

Union Square Neighborhood Council Meeting Notes

March 12, 2019

7:30 pm to 10:30 pm,

Public Safety Building

220 Washington St.

Present:

Board Members:

Tori Antonino

Ben Baldwin

Ann Camara

Bill Cavellini

Andy Greenspon

Michele Hansen

Jacob Kramer

Paola Massoli

Bill Shelton

Pennie Taylor

Ellie Tiglao

Community Members:

Joe Beckmann

Joanne Berry

Sam Epstein

Jessica Eshleman

Mike Firestone

Simon Hill

Joe Nissenbaum

Nick Pettazzoni

Gary Trujillo

Item 1: Welcome and Introductions

Item 2: Public Comment

Joanne:

As Nick and I prepare for our next chapter together in the suburbs, I have been asked to impart advice from my experience on the Council to the new (and existing) Board Members:

First, congrats to the new members of the board! This is an incredibly exciting experiment followed throughout Somerville and Massachusetts.

To you members I want to advise practicing self-integrity and humility. You are here first and foremost to represent the community. Through representation, you must rely on your background and experience to bridge the gap between community desires and neighborhood realities. Stay humble and acknowledge a person's expertise regardless of your individual bias. The person might be right or wrong, but this IS their field so the very least you can do is listen. Discussions and relationships are best achieved when people listen.

Second, I want to encourage keeping Somerville departments involved in this process. During my time, I found incredible guidance and suggestions from representatives of the Board of Public Health, the Chamber of Commerce, the Board of Education, the Planning Board, and the Council on Aging. These departments all have valuable insight that should not be discounted from the discussion in Union Square. I can personally attest the Board of Public Health's guidance helped me appreciate the consequences and shortcomings detailed in the MEPA Waiver Request last year.

I look forward to the possibilities in future confirmations and appointments throughout the Somerville departments. People who have invested so much into this city are finally getting a place to carry out their ambitions accumulated by so many community members like us. Use them. Whether it be for advocacy, support, criticism, etc., you can not ignore the passion they ultimately share with you.

Third, I want to discuss tonight's officer nominations.

I am ecstatic for Michele's nomination for co-chair. She is very appreciated.

I must also strongly oppose Bill's nomination. Over the past year, he has continuously demonstrated a narrow-minded, egocentric, and misogynistic demeanor through his words and actions as co-chair. He has failed to 'lead' the council as a co-chair should. He has also actively decided to ignore community positions. It is crucial for a co-chair to set a precedent for the other Board members to truly represent and serve the community's needs. I am discouraged that three of the Board members have nominated him and another two have supported this nomination earlier today. If you, as the council of this neighborhood, want your meetings to progress and discussions to resolve in a timely and efficient manner, you will not vote for Bill as co-chair.

With that said, I will simply add that you really should review the email lists because I still receive all board member emails.

Gary:

I want to draw everyone's attention to the language I have drafted for the request to be passed on to the Outreach and Communications Committee. I sincerely hope that committee is resurrected soon. I would like to do some outreach to some people who are eligible to be members of USNC to be involved before we start up meetings of that committee, and that we take up this agenda item at our next meeting. I strongly feel we need to get more of the community involved. The activities of the council to date have been primarily about the CBA (as contrasted with activities of the City that pertain to Union Square development (e.g. Design

Review Committee)) and there has not been serious and substantial reporting to the membership and the wider USQ community. Please read what I submitted and revise as needed. Some months ago I submitted the subject of topics pertaining to the website as a potential agenda item to the co-chair 48 hours ahead of a general meeting, but I got no response. I feel like I have a stake in the matter (since the web site's purpose has to do with outreach and communication, and was chartered as a function of that committee), which is why I've been so bold in offering a draft pertaining to the O & C Committee, whose mandate I feel should be clear and comprehensive.

Simon:

When you had an election 14-15 months ago that got ~720 votes, that level of votes was taken as validation of the council. This time when there was 160 votes or 1% of the voting area, that sets up an un-mandate or a rejection number. Even if the City Council tends to support the recognition of this Council, it is difficult to say that it has any actual validity or representation of the neighborhood. In that vein, it is inappropriate if both co-chairs come from Union United.

(Michele clarifies that she has never been part of Union United.)

Joe:

First, a friend wrote a doctoral dissertation on community benefits agreements 8 years ago. It described all the same problems we have with our relationship with the developer, with the City, with other non-profits in the City. Highlights the problems we had. If we had been aware of such typical potential problems ahead of time, it would have been better.

Second, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance in the Green Line Extension stations. The stations have got to have elevators, period. The City and the developer do not want to provide elevators. The irony is that it would not take a complicated law action to force them to. ADA compliance is built into the law. If they ignore it, they will break the law, but nothing will happen. Need to use lawyers, for example, from Harvard Law for cheap to work on this. I bankrupted a CDC in Cambridge with this technique. It would not be hard to get an elevator on that corner.

The corollary to this is the fight over underground parking. US2 complaining about \$10-20 million for underground parking on a \$2 billion dollar project.

Joanne: I think Coordinated Development Special Permit (CDSP) has a condition for US2 to work with MBTA and City to get that elevator at the Union Square station.

Pennie: Looking at precedents for CBAs; the document that came out of the CBA summits has links to various versions of previous CBAs.

Item 3: Approval of February 20 Minutes

Gary wants his changes incorporated into the minutes for his public comment.

Unanimous vote to for approval of minutes to be postponed to the next meeting due to desired changes from some community members.

Item 4: Election of Officers of the Board

Co-Chair Nominations:

Bill Cavellini
Michele Hansen
Andy Greenspon

Secretary Nominations:

Andy Greenspon
Paola Massoli

Treasurer Nominations:

Pennie Taylor
Michele Hansen

Co-Chairs:

Discussion of the merits for all co-chair nominees.

One co-chair must be female per the Bylaws.

Vote on Michele Hansen to be a Co-chair:

- 12 yes
- 0 no
- 1 abstention

Other co-chair: Vote for one.

- 8 for Bill Cavellini
- 2 for Andy Greenspon
- 1 abstention

Secretary:

Brief discussion of the merits for each secretary nominee.

Secretary – vote for one:

- 7 Andy Greenspon
- 4 Paola Massoli
- 1 abstention

Treasurer:

Pennie Taylor

- By acclamation yes
- 1 abstention

Summary of Officers for the Next Year:

- **Co-Chairs: Michele Hansen and Bill Cavellini**
- **Treasurer: Pennie Taylor**
- **Secretary: Andy Greenspon**

Item X: Decision on Future Dates for USNC Meetings

- Agreed to have regular USNC meetings 2nd Tuesday and 4th Wednesday of every month.
- Discussion that in the future as Community Benefits Agreement negotiations finish, meetings may eventually be only once a month. But difficult to say given the rapid developments in Union Square.
- General agreement that many things can be done outside of and in between regular USNC meeting, in Committees and over email.
- At USNC meetings, we can debate larger committee or organizational issues.

Item X: Discussion of Outreach Committee

- Support for resurrecting the Outreach Committee by a number of Board members.
- Andy as Secretary can set up Google Calendar to organize USNC and Committee meetings.
- Discussion to more readily use our list of community organizations when we want to send letters out or do outreach and get feedback.
- Discussion that the secretary had become the de-facto chair of the Outreach Committee.
- Pennie stating that treasurer wants to shift to fundraising role more, which will tie strongly to Outreach Committee.

Ben Baldwin's experience as Chair of Outreach Committee:

- Lot of people involved in the first year's election. Lots of attendance at both CBA summits and media outlet attendance. Fundraising social last year was a huge hit.
- Some things got in the way of doing Outreach. Some community members felt alienated and have not participated. What we are doing is important, but not exactly "fun" work. Our more recent election was uncontested, 15 candidates for 15 seats. Such elections are not known for turnout. Would have wished more people would have shown up.
- The last Outreach Committee meeting was 2 people, Ben Baldwin and Gary Trujillo. The next Community meeting will be to update community on CBA negotiations, so that will be more substantive and allow for community members to give feedback.

Item 5: Decision on date & preparations for Community Meeting to update membership on progress of negotiations for a Community Benefits Agreement on the Union Square Revitalization development

Negotiating team talked to US2 about having a community update on the CBA negotiations. US2 said they want to co-facilitate the community meeting the USNC wants to host. Negotiating team discussed it last night. Does not have a recommendation for this Board. It was split.

Ann: Would be great to have US2 there.

Paola: Not sure what US2 means by co-facilitate. But US2 should be there for clarity of what is said and heard by everyone. Depends on the format of the meeting. Will it be a presentation, questions from the community? Role of the Board and US2 at the meeting will change depending on format of meeting. Might not be helpful if two entities give two completely different answers to community questions.

Pennie: There are two types of meetings. One updating community on status of CBA negotiations. One coalition building meeting with members of the community who we are working with. A strategy meeting for the CBA.

Jacob: Don't like idea of US2 co-facilitating our meeting. All our meetings are public, so US2 can show up anyway. We will be presenting what we are trying to achieve and where the distance between negotiating sides lies. Our constituents may come and express their feelings, and US2 may be present to observe it.

Andy: What does co-facilitation mean? A full presentation or just answering community questions? US2 should be able to answer questions from the community if they want to. If they want to make a statement/presentation first, I don't care. USNC will of course make a statement/presentation and take questions from the community.

Bill Cav: Ground rules of negotiations are not to reveal what is going on in the negotiations detail by detail, so as to not lock people from either side into positions. Negotiators need to be flexible within the negotiations. For first public statement at Board of Aldermen Finance Committee in December, US2 wanted a joint statement with USNC, but USNC Negotiators wanted to be able to give their own perspective. The community wants an update – it's been 6.5 months. The negotiating team feels strongly that we have to report back to the community before end of March.

March 27 is the date for next USNC Meeting. Make that the Community Report Back Meeting.

Bill S: The negotiating team is asking for things that are reasonable, and US2 is being intransigent. It tells in their refusal to show their pro-forma (i.e their finances) to show whether they can afford something. I'll sign a confidentiality statement to see their finances, but I want them to prove it. I second Joe Beckmann's comments on underground parking of it only being \$10-20 million out of \$2 billion project. Request that our positions are presented very rationally, to show that US2's intransigence becomes evident.

Bill Cav: Support this meeting being a report-back on the progress on the priorities we were given based on the CBA summits and CBA document prepared. Try not to do more than that. Spend most of the meeting listening to the community. The community includes the developer. Next two weeks to get as many community groups into the room as possible. Do nothing else. Get the information out that we feel we can share that does not violate the ground-rules of the

negotiations. I don't support it being dual facilitation. This is the Negotiating Team as chosen by the Board as elected by the community.

Andy: Question about logistics: Can the USNC have a community report back without approval from US2?

Someone states the disclaimer that the USNC wants to report back to the community and US2 is on board as wanting to be transparent as well.

Paola: Agree on focus on feedback from community. People might not understand what has been happening if they have not been involved in this process. Format of meeting will be critical. They know they are going into a room that is mostly community people – US2 will be in the minority. Presentation could be organized by negotiating topic with US2 position and Council position. Must be a written statement from both parties – be transparent. No one can question what was and wasn't said and what the positions are. Will officials from the City be present?

Ann: We need two dates. One meeting where both USNC and US2 facilitate, and one meeting with a coalition to discuss CBA goals.

Pennie: Support Paola's idea of having some materials in advance. We are the ones planning and organizing this meeting, doing the work, don't want US2 to just jump onto the meeting. Idea for next meeting: CBA report back and time for public comment.

Bill S: Not as concerned as Bill Cav is of the power in the room from US2. But I cannot imagine what co-facilitation means. Hesitant about Pennie's suggestion of just putting this as an agenda item in a regular USNC meeting. Based off Paola, let's put some material out there and put together an agenda. This is what we are asking for, this is what they are asking for, put an agenda item at meeting for them to respond. Then do a lot of listening. Trust that the audience is challenging US2.

Andy: *Motion for meeting March 27, USNC in charge of meeting, give short presentation, give US2 a chance to have a brief statement. They can be in the room. But organize meeting well-ahead. As rule of thumb, say US2 gets 2 minutes to respond to a question if addressed to them. USNC can respond as we like.*

We need to show that US2 has been an immovable object. Put them on the spot.

Pennie: *Friendly amendment: USNC supplies the meeting facilitator. Andy agrees to friendly amendment.*

Bill S: Two weeks is not a lot of time, so we need a full court press on this. Not "cutting off" US2 but exposing them.

Motion passes unanimously.

*Send out notice of meeting CBA report back by USNC on March 27.
Ellie would help with noticing this.
Idea to notice this on Somerville Times, Somerville Patch, etc.
Have meeting at Argenziano Cafeteria – motion passes unanimously.*

Andy will set up Google Map to flyer different areas of Union Square.

Bill S: Need to mobilize existing networks of trust to spread the word.

Andy: Can send out list of outside groups and people can ask for their emails to do outreach to them.

Action Items:

Andy will set up Turf Map via Google Maps, spreadsheets.

Bill Cav. draft leaflet and outreach email.

Negotiating team will tell US2 when this meeting is.

Item 6: Built Environment Committee Report

Item 6a: Report back and discussion of latest community meeting with report (March 5) from the City on D2 Design:

Paola: Meeting was pretty open format – community members were allowed to speak throughout the City presentation. City is taking the approach that questions of D2 development are not the City's problem. For example, on ADA accessibility, the City said it was the issue of the MBTA, not the City's issue. We should send our comments on the MEPA DEIR also to the City, the Mayor's office, Planning Board, George Proakis, etc.
Board gives unanimous approval to do this.

Pennie: Presentation from George Proakis on the current and alternative D2 designs. George just saying he is the messenger, no City opinion on this. They hired a firm to do peer review of different types of underground parking and their predicted cost. Community was angry that after 5 years of community soliciting feedback, very little has changed. Felt that presenters were framing the MEPA, DEIR, CBA things as delays, whereas financial concerns of US2 were highlighted, so the City didn't seem neutral. Discussion of opportunity zones but community benefits issues left blank. Questions about how the community should benefit from opportunity zones.

Jacob: Four story underground parking garage under the commercial building alone was ~1/2 the cost of one story underground parking underneath the entire D2 block. I also attended the most recent Somerville Redevelopment Authority (SRA) meeting – the chair of that meeting said “we are all eager to get shovels in the ground” on D2. But community would rather have delay of shovels in the ground if we can get a better design and development.

Disjunction between developer position, City, and community.

US2 claimed underground parking too costly and permitting delays would be up to nine months to submit changes in the CDSP. Other people in the community, including those who developed the alternative plan suggested CDSP could be updated fairly quickly.

Video of meeting was recorded – will find a link to it.

Item 6b: Whether to seek more frequent meetings w/ the Mayor

Tori: In dialogue with the mayor. Got a meeting with him. Admonished him for being an absentee mayor, leaving the community off to their own devices. This is bad management. Mayor's general reply: Tori, I'm sorry. I'm glad you came. I would like to start regularly meeting with community groups. Would start meeting regularly with Climate Coalition. Also suggested meeting with USNC regularly. Tim Snyder from the City said we might need to be careful on meeting with USNC. But it wouldn't be a meeting about CBA negotiations, just meeting with the mayor about how to help the Union Square community.

Meeting with the mayor with a simple message that the community is not happy.

Unanimously passed motion.

Tori will ask mayor to schedule such a meeting with USNC about community developments. After our CBA report back meeting.

Item 7: Update on JJ Sullivan project on Somerville Ave & Lake St.

City Councillors Ben E-C and JT Scott called neighborhood meetings on J.J. Sullivan Development.

Elan Sassoon is the developer. Three meetings with different proposals: 1) Housing on Lake St and partly on Somerville Ave with courtyard in btwn. 2) Nine story building on Somerville Ave with a park on Lake St side. The development is in flux. The neighbors are not happy about design 1. Slightly happier about design 2.

Item 8: Referral to Outreach Comm. – request for recommendation on Website future

Postponed to a future meeting.

Item 9: Public Comment:

Joe Nissenbaum:

- 1) US2 joined up with Skanska, the fifth largest construction company in the world.
- 2) Somerville is #1 on the list for Audi to have driverless cars. Currently being tested in Germany. As far as I know, the Trailer Trucks in Europe on highways are basically self-driving already. Before Union Square Development is finished (>25 years), driverless cars will be here. On Boynton Yards development, there is interest in putting a large garage on the Boynton Yards side for D2 development.
- 3) I believe the underground river in Union Square will make 4-story underground parking difficult. Water pumps running 24/7.

Gary:

I'm happy to help resurrect the Outreach Committee, whose importance is highlighted by the low turnout for the most recent election. Though the committee will have to work to promote special events, I see its main function being that of informing those who live, work, operate businesses and own property in Union Square about the function and operation of the USNC and to encourage them to become involved to the extent they are able and express their thoughts and their own hopes for the future of the area, so these things can be taken into account in our working on their behalf. I hope we can agree on a mandate for the Outreach Committee at the meeting where Tori's agenda item is discussed, and that it can be along the lines I have proposed.

Bill S, Tori, and Wig made statements at the City Council meeting on Open/Civic Space.

Meetings for planned development adjacent to D2 (along Charlestown Street, between Allen and Merriam) are happening under the leadership of Scott Hayman. The meeting which had been scheduled for tomorrow is postponed indefinitely. They want a meeting with the USNC first to present their plan.

Simon:

Wider community would like both USNC and US2 to talk, but neither has "control" of the narrative. I would suggest having the community report-back meeting at Greentown Labs and get the City, Chamber of Commerce, etc, to get food for it. This will get a lot of people, as shown by the Greentown Labs panel and the D2 meeting run by the City. The community can see these are two independent bodies and see what both sides say.

Item 10: Executive session to discuss tactics and strategies in CBA negotiations