

Union Square Neighborhood Council - Meeting May 1, 2018

Attendance

USNC Voting Members:

Rachel Weil, Ann Camara, Michèle Hansen, Ben Baldwin, Ben Bradlow, Mike Firestone, Jacob Kramer, Erik Neu, Tori Antonino, Afruza Akther, Ganesh Uprety (via phone)

-

Neighborhood Resident Members: Jessica Eshleman, René Mardones, Gary Trujillo

Co-Facilitators: Rachel Weil

Agenda

1. Welcome and intros
 - a. Rachel started off the meeting with introductions
2. Party time - great success!! (5 m)
 - a. Thank you to the organizers of the party
 - b. The event made over \$400
 - c. Mike Firestone- We have everything we need to open a bank account. At this point we are incorporated and can go through the process of applying for 501c3 status.
 - i. Ben Baldwin- To open a bank account, must have Treasurer plus two officers present.
 - ii. Ben Bradlow- It would be worth opening an account at a local bank. eg Winter Hill, East Boston, Cambridge Savings
3. Beacon St. tree support- letter (5 m)
 - a. Rachel- Letter re: Beacon St tree removal has been through a few iterations.
 - i. Gary- I thought that was being sent in on Friday
 - ii. Rachel- Another version was generated
 - b. Michèle- The original letter called out Newport Construction. Why was that removed?
 - i. Rachel- I felt that the sentiment was better f
 1. This brings up how the board can configure addressing issues that are not immediately relevant to our mission. Don't want to open this up at the moment.
 - ii. Jacob- As writer of original letter I am happy with the revisions. I move to accept the letter as edited by Rachel
 1. Erik Neu seconded
 2. Vote: 7 yes, 0 no, 1 abstention
 - iii. Rachel- Last week at the end of the meeting, many of us were not caught up with what was happening. We may need to have another discussion about what further support would mean for these kinds of issues.
 1. Gary- Deadline is tomorrow, by official protocol, for submission of comments. It's important to decide whether we want to have that level of influence. It's part of open space/built environment
 - iv. Jacob- My understanding was that our strategy for Beacon St

trees would be to send a letter. The ask for the trees on Somerville Ave was to set up a hearing. We should encourage our membership to attend that hearing.

1. Gary- There is a law that refers to the city's right to remove trees. If one or more objections are received before or on the day of the hearing, the only authority authorized to issue an order to cut is the aldermen or the mayor.
 2. Rachel- At the hearing tomorrow we can object.
 3. Mike Firestone- There is a hearing for this. That is a formal opportunity. Verbal comments are identical to written comments. If there are people going tomorrow to express concerns then we are covered. I think we're putting ourselves on record about a group of trees.
 - a. Gary- There will be no scribe at this hearing to record these comments, so a written comment has more value.
 - b. Rachel- I would encourage those that aren't able to attend to write a letter.
 - c. Jacob- This is a capital project- something that has been bonded by the city for public good and infrastructure.
 - d. Rachel- We have not had time to do a full legal analysis so we can only offer our opinions. Please attend the hearing tomorrow if you are able.
4. Discussion with directors of YMCA, Boys & Girls club, other nonprofits (set dates) (10 m)
- a. Rachel- These are nonprofits that may be fruitful partners in negotiating for a community center. We can talk about this today to see what we would like to get out of these discussions.
 - b. Ann Camara- Bill Murphy at the Y, Glen Ferdinand at the library...
 - c. Mike Firestone- This is a really important idea. We are having a conversation about having a negotiating committee and indoor civic space is one of the most active discussions. The success of an indoor civic space proposal is going to depend on an operational partner or partners. Asking for a rep from the Y to come to our next meeting to hearing about their hopes would be extremely positive.
 - d. Ben Bradlow- What has been the interaction with YMCA in these discussions up to this point. George Proakis mentioned it.
 - i. Ann Camara- I called these directors myself. I had heard from US2 that the Y wasn't interested but when I spoke to him he expressed interest. They are interested in selling their building and moving to Union Square.
 - ii. Michèle- There has been talk for years about the Y moving to Union Square.
 - iii. Erik Neu- Is this the YMCA on Highland Ave? They are interested in selling and then moving? That could make the whole thing a reality.
 - iv. Ann Camara- The library is interested in a new youth center area.
 - v. Tori Antoninio- Greg from US2 said he met with people at the Y who weren't interested
 1. Ben Bradlow- When?

2. Tori- Last six months or so.
3. Ann Camara- The Y was possibly going to open a private gym area for US2 residents. I called corporate and apparently that is something that they do.
- vi. Gary Trujillo- Tom Bent, on board of the Y, wants something on the "main line" rather than the green line spur.
- vii. Tori- in the CDSP it says that US2 will engage with neighborhood council in locating a spot, finding a tenant. If we start to engage in a process, we can reach out.

Mike Firestone- This is all good- we should set up a meeting to talk about their plans for the future and talk a little. Should we invite the director to come to the next meeting?

- Rachel- Should we try to prepare a list of questions?
- Ben Bradlow- The way I'm thinking about this meeting, and I suspect the Y isn't the only stakeholder we may meet with, is that we're trying to hold focused engagements to prepare us for the negotiation. It's not bad to have an open ended conversation. Difficult to imagine focused parameters of what's possible since we don't have all information. We can circulate questions on the email before hand.
 - Erik Neu- Nobody here understands the Y's business model. We need to get that information.
 - Tori- Is this just an invite to the Y or to others?
 - Ann- They asked me to attend a USNC meeting.
 - Jacob- We should be clear that we don't have a particular direction we're going in. Another part of this is looking at funding sources
- Michelle- Ann, did you reach out to the Boys and Girls Club?
 - Ann- no. I can reach out.
 - Michèle- Would be good to get them involved, too.
- Erik- Library was interested in an annex branch. It could be something that is an adjunct to the YMCA. It could be easy to get YMCA involved and then supplement with library after.
- Tori Antonino- USMS offered to work together with us on this. To be part of this community center discussion. To offer space for meetings and resources.
 - Jessica Eshleman- This is a matter that is important to our board. Figuring out what our support looks like, as a 2 person team.
- Jessica- One other group brought up is the Somerville Media Center
- Ben Bradlow- We are agreeing, that a. we are going to invite directors of the Y to a meeting ASAP. b. and Boys and Girls Club.
 - Mike Firestone- B&G club operates several in Boston and 1 in Chelsea. They don't have one in Somerville. I think in terms of engaging with existing Somerville partners, there is a benefit to having a conversation with the Y first.
 - Michèle- the B&G club left Somerville not by choice. It was a big loss so bringing them back would be good.
 - Ben Bradlow- I have met with a neighborhood group in Lincoln Park where the B&G club also came up. I just want to underscore that this is something that is coming up elsewhere.
 - Erik- Where did people end up when the B&G club moved out of Somerville?
 - Michèle- Charlestown. I can find people and make contact.
- Rachel- Do we need a vote?
 - General consensus- No

- Rachel- We are meeting on a Tuesday this week. When should we schedule our next meeting? I can send out a Doodle Poll
- Ben Baldwin- We could check the availability of the Y and base our meeting on that.
 - Rachel- Ann, can you check the availability of the Y and we can move from there?
 - Ann- yes.

5. By-laws review (10 m)

- a. Rachel- This is a broad discussion, but we should have a plan to discuss.
- b. Erik- We need to Renew our bylaws, or, the interim bylaws continue for another year. We would be considered a “continuing interim board.” This language would need to be amended. It makes sense to aim for a timeline a month in advance of what we did last year. When was final successful vote last year?
 - i. Michèle- October
 - ii. Erik- Let’s aim for September to begin these discussions. We’ll need a $\frac{2}{3}$ vote and people won’t be on vacation anymore. I nominate myself and Andy Greenspon to do a first pass at reading the bylaws and note what needs to be changed or at least debated.
 - iii. Ben Bradlow- One possibility is to create a bylaws committee. It sounds to me like you and Andy could do that. We don’t want all board meetings to be taken up with things that can be done in committee.
 1. Group- Its a lot of work.
 2. Erik- And we need group consensus on so many things. The hard part will be discussing, agreeing, and closing these items out. I’m ok with calling it a committee.
 3. Jacob- I’d be inclined to support the committee idea. I think what hung up the working group was inability to come to and stick to a decision. I don’t think that’s as much of a problem since we already have a board structure.
 4. Michèle- It will be easier if we can pinpoint the things that need to be changed.
 5. Ben Bradlow- The way to go about this is to create the committee. They can advise when there should be a convening of the whole. It would give us flexibility to not have a board meeting for every discussion.
 6. Ann Camara- Why did I hear that we had 6 months to revise them?
 - a. Erik- That’s why I looked it up
 7. Mike Firestone- I think there is something about the timeframe, but for what it’s worth, if we’re in violation of the bylaws, there is not a large punishment. We can stick to the timeline that Erik presented. I am happy to be helpful. What we ultimately want is a set of written recommendations from the bylaws committee.
- c. Rachel- Do we have a motion?
- d. Ben Bradlow- I move to create a bylaws committee
 - i. Miek Firestone- seconded
 - ii. Discussion- Ben Bradlow- Let the record show that Erik Neu has

volunteered himself.

iii. Vote- 9 yes, 0 opposed.

6. Public comment (20 m)

- a. Gary Trujillo- If we change the venue of the meeting, we should put signs on the doors.
- b. Rachel- Do people like conference room 104?
 - i. René- We have the white board it's great, but what if a lot of people turn out?
 - ii. Tori- I can't stand the high pitched ringing sound.
- c. Gary- Maybe something for a future agenda. Now that the web site has been changed, there is a conversation about how to do things better. I want to encourage critique and suggestions.
 - i. Rachel- Is this something for the O&C Committee?
 - ii. Gary- Yes but we haven't had a meeting in a while.
 - iii. Ben- There is a lot of discussion online, but it's true we need to schedule another O&C meeting.
 - iv. Tori- I can't read the bylaws online.
 - 1. Gary- I will take a look to make sure it works on phones.
 - v. Rachel- If people have web site issues, can they send them to you?
 - 1. Gary- Yes.
- d. Gary- I want to make sure that the Tiny Letter reflects important announcements from the front page of the web site.
 - i. Ben Baldwin- I can check the web site before sending newsletters.
- e. Tori Antonino- Union United is talking about our recognition and I think we need to be involved in these conversations.
 - i. René- I don't think UU is doing any legal research on behalf of the USNC. We have members of UU and USNC seeking legal council. Right now we have UU members participating in USNC and they . You know that Bill, Ganesh, Afruza, etc are involved with UU. Some of them are not able to get legal advice on these issues. UU has a commitment to give them the support they need to participate in these discussions.
 - ii. Michèle- Union United was having a discussion within their own ranks. UU, USMS, US neighbors as constituencies of our board. If they want to scrutinize us they can. We have made a decision to be private.
 - iii. Ben Bradlow- It should be clear that what appears to be happening with UU, that we are all members of other groups, and we talk to people, get advice etc. If other groups want to weigh in on what we're doing they are welcome and encouraged to do so.
 - iv. Mike Firestone- I draw a distinction in what the fact patterns are. If I send a letter to the group about an important issue, but don't disclose that it was actually written about someone else. That's not ok and does not conform to the transparency we are trying to achieve. But if Phil Parsons sends a letter about our organization to the Board of Aldermen, then he can do that. We want to be cognizant if this org is speaking for itself or if someone else is doing so.
 - 1. Tori- There hasn't been any report back to us on their findings. If they're doing work to help us then just give us a

heads up.

2. Michèle- I don't think they have to do that. They are allowed to scrutinize us.
 3. Mike Firestone- If someone is writing about the USNC, they should be encouraged to come to the council. But they don't have to.
 - a. Afruza- We are here, also. We also count on the legal advice at UU.
 - b. Tori- After you have done some work, I hope that you will come and share what you have found.
 - f. Jacob Kramer- There was a hearing last night on affordable housing and whether or not it is a crisis. I encourage people to look into this meeting. It's on the Somerville meeting portal.
 - g. Rachel- Public hearing tomorrow for tree removal 5:30pm at the Public Safety Building. Thursday is meeting of the planning board for Boynton Yards 6pm VNA on Lowell St.
 - h. René- To clarify this legal question at Union United. The research we're doing will have implications for how USNC negotiates with US2. It will be good for this group to have that discussion. We will be willing to share what we have found, but it is sensitive information right now.
 - i. Ben Bradlow- We need to figure out a way to engage on this. Given our necessities around transparency, the request would be: If there is info UU wants to share with the board, is it going to be in writing, a meeting, etc?
 - ii. René- We are still gathering all the facts.
7. CBA negotiation committee (exec session) - 60 m