

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

**Attendees:**

**Board Members:**

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

**Community Members:**

Gary Trujillo  
Cosmo DiSchino

**1. Welcome and introductions**

**2. Public Comment**

**3. Approval of Minutes of November 12, October 1, and September 3 Meetings**

*Minutes approved from 2019-September-03, 2019-November-12.*

*8 yes*

*1 abstain*

*Still trying to find the minutes from 2019-October-01 to review.*

**4. Report on signing of the Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) for Union Square**

Monday December 2: Community Benefits Agreement Contract between USNC and US2 was signed by **Michèle** and **Bill Cav**.

15-20 people were there to witness the signing.

We have to put together an Enforcement Team/Committee for the CBA of no more than 7 people. Anyone can be on this committee.

US2 is focused on getting the documents together to get a building permit for the D2 block and aggressively recruiting tenants for the commercial life science building and the retail space on the first floor of the residential buildings. Earth moving site work will begin at the start of 2020, but no building construction is expected until June 2020.

USNC will send out an official announcement about the signing of the CBA and also advertise for interest in joining the Enforcement Committee - give an estimate of the time it would take, what the work would involve, and estimated time it would take, and who to contact if interested. Ask for people to say within 200 words why they are interested.

May need to recruit from diverse parts of the community for the enforcement team.

**Pennie** will send **Andy** the list of interested people to get more involved in the Council who were at the CBA signing yesterday.

Prepare thank you cards for those from the Negotiating Team who were not on the Board.

Press release for CBA signing is in the Somerville Patch and will be in the Somerville Journal. Would be good advertising for getting people to apply to join the enforcement team.

**Bill Cav** will send **Andy** all the things to send in the tinyLetter.

Deadline December 31 to apply.

**Bill Cav** suggests 5 people.

**Michéle** suggests we do need 7 because it's going to be a long-term team working.

**Andy** says let's just be flexible and see how many people apply.

Reach out to people who were involved or ran for the Council in the past.

USNC Meeting to discuss the applications:  
January 14, 2020.

Add a note that elections will be in February, exact date TBD; you can be on the Board and serve on this committee.

### **5. Volunteer to go to Adventure Travel Special Permit Hearing – Dec 12**

Official vote on if the USNC should support the Special Permit for Duvine Cycling at 337 Somerville Ave.

7 *yes*

2 *abstain*

**Andy** will write letter of support to send ahead of the hearing. Send out to USNC by end of week to edit if needed.

## **6. Report on Progress of SomerVision 2040**

December 19: City is presenting *SomerVision 2040* draft to the Planning Board.

Listing a few goals expected to be in the draft:

Goal of 20% affordable housing total in perpetuity. Currently ~10% of total Somerville housing is deemed as affordable housing.

75% of commuter trips by non-car transportation.

Open space – 105 new acres with 20 already accounted for (though **Tori** believes it's really only 15 acres accounted for).

80% decrease in carbon emissions.

1:1 jobs to worker ratio in Somerville.

100% age 18-24 sustainable path to college or career, and life.

Also, included in the document is some discussion of achieving fiscal sustainability of the City.

Need to check if the public can give feedback to the Planning Board that night.

City Staff posed multiple choice options for goals in different areas, that the Committees generally rejected and asked for their own goals. E.g. instead of 11,000-18,000 new housing units, set a goal of 20% total affordable. City wanted to reduce open space, but people wanted to keep the 125 acre goal from *Somervision 2030*. City wanted a set number of jobs, people wanted the number of jobs equal to the number of people or workers residing in Somerville.

**Bill Shelton's** fear is that the Staff will add their own thoughts on top of what the Committees want. Let's get a copy of that draft report as soon as possible to read through and go to the Planning Board with specific objections in the document and the overall process.

Should ask for a public hearing before the Planning Board if not already scheduled. Should in principle have a joint public hearing with the Planning Board and City Council.

Will the Planning Board be amenable to this request?

**Jacob** motions to make a letter to the Planning Board and City Council expressing dissatisfaction with the process for approving *SomerVision* Master Plan without going through an elected body, i.e. the City Council. Request a community process with approval from the City Council in addition to the Planning Board.

This letter could be expanded with more specific details as needed.

*Unanimous approval.*

**Jacob** will prepare a letter before end of the week.

This letter is different as compared to **Bill Shelton's** draft letter that critiqued that the *SomerVision* process was originally driven by the City Staff. Though some of those concerns appear to have been alleviated now thanks to pushing from the community members on the *SomerVision* committees.

**Michéle** suggests to have this first letter. Then we get the document and see if these are any detailed critiques that need to be brought up at a requested public hearing on *SomerVision* 2040.

## **7. Citywide Zoning Overhaul – Implications for Boynton Yards & Inner Belt**

**And**

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

**Jacob** says that any zoning overhaul should have a Community Benefits Agreement clause. Or if it has to go through the City, then it should be an open and transparent process.

Wednesday December 4, Meeting about Boynton Yards development, 6-8 pm.

Previously USNC members sat with DLJ member about developing a memorandum of understanding regarding community benefits.

DLJ partnered with Leget McCall, did a groundbreaking yesterday for a huge lab building. 100% Union Labor, underground parking. Plan to have 20% affordable housing for their housing development.

\$90-100 million in infrastructure required for Boynton Yards. Was originally \$30 million estimate.

Zoning Overhaul may be approved December 12. Last Land Use Meeting of City Council went over all amendments proposed for the Zoning Overhaul. Took 6 hours.

Zoning Overhaul has new definition of Overlay Districts. City does not have time or money to do Plans for all the development areas, so looking for large developers to handle these issues.

Large developers planning to develop multiple parcels can come in with a comprehensive plan, that will allow a huge density bonus of development. Most of Boynton Yards except for the east and west edges have no height limits. Plan to straighten South Street. Have not planned out a way to compensate people whose land is taken or how to compensate them. Plan for a large substantial park in the middle of Boynton Yards. At least 20% of the land must be Civic Space.

City is taking on huge amounts of debt that will constrain their choices.

Other than Inner Belt, Boynton Yards is the least developed and dense place in the City. High value Commercial Development could double the City's tax base. Katjana requested an amendment to require 75% of Boynton Yards to be office, R&D, Arts and Creative. Very narrow

and a couple City Councilors took issue with it, including JT Scott. Niedergang proposed a 68% compromise. At least 5% of all build sq footage needs to be a community center, 10% of st footage must be arts and creative, so it's really 53% this type of good commercial. Compromise was approved, allowing any commercial use to qualify except automotive use.

**Pennie** asked about Somerville limiting tax incentives for developers since everyone wants to develop in Somerville. Bill Shelton believes there are no tax incentives for these developments.

2/3 of the City's sewers runs through Boynton Yards, so the infrastructure development paid for by the City is probably needed.

**Jacob** asks, given our discussions with DLJ last year, we should we ask for more discussion and reiterate an ask for an MOU.

December 10 – public hearing on zoning overhaul.

Do we need things that cannot be done in zoning but could be in a CBA?  
Unlikely that any CBA requirements could go into Zoning. Could possibly go into a separate City Ordinance.

But we still could bring this matter up at the zoning hearing as being something for them to consider for future reference.

Proposal – send a delegate or delegation to the meeting Tuesday to advocate at the public hearing for the City to not pass a Zoning Overhaul until there are provisions some way (a City Ordinance etc.) for CBA negotiations to proceed with the major developers in these overlay districts and other larger sites above a certain threshold. Discuss how we have already done this with US2 and it worked. And we are in negotiations with DLJ for an MOU. Ask for such larger developments to require community input beyond just immediate abutters and neighbors.

7 *yes*,  
1 *no*,  
1 *abstain*.

Can we increase the community benefits required in zoning overhaul even more? Some suggestion that the zoning overhaul has maxed out those required benefits.

**Jacob** volunteers to go to the zoning public hearing meeting -- will send draft comments for feedback from the USNC Board.

**Tori** points out that there are some blank open spaces in the zoning overhaul where more benefits could be added, such as considerations for density bonuses. But also many required benefits already in there like underground parking required in Boynton Yards development. There will be an Opportunity Zone discussion at Somerville Community Corporation on Friday.

## **9. Progress on plan for outreach to other Somerville neighborhoods that might want to form neighborhood councils**

**Ann:** I spoke to Gilman Sq, went to Beacon street Star Mrkt mtg, and heard the neighborhoods asks and would like our NC to go to all areas of Somerville to offer our help and support to form an NC if they want. I know this can be done in short time. There is so much development going on in Somerville, we want all neighborhoods to negotiate CBAs when they can. I will be going to the Gilman Sq mtg first Mon in Jan to listen, and I wrote to Beacon St neighbors.

**Gary** points out that a neighborhood group in Miami heard about the work of the USNC and wants to speak to members of the USNC Board to get a better sense of how we operate, which they feel could help them in their work. Paola has suggested we set up a conference call for this purpose.

At the last Somerville Community Corporation/Union United Opportunity Zone Meeting, there was discussion of forming Union United groups in other Somerville neighborhoods based off the first Union United model.

Some discussion that any private group could ask for a CBA from a developer, if the developer agreed to negotiate.

**Pennie** suggests making a street team/technical assistance team of a few people who do outreach and take requests from different communities, a sort of committee preparing packs of materials, such as previous examples for forming Neighborhood Councils, past flyers, etc.

**Bill Shelton** supports empowering people to have power in their own neighborhoods. He suggests a more informal venue for discussions with different communities in Somerville. Community organizing – are the people in the community truly empowered.

**Michéle** suggests that we don't need a years-long process to form community empowerment organizations in other areas of Somerville, as it took so long in Union Square. We need to be fast-acting to empower people.

## **10. Public Comment**

**Gary Trujillo:** I spoke previously with a person from Miami (a lawyer who is advising a community group) who reached out to the USNC about trying to form a neighborhood council. [She had discovered our web site and was impressed with what we are doing and have accomplished, and the degree of transparency with which we operate.] It appears to be a bunch of local community groups, including several churches. They're looking to together form a neighborhood council. They appear to be dealing with the issue of sea level rise and developers trying to build in higher ground neighborhoods that are low income, which could lead to gentrification and displacement.

*Consensus that no motion is needed for us to do outreach to other groups across the country to provide advice.*

SCATV USNC membership has lapsed. Need to pay an annual fee. \$125 – **Michéle** said she would pay if we don't have funds.

If anyone has any photos or other information to put on website.

Van Hardy and Greg Hill took photos. **Gary** will contact them.

Bill Cav gives Gary press release. Andy will give Gary any details also to be put in tinyLetter.

Tufts Democrats want to meet with us, **Michéle** would be happy to go to a meeting -- will send them an email. Andy and Pennie said they would love to go too.

Next USNC Meeting: Tuesday January 14, 7 pm.

We have to pick an election date before then!