

Union Square Neighborhood Council Meeting

March 31, 2020

3 pm – 5 pm

Zoom Meeting

Attendees:

Board Members:

Michèle Hansen

Bill Cavellini

Andy Greenspon

Pennie Taylor

Danyal Najmi

Bill Shelton

Isabella Drago

Phil Privitera

Ann Camara

Gary Trujillo (joined at 4 pm)

Tori Antonino

Sarah Dunbar

David Scott (joined at 4 pm)

Outgoing Board Member:

Paola Massoli

Community Members:

Jessica Eshleman, Union Square Main Streets

Alexis Farmer, Student at Harvard Kennedy School, working on a project for an Affordable Housing Development Corporation in Union Square.

Paul Penman

Frank Kautz

Yvette Wilks, on the Board of Somerville Media Center

Remote Participant:

Daniela Cimo, Esq., Staff Attorney, [Florida Community Development Legal Project](#), Legal Services of Greater Miami, Inc.

1. Welcome and introductions

Bill Cav thanks the outgoing Board members for their service and welcomes incoming new Board members. Bill Cav thanks the Elections Committee for their work on the Election, especially during the COVID-19 chaos.

2. Public Comment

Jessica thanks the Board. USMS has been partnering with the USNC since it started in 2017. Thanks to the USNC for encouraging the community to support the local businesses in the area. USMS working in conjunction with Central Square Business District and East Cambridge Business Association have prepared this document:

Grassroots for Main Streets Executive Summary <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1HfmmBAVjLgALubNngBxvOFcYtigRiJ2m>

Executive Summary of Policy Recommendations to the State Legislature of Relief Recommendations for Small Businesses.

USMS compiling resources to help small businesses understand if they can stay open and what they are allowed to do under this current health crisis. www.somervilledelivers.com is a collaboration among the business associations in Somerville to help the community know what businesses are open.

USMS main webpage <https://www.unionsquaremain.org/> now lists which businesses are open or what can be purchased from them.

Alexis Farmer: Affordable Housing Development competition - working with US2 and POAH on the Affordable Housing D4.3 parcel. We are looking to get a sense of what the community is looking for in this development.

Pennie: Idea for 1 or 2 current Board members or members of the CBA Enforcement Committee to share documents with Alexis and her group.

People who will be in contact with Alexis: Bill Cav, Bill Shelton, Michèle Hansen, Ann Camera, Tori Antonino. Bill Cav will organize it. Alexis send Bill Cav questions ahead of time about this.

3. Approval of Minutes of January 14, 2020 & February 18, 2020 Meetings

Approved by unanimous consent.

4. Election Committee report

Bill Cav will ask Gary to remove parenthetical description on the Election Results

5. Decision on when to elect new officers

Elect officers at the beginning of the next USNC meeting.

Asking people to nominate themselves for this year. Michèle would be happy to stay on as co-chair. Ann interested. Andy interested. No one yet interested in being Secretary and Treasurer.

Pennie will talk about treasurer responsibilities.

6. Decision on how to respond to results of non-binding advisories for change to Bylaws concerning election procedures

Some polling seemed clear, some polling was inconclusive.

Amendments must be proposed two weeks ahead of the meeting at which a vote on such amendments is done.

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

Bill Cav: First CBA Enforcement Committee meeting with US2 was scheduled but then was postponed due to the shelter-in-place order. Alternative virtual meeting would have been today, but that has been postponed also. Greg K wants his assistant Justin Kuntz to be present but he is away this week. Probably will have a virtual meeting with both of them on April 8.

All the work current being done on D2 is work being done on the GLX.

Reminder of 6 Member **CBA** Monitoring Committee

Site work was planned to start at end of March/in April.

No construction until middle of July at earliest.

This may be delayed due to current public health crisis.

Ann: Called JT Scott, chair of City Council Finance Committee to ask about money for SCC First Source Workers program. He said Ann has to contact Tom Galligani. No answer from Galligani yet.

Michèle: Spoke with Jessica - USMS and First Source have been in contact with each other, working on the same goal to get the expected funds from US2 as laid out in the CBA.

Bill Cav: Receipt of funds for this should not be tied to the money made in the Covenant between the Mayor and US2.

Danyal: First Source is very active right now, working with people who have been affected by the shelter-in-place order in MA, especially those who have had hours cut or were laid off. Helping them fill out unemployment benefits info.

Paola: Send email to Board about the CARES Act passed by federal government that has funding opportunities for small business that they can apply for. Add this link to the website and send it out in the tinyLetter. Job Creation and Retention Fund is doing support for non-profits.

8. Decision on whether to invite Tom Macone, developer of large project on Glass Stop/Russell site across from Target, to make presentation to board or try to meet with Dan Bartman of OSPCD first on zoning for the site

9. Decision on whether to invite John Fenton of DLJ, developer of Boynton Yards, to make a presentation to the board about plans for Gentle Giant site

Combined discussion for Agenda Items 8 and 9:

Bill Cav: DLJ is currently building on their current site at Boynton Yards, and have also taken most of the Gentle Giant site - they have mostly preliminary plans there.

Pennie: Are developers coming to us because they want to know what the community actually wants in developments or do they just want to get “community buy-in or approval”? We need clear objectives for these meetings and presentations. Maybe we need a rubric of what would qualify to have the USNC give a favorable review of a development.

Ann: These developers do a lot of research, add a lot of notes, things that *might* include things from the community. But they don't want a list from us - they want to do their own thing and remain independent.

Michèle: What we want from a developer may depend on the size and type of developer. Macone and DLJ are very different. We are supposed to have a follow-up meeting with Brickbottom Association to figure out plan for another meeting with Macone.

Tori: Having feedback to present to the developers that is visual in addition to a list of things as what the community wants as an alternative perspective to a developer's initial plans. This would generate a better back and forth relationship with developers.

Paola: Agree with **Pennie** on having guiding principles a developer should follow to have the USNC endorse or approve a project.

Bill Shelton asks what Michèle means that we have more leverage with one developer vs another.

Michèle: The Macone development requires a Special Permit for the Hotel.

Bill Cav: Not sure what DLJ needs from the City for the Gentle Giant second phase of their development. Example: They agreed to move the South Street Groundworks Somerville Garden east and north of where it is now because they want to straighten out South St. It would sit on top of the required rainwater withholding tank that has to be installed in phase two of Boynton Yards. There is a significant open space also in their second phase plan that is more centrally located in that area. There are a lot of infrastructure improvements that will be required - I am unsure what variances they may need given the Zoning that is there now.

Bill Shelton: Some permitting may still remain for phase one. I have not met Macone, but I have met the co-Presidents of Legin McCaul and met with Jon Fenton. And both are more responsive than US2. I feel good about what they are proposing so far, though that does not mean it cannot be improved. We should all meet with them.

Michèle agrees that they are generally more responsive. Emphasizes that developers need to answer every question the community puts forward to them, to show that the community is at least heard.

Bill Cav: Jon Fenton was very clear that he does not want to sign a CBA with the USNC.

Phil: Motion to schedule a meeting with these developers.

Michèle: Not opposed to such meetings but We need a clear objective for any meeting like this.

Paola: What about a Memorandum of Understanding as opposed to a CBA?

Pennie: Suggested an MoU with DLJ at a meeting before they started phase one, but DLJ never responded to it.

Michèle: A bunch of USNC board members did meet with DLJ about their phase one, but it was just one building. I think mostly that these developers don't want us to give them trouble.

Bill Cav: Agree that we should decide what we want from any of these developers before we meet with them.

Bill Shelton: Mystic View Task Force was effective because we looked over and mastered all the documents for those developments in Assembly.

Tori: Agree that we need to understand the proposed development documents in order to have counter proposals.

Michèle: Friendly Amendment: Make a prepared list of questions and priorities and understand developer documents before setting up any meeting with a developer for a specific development.

Phil agrees with friendly Amendment.

Unanimously approved.

10. Report on Progress of SomerVision 2040 (10 minutes)

End of comment period for *SomerVision 2040* was supposed to be March 31.

Tori: Currently the Planning Department says Comments on *SomerVision 2040* will be accepted until noon April 17. There was supposed to be a Public Hearing Tonight at Land Use, but that appears to not be happening due to current shelter-in-place. I started a document on critiques of *SomerVision 2040*, but some of the points I originally wrote no longer feel appropriate given the Outreach and changes the Planning Department has made based on Community Input.

Help Tori with going over most recent *SomerVision 2040* document and possibly preparing a letter analyzing it: Tori, Ann, Michèle, Paola, Bill Shelton consulting and helping. Tori will share Google Doc of draft letter with the Board.

Bill Shelton: We should talk about the process as well as the document. Not all the priorities in the document can be done given the current situation. I'm not sure how to make a more systemic way to implement the plan.

Bill Cav: I know that the Zoning Board of Appeals has been meeting and taking public feedback and public comment. So public comment periods and City processes are still going forward.

Frank Kautz points to Executive Order allowing Remote Public Meetings for Cities:
<https://www.lowellsun.com/2020/03/12/emergency-change-permits-remote-public-meetings/>

11. Discussion of formation of committee to make suggestions for broadening participation in the USNC over the long haul

Gary points out that we already have an **Outreach and Communications Committee**, but it needs renewed energy and action to do outreach more effectively.

Bill C.: Who is on that committee?

Gary: Ann, Michèle, Tori, David (from the library) [and Pennie].

Andy: Gary, you control the list, because it's your proprietary email system.

Gary: I'm using the mailing list software present on the server we use for the web site. I'd be glad to share the responsibility for maintaining the list, if anyone is interested.

Tori: I think switching to a platform that's more accessible to people would be the most effective in getting help with that task.

Gary: This is a topic that should come up once that committee gets going again. Changing to a different content management system would be quite difficult at this point, one reason being that there is a lot of content on the site. I'd be happy to teach anyone who's interested how to do editing and management of the site.

David Scott: Lumina - application to edit PDFs in Google Drive.

12. Public Comment

Gary: *Introducing Daniela Cimo.*

Daniela Cimo: Found your website. I'm an attorney in Miami at a legal aid organization, Legal Services of Greater Miami. We represent non-profit organizations, one of which is a community group that came together to negotiate a CBA in their Coconut Grove neighborhood in Miami. I love your web site and the way you have things set up out there for everyone to see. I'd like to see how you govern yourselves and the work that's been done with developers in your neighborhood. I've gone through your bylaws and other organizing documents, and would like to learn more about your CBA efforts. I did get to hear a bit about those efforts - it's a similar thing we are trying to implement.

Gary: We talked at a previous meeting, based on a suggestion by Paola, about setting up a conference call (which could be done via *Zoom*) for a number of board members to speak with Daniela to answer her questions.

Michèle: Is there a specific developer you're working with now?

Daniela: Right now they're a small development project. [The City of Miami] is re-zoning applications that developers are applying for. Our group is made up of churches, various civic groups, and other non-profits - it's a membership organization. The Board just came together six months ago. We are trying to figure out the best way to get everyone on the same page and working on different elements. Trying to figure out everyone's roles in the organization. Currently negotiating with two developers who want upzoning, to build five storey apartment buildings. Group's primary goals: Affordable Housing, Green Space, etc. We have gotten two developers to commit to on-site affordable housing; the other developer is committing to make a contribution to an affordable housing fund. Our city government has also suspended public hearings, but public meetings are being held remotely. Not doing Zoning and Land Use meetings right now. Everything is on hold for two months. Gary's email came at a great time, because we need to make preparations before going before the commission in a couple of months.

We will schedule a separate Zoom Meeting with Daniela to discuss how USNC did their CBA project. Michèle, Ann, Gary.

Tori: Land Use is meeting tonight - on meeting, Third meeting discussing Affordable Housing Overlay District. Additional things on Zoning.
Urban Forestry Committee meeting virtually on Thursday.