

Union Square Neighborhood Council Meeting
September 3, 2019
7 pm – 9 pm
Public Safety Building
220 Washington St.

Attendees:

Board Members:

Bill Cavellini
Michele Hansen
Andy Greenspon
Pennie Taylor
Ann Camara
Jacob Kramer
Ben Baldwin
Tori Antonino
Paola Massoli
Bill Shelton

1. Welcome and Introductions

2. Public Comment

No public comment.

Upcoming meetings mentioned:

Thursday, September 19, 6 pm – Public Hearing for the newest version of the Zoning Overhaul.
Tuesday, September 10, 6 pm – Public Hearing on Land Transfer of D2.
Wednesday, September 4 – JJ Sullivan development before Zoning Board of Appeals.

3. Approval of Minutes of August 20, 2019 Meeting

Approved: 9 yes, 0 no, 1 abstain

4. Determination of date for Referendum & preparations for info meetings

Info sessions/voting:

Sunday September 22, 10 am

Monday September 23, 7 pm

Jacob waiting for confirmation email on booking of Argenziano. Jacob will forward the confirmation when received for preparation of other outreach materials and emails.

Full ballot voting day: Saturday September 28, 10 am - 6 pm

Jacob follow-up with Ellie to see if Bow Market is free for voting: 10 am – 6 pm.

*If Bow Market is not available, then Public Safety Building, and **Ann** would reserve the spot there.*

Make a bulleted summary of the Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) document for the front page of the website.

Discussion of what the August 20 CBA vote by the Board meant, whether it was approval of the document, or just approval to send it to the community to vote on for ratification.

Remaining concerns in the CBA – YMCA wants to buy a property in Union Square, not lease it as stated in the CBA document. Is this the purview now of the Negotiating Team or the USNC Board going forward to have a conversation between the YMCA, US2, and USNC?

One other concern regarding the Community Garden has been addressed in the updated CBA - “ensure the future of the Concord Avenue Community Garden”.

Negotiating Team Members prepare Powerpoint slides draft for feedback from Board for presenting at community meetings – presentation should be no longer than 20-30 minutes to allow most of the time for questions from the community.

USNC Board to take initiative to set up a meeting between the YMCA, US2, the City, and USNC to discuss the question of leasing vs. buying a space for the YMCA in Union Square.

Ann is in charge of contacting the appropriate people.

Unanimous 10-0.

5. Organizing outreach and publicity for CBA ratification process

When to have the next USNC meeting? After the CBA vote.

Finish up CBA vote and then move onto other community concerns, and **Bill Shelton** suggests self-evaluation of how we are doing as a group so far.

For CBA outreach at the Farmers Market: Prepare bullet points based on the Powerpoint slides prepared by the Negotiating Committee.

Ben Bradlow made a draft of a tri-fold pamphlet for the CBA to hand out at the Farmers Market. **Pennie and Ben Bradlow** can print and fold on Friday before the next Farmers Market if needed.

Maybe print out the front page of the website for people to take a picture of to then go to the website later.

Print a map of the USNC boundaries with the website address.

Write down the questions people ask that we maybe cannot answer without the Negotiating Team.

Encourage small change donations for the group at the table.

Vote on having the next USNC meeting after the CBA vote is finished: 7 yes, 1 no, 2 abstain

Advertise the CBA info sessions and vote dates at key locations in Union Square or leaflet every door in the Union Square area? Question of both monetary cost and volunteer time cost to invest in how far to outreach to the community and through what methods.

Ask for reverse 3-1-1 from the City? Does not hurt to ask.

OUTREACH ACTION ITEMS:

- *Ann will call the City to ask about 3-1-1.*
- *Pennie will draft the poster advertising the info meetings and voting times.*
- *Andy will get out the turf map. **Every Board member present today** said they will help out in putting flyers up in turfs.*
- *Contact the local newspapers and the elected officials Ben E-C and JT Scott, at-large City Councilors to share the information.*
- *Press release for The Somerville Journal and The Somerville Times. **Paola** will talk to **Ben Bradlow** about a press release. Julia Taliassen as point of contact at The Somerville Journal.*
- *Send information to listservs. Our Revolution Somerville, Union United, Somerville Arts Council, Green and Open Somerville, Climate Coalition of Somerville, Mothers Out Front. **Andy** will re-share the spreadsheet of community group contact info for people to sign up to contact. Send out info to everyone once we have confirmed locations for everything.*
- *Union Square Main Streets will advertise the information.*
- *Get all the information from previous election – **Rachel Weil** may have it – **Bill Cavellini** will check.*
- *Fill out the Farmers Market Spreadsheet for volunteering.*
- *Figure out exact language for the ratification vote: Do you approve of the Community Benefits agreements as written? Check with Mike Firestone on the language ahead of time?*

6. Report on Progress of SomerVision 2040

SomerVision 2040 task is to figure out what to measure in achievements for the City. In SomerVision 2030, there were 3 primary items - new housing units, jobs, and open space.

The City is now reaching out to the community with a card game with ~60 different cards of possible things the City can measure in achieving. They have done outreach at Farmers Markets, community events, etc. Each person can choose up to 8 cards of things the City should measure.

Ann observed this process at Lincoln Park – wide variety of people attended. At that event, there seemed to be a large focus on affordable housing, jobs, youth issues, etc.

Ann is on the youth committee for SomerVision 2040. There was a SomerVision Youth Forum at

the Library recently. Not very many youth attended. A lot of them were from the Mystic Housing Projects. SomerVision 2040 organizers were telling these youth that there needs to be more housing units (11,000-18,000) and less open space expectations. And the youth response was to push back and say the City is wrong.

Ann asked City Councillors Ben Ewen-Campen and JT Scott to come to these SomerVision meetings and see how it's being done poorly.

The issue is that this will be a legally binding document, so we need to push back on it. SomerVision 2030 was a fairly well-done community driven process, and SomerVision 2040 does not seem like it is.

The data collected from this card method here can be manipulated. There is no actual conversation among different stakeholder groups about picking specific cards and discussing why they picked those cards and digging deeper into the details about what is achievable. The way the cards are framed is constraining and are leading, skewed questions.

Question of reaching out to the City Council to pass a resolution to censure the Planning Department against spurious behavior in how SomerVision 2040 is run.

Discussion of whether the USNC Board members who have participated in the SomerVision 2040 process so far believe it is worth staying involved vs. protesting and boycotting the process. Discussion of how legally binding the Comprehensive Plan is.

Who will send a letter of critique of SomerVision 2040 – individuals or the USNC as a group? General consensus that USNC has spent a lot of meetings with discussions of SomerVision 2040, and we are invested in this process turning out well.

SomerVision 2040 website says the City plans to have a draft document on October 1 and a final adoption by December, so USNC and community must act now!

Asks:

- 1) SomerVision 2040 must have approval from the City Council, not just Planning Board.
- 2) Must have the SomerVision 2040 staff not trying to push their desires for 2040 goals, but actually have community driven input and results.

*Motion for those who have participated in SomerVision 2040 process so far - Ann, Michele, Bill Shelton, Tori - will work on a draft letter. Write a letter registering the USNC's dissatisfaction with the SomerVision 2040 process that has been driven by City Staff with a particular agenda and as a fake, non-community driven process. We want this process to have oversight and a democratic vote of approval by the City Council at the end, not just the Planning Board.
Vote on the motion: 9 yes, 0 no, 1 abstain.*

7. Updates on Planning Board meetings involving D2 design

The rest of D2 was approved at the Special Planning Board meeting on Thursday August 22. Amelia Aboff wasn't going to approve it at first on the basis of an issue from the Design Review Process. Then George Proakis stepped in to say the Planning Board does not have to follow the Design Review Process, so Amelia legally under zoning would have to approve the remaining parts of D2. And then Amelia did approve it reluctantly.

Consensus that the USNC has to focus on zoning changes going forward, which will have the most influence on future development.

Motion to adjourn meeting:

Vote: 3 yes, 5 no, 2 abstain.

Meeting continues.

8. Planning a fundraiser for USNC

Deferred to after the CBA meetings and ratification vote. The Outreach Committee can discuss planning for such a fundraiser and social if they wish.

9. Public Comment

No public comment.

10. Executive session to discuss personnel matters

Vote to go into executive session: 9 yes, 1 no.