer.
- iii. Ann Camara- I feel similarly and thought about applying. It may be good to have separate meetings with the negotiating committee to update the board.
  1. Michele- You mean executive session
  2. Ann- It can be open, but just designated time to meet on this topic
  3. Michele- Anything we deliberate on for the negotiating will be in exec session anyway
  4. Mike Firestone- HAVe to think about how the negotiating committee can ... it can definitely report back to the board in a closed door session. There is no mechanism for the negotiating committee to have a closed meeting with the entire membership. A listening session or something. N.C. has a lot of freedom to schedule sessions on open space for example.
- iv. Barbara- We had a negotiating committee at Harvard and we always met back with the leadership. Open discussion is one thing, but being advised on specifics is important. If you had some knowledge backbone on the team that could serve that function.
- v. Michele- I will go back to my idea of having people there as advisors, not necessarily participating in the negotiation.
- vi. Ben- We already have a proposed committee of 5-7. 2 or 3 of those people could be serving purely expertise purposes
  1. Tori- It is time sensitive, so we need to make a decision now. Is applying to the committee with the intention of being a pure expert and nonparticipant an option?
  2. Ben Bradlow- There are some general recommendations in terms of the application. My view is that if someone applies and proposes to be selected for criteria other than those explicitly laid out, then the board should consider those criteria in

making a selection.

#### 4. Update on US2 discussion

- Rachel- Mike and I were at the meeting. Erik was not able to attend. It happened just this afternoon. It was generally a good discussion. They were forthright about their priorities, made them very clear. We made our position clear that we were not looking for substantive changes to the amendment when we submitted ours. And that this is not the vehicle with which they should be proposing these substantial monetary terms. They were unwilling to budge from the covenant should accept their amendment.
- Mike Firestone- Greg \_\_\_ and Paul Scapiccio met with us. They had submitted an amendment with a few unimportant things, plus one major change: make explicit that any monetary payments negotiated in CBA negotiations (ex if they created a \$500,000 revolving loan fund), they would get a dollar for dollar credit for their other required contributions in non-CBA processes. They also wanted dollar for dollar credit for non-monetary contributions.
  - i. They suggested that the “nonmonetary” part of the amendment be struck from the proposal
  - ii. They were insistent on the idea that, if they are doing direct payment to funds, ie a small biz support fund, arts fund, relocation etc, these are the kinds of things that we shouldn’t be doing that. That has “always been” their position and want it to be reflected in the covenant.
  - iii. The choice for the USNC is 3:
    - 1. We aren’t interested in negotiating with any new conditions built in. They can have that position, but it must be in the negotiations, not the covenant. This is where we currently are as an organization
    - 2. Middle position-We could consider because: If we can reach agreement it’ll move the process forward more quickly. We don’t agree that they get a \$ for \$ contribution credit, but we agree that you’ll be seeking one from the city.
    - 3. Accept their amendment.
    - 4. Ben Bradlow- possible 4th option. This was a take it or leave it amendment from US2. The BOA is able to create a stub CBO such that the covenant doesn’t need to be amended. It seems to me that anything that would weaken the covenant isn’t worth considering
      - a. JAcob- We made it clear internally that we are an independent org. If there is official language saying that they intend to ask the city for a credit, that we could get entangled in with city funds and then be subject to different

regulations.

b. Tori- Looking for clarification

i. Mike F- Right now in covenant they are committed to: Community Benefits contributions \$1.60 per sq ft up to something like \$3.8million over 30 years. ACcount overseen by the BOA. US2 is saying that we could prioritize some of these dollars to our own projects rather than going to the BOA first. There is a possibility that there is some value to getting money now to go toward priority projects identified by this organization rather than money over the next few years doled out in grants to local organizations.

1. If we set this aside and tell US2 that their prior dollars to the city have nothing to do with the CBA. I think this is the position we can take. May be flexible at the actual negotiating table. Otherwise we're starting with less at the negotiating table.

2. Tori- I don't think we should put burden on taxpayers by telling them to seek credits with the city. If they want that \$ for \$ amount we could do this

3. Sam- Were they clear that if we went for the \$ for \$ option that they would provide the money upfront? That is the main benefit of this course.

a. Mike Firestone- They're not saying anything up front, but I think that's how its been envisioned. Also: I think Ben Bradlow is right. We can just say that we don't want it in the covenant.

iv. Michele- I make a motion that we stick to our original language and stick with what is in the covenant now. Perhaps work with the BOA to move the CBO ordinance along faster.

1. Ben Bradlow- Ive been watching the legislative matters committee and its clear that these issues aren't going to be off their agenda in the near future. Want to raise issue of timing. I don't know when the CBO will be taken up by the BOA. I don't see this being a single session issue. This could easily delay us by a couple of months.
  - a. Jacob- They are already in motion on this stub CBO. In the meeting when they rejected US2's amendment, they made a motion that they would work on a stub CBO and move forward with that way of recognizing the council.
2. Mike Firestone- We said we would take this back to the USNC. Made it clear that we thought it was a positive move to remove reference to non-monetary contributions. Two things: We should not vote a decision right now. We should say "our discussion indicates that the board is interested in continuing to work with the BOA on pursuing this" but we'll keep the dialogue going with US2 in the hopes that the stub CBO process will give us more progress.
  - a. Ben Bradlow- Do we have to say anything right now, are we expecting them to come back to us with something?
    - i. No they basically left it at the same place as us. They need to bring things back to their people to look into their concessions.
  - b. Wig- Is there a presumption that US2 is going to be the developer of all these sites and if not, what is the transfer process for their payments due to the city? Normally required at permit stage
    - i. Mike Firestone- We'd have to look into the covenant. All linkage fees would be identical. Any revenue stream based on sq ft permitting would be common across all linkage fees.
    - ii. Wig- Inheritability goes to us rather than the city
      1. Mike F- Something to consider
      2. City Rep- We would probably amend the ...
    - iii. Tori- There is information about this in the covenant. it has 26 items which may include Wig's question.

- 1. Wig- But USNC is not written in.
  - iv. Mike F- Is there an issue for the city in capturing their \$1.60 revenue?
    - 1. Wig- Could be a legal threat from developer or the city
    - 2. Mike- Because we're not a party to the covenant, a commitment of this nature would be a deal between the city and US2 that they're voluntarily scoping a space for the neighborhood council. Be mindful of that language, but the back end language establishing how payments are maintained, even if another developer takes over, that's not something we'll be negotiating around.
  - v. Tori-Item 25 in covenant says: this covenant and contributions ... are intended to be applied fairly to all projs in development plan area so that they are all contributing similarly...
  - vi. Ben Bradlow- This also came up in CBA summits
- 5. US2 D2 Planning Meeting - Thurs April 19 6-8pm @ Public Safety Building
  - o Postponed due to lack of time
- 6. Discussion with George Proakis
  - o Rachel- Thank yhou for coming and offering to answer some questions. We have several prepared but feel free to start it off:
  - o George- Sarah Lewis is the individual responsible for large scale process permitting. Really exciting work. She incorporates everything we can into the process and has been key in the US process. I just came from talking about marijuana for the last hour and a half.
    - i. I don't quite have all the answers at this moment but we can do our best to get them to the USNC.
    - ii. Starting with prepared questions.
  - o Mike F- Anything you wanna say to
  - o Sarah- April 19th at the police station is their first required neighborhood meeting prior to the submission of design and site plan.
    - i. George- We are the first city that requires such a meeting before even applying for the permit.
  - o George- I've been here 8.5 years and when I came in it was the middle of the Somervision plan. The plan(2012) has goals and

action steps: One was to dive into neighborhoods and do neighborhood planning. T stations were first. BOA did a US revitalization plan. At the time the T was saying acquiring land was the biggest risk factor to staying on time. They put a committee together to look at different developers, and in the end of the day SRA chose US2. They brought in their own planning team and “We” moved onto Davis Sq. They had some asks, so we did the neighborhood plan for Union Sq to figure it out. Throughout that process, there was a significant conversation- more and more policy issues about affordable housing and protecting local biz. Making sure we can meet our regional housing needs while not displacing the people who make US great. When the US plan was done, it had ~50 pages of policy recommendations before the report even started.

- i. We now have neighborhood plans for- Gilman Sq, Lowell St, Winter Hill, Union Sq, About to release Davis Sq and then moving on to Brickbottom.
- ii. Plan for US includes Boynton Yards, Target, all the way to McGrath Highway.
- iii. Zoning- we are also doing citywide zoning overhaul. Decided to do US first for a bunch of reasons. Also allow us to test ideas from zoning overhaul in a particular neighborhood. Did a plan for an overlay of just what US2 is doing. BOA passed a district to do this process with US2. We are bringing these processes to the rest of Somerville.
- iv. Substantial step for US2 to be able to build was the CDSP: it says “here’s how over the next 10-30 years, US2 will build out over a series of lots.” Had to meet thresholds in zoning, public space etc. Approved in Dec 2017. Next step is to come back with design plans, have to be applied for for every thoroughfare, civic space, and every building. D2 site consists of several of these. That will reach planning board in beginning of August based on existing schedule.
  1. Tori- Can you explain the steps?
  2. George- Neighborhood meeting, 2 weeks, meeting of design review committee, couple weeks, 2nd neighborhood meeting, and then you can submit an application
    - a. Sarah- 1st neighborhood meeting is conceptual and, then design review committee does schematic development (more detail), then when it comes back for 2nd neighborhood meeting it should be at a design/development level. Can talk about materials and preferred schemes.
    - b. Mike F- If concerned local residents want to contribute productively at that meeting, what

kinds of questions would you ask?

- i. George- Reports and decisions page on Somerville planning & zoning. Where we post staff decisions and plans going back to 2011. Find CDSP- look at what was approved and what decision was filed by the planning board, and get an idea of what recommendations/demands they made. 94 conditions.
- ii. Real issues are from quantity to quality- some basic things are set in the CDSP process. How it operates or interacts- Imagine walking out of the T station. Is there something missing? Trees? circulation? elevation changes?
- iii. Tori- My concern is whether US2 will listen to us. So far they have showed us some designs, but not followed up to our feedback. Have there been any changes based on that? How do we get them to listen?
- iv. George- There was some evolution of their plans. The board brought up community input and asked for responses. Biggest open space discussion was left open for more discussion. I'm happy to take feedback from community into design review meeting to keep them focused on neighborhood concerns.
  1. Staff report for planning board- make recommendations for conditions that haven't been met yet. Planning board itself tacks on a bunch of things.
  2. Tori- So if US2 is not as responsive, we can champion the planning folks to do some of that work.
  3. George- there is no question right now that there is significant profit to be made by developers in Somerville. Particularly housing. To some extent, planning office role is to make sure the



community shares back some of that. I would take back as much as we can until we get to the minimum point they are willing to accept. The loudest voices to date have been about affordable housing in the development project. Those numbers are fixed. No surprises. Trying to do that for infrastructure or green line contributions. We're starting out with building permit fee, IZ, 10\$ sq ft linkage, jobs linkage, \$2ish green line, infrastructure, and then CBA program we have before us here. We are also demanding that they build some open space. Add that up, and we're asking more than suburban communities around us. So far development has continued. At some point we will hit a point with trade offs and I don't want to be the one deciding which thing is more important.

- Jacob- Let's move into prepared questions. My big question is about a desire for civic space, "community center." People seem to want an entire building with many types of spaces for different ages. Can you comment on degree to which that is imagined in CDSP, where is the gap, and how would funding for that flow
  - i. George- They need to be having conversations about this topic with USNC.
  - ii. Sarah- There has been progress in defining what that thing is. The more we can get to a point that we can articulate what this civic space needs to be. They won't improve on the concept without knowing what we're demanding.
  - iii. Ann Camara- Can we come up with measurements, too?
    - 1. George- Certainly helps. How much space is this civic space?
  - iv. Mike Firestone- This is a group with mixed background in this field. Planning department has more expertise. There's a lot of aspiration toward indoor civic space. I'd love for us to have a fully formed proposal to serve up. Knowing what you do about this process, do you have recommendations for how we can work more productively with the city to advance these ideas about civic space?

1. George- Talk to library director at the city- interested in US branch library. It could serve as an anchor for other things. Invite him to a meeting.
  - a. YMCA is limited in Highland Ave building. Y leadership has been talking about this for years
  - b. Bring a partner (e.g. library director. also brings some state funds, etc) to the table in your ask to the developer. Will work better than just making demands.
  - c. Boys and Girls club sold their building in US.
  - d. We can put you in touch with all entities that have come up in these discussions
  - e. SCATV- Moving them out of the little fire house could allow a space to move in that utilizes the space right in the middle of the Square
2. George- I lean toward D1 building for civic space. Makes more sense from city perspective. Also a park on the site, could integrate indoor and outdoor civic space.
3. Gary Trujillo- At CDSP hearing Alderman Rossetti, [suggested](#) that city could own the space. Is that idea a practical possibility?
  - a. George- Won't take anything off the table. A lot is going into the changes in the D1 site. Parking there supports other uses around the square. If we can gel around what our expectations are we can answer questions like that.
4. Resident- Somerville Planning staff- My family has been here 100 years. We want to see Boynton Yard to be a cash cow for the city. That way we can better fund the schools.
  - a. George- Yes, additional tax money goes toward schools, open space.
  - b. George- Boynton Yards- 3 landowners with valuable developable land. Challenge with it is that the majority of it sits on one persons land. Need to find a way to equitably address this. Owners are interested in redevelopment.
  - c. Tori- The reason this is one of our questions is that under zoning overhaul, there is a Boynton overlay section. Prescribed civic space has one map of piecemeal places. I am hoping we will be allowed to have this conversation again.
    - i. George- Discussing BY overlay in zoning is a whole discussion I'm happy

to have at some point

- Jessica Eshleman- We're talking about \$3.something million dollars. List of potential asks is far greater than that. How is this investment going to leverage the greatest return. In your knowledge of other communities, has the ask been concentrated to one large initiative or is it sprinkled among different topics?
  - i. Sarah- Huge variation
  - ii. George- Many projects, city ahs asked for money for many purposes. Assembly development paid to fix parks all across the city. I don't have as much experience with communities talking about CBAs.
  - iii. Sarah- It's hard work- This group is the community leader. The community can decide that indoor community space is the highest priority.
  - iv. George- If there is something we can provide that will help, we will do it
    - 1. \_\_\_\_\_ - CBAs in similar areas with similar projects tend to contribute to either affordable housing or a particular nonprofit. This is unique since there are so many components. Demand specific things in the negotiation.
- Jacob- Can you describe process of how we could get to 2 parks (from CDSP proposal). Some has to do with permitting but does the council have a role?
  - i. George- Civic space term as defined in ordinance is a quality public open space- park, playground, plaza defined by trees benches etc.
  - ii. George- One must be substantially sized- D7 or D1 site. Developer doesn't care which. Expanding D7 space may be the way through this process that gets more than we had. Route to that is: Goodyear site height limit going from 4 to 5 stories would allow US2 to free up space elsewhere and expand the park. If board passes this, US2 would make a change to CDSP to put this all together. If you think this concept makes sense, we can probably do this.
- Pennie- 5702 sq feet that US2 needs to provide in open space
  - i. Sarah- They are only 2000 sq ft short, that they can pay in lieu(?)
  - ii. Tori- Maybe they can add more to the neighborhood park. D3 parcel is tiny and I would rather see that sliver go to a higher quality civic space.
- Wig- Seems like there is a time issue. Critical path for developer and community have to be on the same page. I would suggest that somebody breadboarding critical path on the asks. US2 is going to be going thru the conversations with the community in a month. Not a long time from conceptual to design development.

- i. Sarah- Yes, it's an aggressive timeline. I'm going to push them for as much information as we can get early in the process.
  - 1. Pennie- what types of information?
    - a. Sarah- When doing conceptual design you don't really cover materials. Because US is an existing community, things like that we need to start to get them to think about early in the process. Sustainability issues is a big one. Mobility management issues don't usually get addressed until building is built. Many things that usually happen later in the process.
      - i. George- two biggest things: 1. we want answers to questions on sustainability. (not due til June). 2: mobility and transportation. We are trying to drive the parking space number down lower than normal. Will only work if they are well positioned to have people walking/biking to work. To do that successfully is a robust transportation management system and schedule. Bike racks, showers. Especially on the commercial side. Ways to cut down on parking spaces for commercial employees.
    - ii. Wig- another example- gap between vision of developers and community activists in area. Activists had their numbers down 3 years before it was resolved. There's a lot of conceptual development on the community side and how it works for the city and developers to resolve that amicably.
  - o Jacob- Question about meeting next week. Is it a public meeting
    - i. Sarah- Yes
    - ii. Jacob- and all questions will be recorded? Like a public meeting, even though hosted by US2?
    - iii. Sarah- It will be done as an open house because we had difficulty with it last time. What we've recommended to them is that each topic area has note takers at each station on big flip charts so that everybody can see what everybody else is commenting on. Rather than a big question and answer time, this way we can get more people through and level of detail that you can't get in a big meeting with these specific topic areas.
  - iv. Ann- What happened to information from last open house?
    - 1. George-It exists
    - 2. Sarah- But not posted online
    - 3. Tori- Could this be violating anything?

- v. Ann- What about Walnut St proposed Rec Dept building?
    - 1. If we have an idea for what should be done there we should submit it.
  - o Tori- Will you collaborate with us? You have information and knowledge that we don't necessarily have. If you can't meet regularly, I hope you will be a resource for us if we want to submit more questions.
    - i. George- Issue with our staff having 2-3 night meetings per week
    - ii. Sarah- When I was in the private sector, we did a lot of design workshops and charrettes. As we get into the open space, I can help facilitate and go through that process. There's enough talent here that we can find a way to organize that.
  - o George- 2 buildings in Boynton Yards: 1 and 2 Earl St. in front of the board for review. Commercial space. Scheduled on the 19th. Planning board will not likely vote on them until May 3.
  - o Rachel- Thank you for coming.
- 7. Public comment
  - o Pennie- Boynton Yards update- JT Scott put me in contact with John Fenton (developer) and they had a presentation last week. Presented as community benefits. Not a lot of smart goals. Timeline is fast. Anyone who can meet with them in the next week would be suggested.
  - o All commercial office or startup space. Moving faster than US2 but totally different model.
  - o Wig- Designed two BY buildings to work with street design. Unclear if it's set in the current state of BY or reconfigured.
  - o Wig- First building is 10 story startup building- could contribute greatly to startup culture in US. Both are sophisticated, interesting design. Lacking: landscape, ground plane design.
    - i. Pennie- also quality of green space
- 8. Next meeting date and time
  - o