

Union Square Neighborhood Council Meeting

November 12, 2019

7:30 pm – 9 pm

Public Safety Building

220 Washington St.

Attendees:

Board Members:

Bill Cavellini

Michele Hansen

Andy Greenspon

Ann Camara

Tori Antonino

Ben Baldwin

Community Members:

Wig Zamore

Jessica Eshleman

Cosmo DiSchino

Andy Levine

Deena Giacotti

Stephanie Gerry

Julian Lewis

Note: Next USNC meeting: Tuesday December 3, 7-9 pm.

1. Welcome and Introductions

2. Public Comment

Andy Levine: I am the founder of DuVine Cycling and Adventure Company. I started the business on Holland St in Somerville in 1996. We later moved to 667 Somerville Ave. We now hope to move to 337 Somerville Ave in Union Square. It's a bigger space and better location, next to Bow Market. ~5000 sq ft. We have ~20 employees, and most of them live in the area. We need a Special Permit to convert it from a Medical Use to Office Space. We are going before the Planning Board on December 12 for this Special Permit.

Wig Zamore: It's great to have day time population and uses in Union Square such as this cycling company.

Also, there was a SomerVision 2040 meeting a week ago. I'm pleased with two outcomes given by a vote of the attendees via an anonymous voting method laid out by the staff – there was a vote to retain 125 acre goal of open space and also to achieve live-work balance of jobs to housing in the community.

On reaching out to help with new forming neighborhood councils across the City: It would be good to start out on research about the characteristics of Somerville and other cities and towns in the region in terms of jobs, housing, open space, the relationship between local and regional such as transportation. It might be helpful to teach people things that they might not already know in terms of systems analysis of such issues.

Ann: I went to the Beacon St Star Market meeting and wanted Wig's thoughts on it.

Wig: It's horrible to use the Star Market unique site in the proposed way. Especially if there could eventually be a T stop there in the long term with the Green Line Extension continuing to Porter Square.

Ann suggests the Beacon St neighbors consider forming a neighborhood council.

6-0 straw poll Board support of the Special Permit for DuVine Cycling and Adventure Company.

Andy will send an email to the Board about support for the project and get other people's thoughts.

USNC Board will send someone to Planning Board December 12 meeting to support the project.

3. Approval of Minutes of October 1 and September 3 Meetings

No quorum.

Andy will follow up with Jacob about meeting minutes from October 1.

4. Report on any new developments with the CBA for Union Square

Michele and **Bill Cav** met with Greg Karczewski last week with questions about the timetable for the Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) finalization and when money will start to be available for various CBA terms. They asked US2 to provide the USNC with a list of changes on the Coordinated Development Special Permit (CDSP) and zoning changes that may need to happen in order for the elements of the CBA to be implemented. And what things may need to be approved by the City Council. Justin, US2's architect, is working on that list, which will eventually be presented to the City Council. The USNC Board will have to look at it ahead of time.

Soil remediation and preparation will start for the lab and residential building around January 2020. Nothing will happen before then.

Estimated start of construction for D2 is June 2020.

There will be no release of any funds for the CBA until permits are pulled. Foundation and building permit will be simultaneous. The date of the first quarterly meeting between the USNC and US2 will not happen until at least after January 2020.

US2 have not begun any process to start planning for constructing the majority affordable housing building on D4.3 but still need to actually find a non-profit developer. US2 has had some talks with Somerville Community Corporation about possibly constructing that building. There was a very preliminary design given during the CBA negotiations. Much of US2's time is being taken up with attracting commercial tenants to D2.1 and the first floor of the residential buildings. There is a shade study being done on whether D4.3 building can be 4 or 5 stories, in relation to the community garden on that site.

Tentative date for officially signing the CBA December 2 or possibly December 3. Michele and Bill Cav will sign as co-chairs on behalf of the USNC. They will ask the Board which dates work best for people to attend.

Wig has a question as to whether the preliminary design of the Union Square Green Line station might block the ability to extend the Green Line to Porter, which would violate a condition of building the station.

Discussion that the USNC Board needs to pick people to be on the CBA Enforcement Committee. Four meetings a year while construction is going on. Two meetings a year at a minimum while construction is not occurring. Reports by US2 will be submitted weeks ahead with progress on the various terms in the agreement. USNC hopes to also get reports from the City on many of the CBA terms as well to determine how much is coming from the US2 development versus broader Union Square and Somerville development.

The next GLX meeting is Tuesday, November 19, 2019, 6:30 to 8:00 PM, at the East Somerville Community School Cafeteria, 50 Cross Street.

5. Report on Progress of SomerVision 2040

Tori summarizes the last full SomerVision 2040 meeting. ~1/3 (~20-25 people) of the original SomerVision members attended. Anonymous voting on different key issues. 2-1 voted in favor of keeping 125 acre goal for open space. Melissa Woods, one of the City Planners, said these numbers will be taken back to the SomerVision Topic Area Working Groups to look at them and make a judgment on them.

Wig: City Staff has never gone to other cities and towns to do research to see how they add more open space in creative ways, such as various areas of Boston. Somerville has the biggest asymmetry of jobs to housing, which leads to the least commercial tax revenue to help with equity issues including affordable housing and more open space. SomerVision is supposed to be the legal basis for development decisions, and the City seems to discount this fact.

Bill Shelton in principle prepared a draft critique of SomerVision 2040 process on behalf of USNC. Bill Cav will contact Bill S. to see the status of it and send a draft to the USNC Board.

Discussion of whether these critique is still relevant? Critique is about the SomerVision 2040 process as well as the substance.

Wig suggests waiting to see how the City Staff handle the votes that were taken at the SomerVision meeting last week regarding promising numbers for open space and commercial to housing balance.

November 18 is the next meeting of all members for SomerVision – expect a vote on sending a draft document of SomerVision 2040 around to the community for feedback.

6. Citywide Zoning Overhaul – Implications for Boynton Yards– USNC role

Discussion that maybe the City Council will finish the Zoning Overhaul by the end of this year.

Tori explains that Mike Capuano on the Planning Board said that the Davis Square core is going to be kept to 4 stories for now given all the public vocal pushback about possibly zoning 6 stories right in the core of the Square.

Current draft of zoning says that of the 125 acres of new open space, 60 of the acres would have to be in the transformative districts of Boynton, Brickbottom, and Inner Belt. Open space requirements in zoning draft is 20% per parcel. It would have to be higher to achieve the SomerVision goals.

Should USNC send a letter about the state of this?

7. Meetings on development standards for Boynton Yards, Inner Belt Industrial Area, and Brickbottom - role for USNC?

Somerville Community Corporation (SCC) got a grant to look into opportunity zone planning process and development standards in these transformative districts. They formed an Opportunity Zone Steering Committee with SCC and Union United. There are no guardrails on Opportunity Zones. An investor puts money in through a fund in a way to theoretically help the community. But there is no rule to prove that you helped the community. Cities and towns are now trying to decide whether and how to put in guardrails on what the investment fund has created and what it is used for.

Next meeting is like the CBA submits the USNC held in 2018.

Next meeting at Somerville City Club, 20 Innerbelt Rd, Saturday November 16, 10 am.

Facebook event description: “Community Planning Session, Part 2!: On November 2nd, community members met and generated an extensive list of goals and priorities for the affected neighborhoods. This was an incredible kickoff to our development standards planning process, but we can't stop here!! Join us for a Community Planning Session to continue the planning process for the Community Development Standards we want to see included in the future development of Somerville's "Opportunity Zone”

Same question: What role should the USNC play in all of this?

Discussion to continue at a later date. First agenda item of next USNC meeting.

8. Discussion of outreach to other Somerville neighborhoods looking to form neighborhood councils

Ann's idea about this came out of the Beacon St Star Market site meeting.

Discussion of how to do outreach about this and which neighborhoods to go talk to.

Michele suggests USNC develop a presentation of what we have done and offer it to individual groups that have formed and haven't gotten recognition from the City yet. Bring in people from all over the City who may be interested in forming one of these groups, to have a discussion about this process.

Discussion of the existing short Community Benefits Ordinance which requires the City Council to recognize a Neighborhood Council for negotiating Community Benefits Agreements with a developer. But this should not preclude any non-recognized organization as a private group from advocating for their needs in the community and asking to negotiating a community benefits agreement with any developer.

9. Public Comment

Next USNC meeting: Tuesday December 3, 7-9 pm.