

**Union Square Neighborhood Council Meeting**

**December 21, 2020**

**7 pm – 9 pm**

**Zoom Meeting**

**Attendees:**

**Board Members:**

Michèle Hansen  
Ann Camara  
Andy Greenspon  
Bill Cavellini  
Bill Shelton  
Isabella Drago  
Gary Trujillo  
Tori Antonino

**Developer and Associates:**

Tom Macone  
B. K. Boley, Stantec  
Ginger Desmond, Stantec  
Johanna W. Schneider, Legal

**Community Members:**

JT Scott  
Bob McWatters  
Phil McKenna  
Ben Baldwin  
Frank Kautz  
Cassie White, CAAS  
Sam Engelstad  
Aaron Weber  
Paul Kominers  
Serena Bodner  
Jim McGinnis  
Chris LaRoche  
Jacob  
Tom Bent  
Meredith Porter  
Anne S Ryan  
Stephen Mackey  
Joe B

Steve  
Amelia Aboff

### **1. Welcome and Introductions**

### **2. Public Comment**

**JT Scott:** Thank you for all of the work that ya'll have done. Congratulations. I'm hopeful that as the new year comes around, we can get the USNC more engaged in hosting neighborhood meetings. I could not be more impressed with the work this group has done and encourage you all to keep it up.

### **3. Announcement of commitment letter from DLJ in Boynton Yards**

**Bill Cav:** On Thursday, December 17, after 5-6 months of negotiations and organizing on the part of the USNC, a commitment letter was signed with John Fenton of DLJ for the Boynton Yards development Master Plan. As usual, what you will see is an agreement that is a compromise. But it is one that we think we can stand by. We hope that it will be a signal to other developers who intend to develop in the Union Square general area that if they engage in honest and straightforward negotiations, we will be reasonable and defend the values of our neighborhood.

### **4. Presentation by CV Properties, the developer of the project located at 64 Webster Avenue (corner of Webster Avenue and Columbia Street)**

### **5. Q & A with CV Properties about their planned development**

*CV Properties could not attend due to the CEO having to attend to a personal matter. This meeting will be rescheduled to January.*

### **6. Presentation by Macone/Capital Hall Partners on their planned Gateway Innovation Center development of the Hub Glass site, between Target and McGrath Highway**

### **7. Q & A with Macone/Capital Hall Partners about their planned development**

**Tom Macone:** This is the first official meeting with the USNC. We have not submitted any official filing to the Planning Board. We wanted to make sure we were moving in the right direction before wasting anybody's time -- including our own. We hope to file in January to start that application process. We will be developing according to the zoning as written, so we will not be going before the Zoning Board of Appeals.

*Tom discusses his history in the community and goals for this development.*

*B. K. Boley gives a presentation of the massing, traffic circulation, images of imagined outdoor space, and other details of the development.*

**Andy** asks about garage entrances. **B.K. Boley** and **Tom Macone** respond that there are two, one on Somerville Ave extension, one on the new thoroughfare. There will be exits onto Medford St and Somerville Ave extension under McGrath.

**Isabella** asks about space for people outside during winter as most of the images from the presentation were during summer. **Boley** says this is a good question and something to look into.

**Bill S** asks if **Tom** has purchased the property yet. **Tom** says that the property is large and very expensive (high seven figures), so the purchase does not occur until certain benchmarks are met in the planning of the development. But they do control the parcel and have already invested a few million dollars into design.

**Bill Cav** asks how certain we are that McGrath Highway will be grounded in 2025. **Tom** replies that the designs do not require the grounding of McGrath, but they are taking into account that possibility. The consultants believe that the grounding may fall within the timeline of construction on this site. **Bill Cav** points out that the grounding of McGrath is a state project and presumably primarily state funding. **Tom** says that if McGrath is grounded, some land from the City or their site may be involved. **Tom** also points out that developers are contributing to the City to help pay for the GLX extension as Somerville had to pay \$50 million extra to fund the GLX construction. **Bill Cav** says that he is aware that the developers are paying some few million each through covenants with the City for the GLX, but that may not even reach \$20 million, leaving the City still in debt to pay for the GLX. And some of these developments may not come to fruition, especially due to the pandemic. **Bill Cav** does not believe the city will contribute much to the grounding of McGrath and wants to see if **Tom** sees his development going forward in a way that can survive, thrive, and enhance without the grounding of McGrath. **Tom** says yes, and that the project was not predicated on the grounding of McGrath.

**Tori** states the project is disappointing in the amount of green space and civic space it will provide. **Tori** acknowledges this is the fault of the zoning and **Tom** is going by the letter of the zoning law. Much of what is here is expanded sidewalks and a small plaza. We are missing a lot when we have these immense projects that do not carry their share of what should be given back to the community beyond infrastructure and contributions to the green line. Other important things such as a community center and civic space. **Tori** asks for native pollinators. The urban forestry committee is working on developing a variety of planting standards with native ecosystems. **Tom** replies that a good percentage of the land mass at the edges of the project site is being given to broader City infrastructure projects, such as aligning Medford and Poplar Streets.

**Michèle** states that it is disconcerting to many on the neighborhood council and the community that the zoning is what it is. A lot of the community doesn't understand where this zoning came from. But asks if it's possible still to have the heights of the buildings be less. The traffic is going to be a mess. **Tom** says that it's the City itself, not JT Scott or anyone individually in how the zoning for the development was set up. Things are going to change. We could have done a lot more density in this project, but we adjusted it. When it gets into \$30 million to the City to various buckets of cost that is not complete yet. **Michèle** points out that nobody knows what the buckets are and where the money goes. All the money in the buckets is already spent by the City, whether the highschool, GLX contribution, or otherwise. Tom states that it directly affects the ability of his development to do good things for the neighborhood. **Tom** states that the USNC is a great organization and should direct some of their energy away from developers and toward City Hall to get actions done.

**Tom** confirms there will be 1,000 parking spaces on the site. Tom takes the numbers he has with historical data, gives it to the City and they say whether it works or not. Tom is not going to get into the traffic studies as it is not his area of expertise. He states he does not want to make things worse because that will not benefit the development. Tom states there will not be midnight large trucks going through the neighborhood.

**Tom** states that he wants to recreate and carry on the old Somerville with small businesses and few chains. They are bringing in 4,000 minimum jobs of all levels, and they will need services to support them.

**Bill Cav** likes dual use of the open civic space for people and then service vehicles at off-hours. Bill guesses that most of the deliveries will be from UPS, Fedex, etc, to the office space and labs, as this is not manufacturing space where trucks with large equipment will be coming and going often. **Tom** confirms this point.

**Bill Cav** states the restaurants in Union and Inman Square have been very innovative in moving things out into the sidewalks and parking lanes for outdoor dining. Bill has a vision that similar sharing of space is possible on this relatively small parcel. Bill asks if Tom could take this same principle and look at the parking in the development in a similar way. And if so, then they might not need the 1,000 parking spaces underground, and parking underground is expensive already. In Boynton Yards, John Fenton has already found that he has hard granite that he has to go through under one of the future proposed buildings, so he said that he is looking at that garage again given the soil conditions he is facing and the issues the USNC brought up about shared parking. **Bill** points out that US2 is implementing shared parking between the residential and commercial. **Bill** asks for ways to decrease the amount of parking, encourage public transit use and cycling use. Have sheltered bicycle parking, etc. In order to ease the congestion that is there now.

**Tom** gives his position on parking: We've spent a lot of time finding out what the market needs to survive. Less than 25% of the workers will be able to take their cars. Not everyone is a bike person. We physically are not there yet. We are building the parking because we need it to make this work. In the design, we have electric car, bike, and electric bike parking. We're ahead of the game on this. We also know that Target will be developed some day. Hopefully it will be me doing that development. What we are doing now is an expensive gamble with the minimal amount of parking we feel we are putting in this development. We are designing this building for different uses should we not need the four levels of parking. But we have to provide that option now. We feel we are on the low end of the scale of parking to make this work. Our capital investors are nervous, but we have told them we believe this will work.

**Michèle** states that the USNC wants to continue to have conversations with Tom in the future. Tom supports that idea.

**B. K.** states that the hotel is 20 stories, 234 feet. Building B is 17 stories. Building A is 22 stories. A lab planner asks why so tall for a lab building. B.K. states that certain chemicals used in lab buildings have to be on the bottom 3-4 floors. Up to the 9th floor are some other chemicals. And then the top would have to be things like robotics. So they envision this as overall research and development buildings. **Ginger Desmond** states that the need for various re-stock of supplies is 24/7, but they are not delivered 24/7 and labs typically have back-ups in case of emergencies, so as to not have deliveries all the time. B.K. states green roofs will not be open to the public as these are lab buildings. Those will primarily be for the workers in the building to have lunch, etc.

**Tom** states that he cannot promise anything about parking on a future developed Target site or any other details unless or until he would be developing that site.

**Bill Cav** thanks Tom for coming on and looks forward to future conversations with him. Bill Cav states that the USNC will be talking to OSPCD at the City about all the issues raised here and by other community groups.

Michèle: Thank you for your time. We look forward to speaking with you again.

Tom and team give thanks.

#### **8. Approval of meeting minutes from December 07, November 23**

*Unanimous approval of both meeting minutes.*

#### **9. Update on efforts to get a meeting with OSPCD – Tom Galligani, Dan Bartman, and Sarah Lewis**

**Ann:** I have written to them three times, and I still have not gotten any response.

**Andy:** Should we ask the City Councillors about this issue?

**JT Scott:** I would be happy to bug folks, I wasn't aware you were trying to get a meeting.

**Ann:** We did have a meeting with Melissa Woods and Tom Galligani already. This is a second one we are asking for. Galligani thinks we have talked about everything that needed to be talked about. But we want an on-going process. We know Melissa Woods is leaving and Dan Bartman will be our new contact there [at OSPCD].

**Bill Cav:** We need these meetings, and you heard one of the reasons why via the Tom Macone discussion. It is unconscionable that Tom Galligani can say that we've covered all the topics. Both sides have to agree to that. We pay them to do their job, and they are not doing their job and are making decisions without adequate participation of the residents most affected. There is no Master Plan in Boynton Yards, and we had to negotiate benefits without that Master Plan. We have the same problem with CV Partners at Webster/Columbia and with Tom Macone. There is unfinished business at the Planning Department and what was finished did not involve the citizens of Somerville. If we have to have a 10 or 50 person petition to the City Council to have City staff sit down with us, then we will do it.

**Tori:** I was thinking about making this an entire letter by the USNC because despite Ann's persistent efforts, they appear to be ignoring this. I would help work on a draft of such a letter to send to City staff and cc' the City Council. We should also try for a day time meeting, which may be easier for the city staff.

**JT:** I agree with ya'll 100%. I am happy to broker such a meeting, and can put in a board order if necessary. I am fully at your disposal to help make this happen.

**Bill Cav:** Thank you JT. I would like to include those city councillors whose wards abut the developments.

### **10. Report on SST Food Drive**

**Ann: Michèle** and I went out with \$500 to spend at CostCo. We went to the Food Drive Saturday morning and we packed hundreds of food bags. People donated fresh fruit and vegetables. And then it started raining, and very few people showed up to pick up the food. However, everyone packed the food into their cars afterward and brought it all over Massachusetts to feed those in need. David Scott came and sang as well.

**JT** points out that the Somerville Community Fridge is active and used by the community, located outside CrossFit.

### **11. Bylaws changes- vote timetable**

**Andy:** We must notice the bylaw vote two weeks ahead. So we can have that vote at a meeting in January.

### **12. Any other items not foreseen by the Board**

### **13. Scheduling next USNC meeting in the New Year**

*Next meeting will be Monday January 18, 7 pm. Vote on the bylaw amendment will occur at 7:15 pm. **Andy** will send proposed bylaw changes this week. And will work with **Gary** to put the info on the website.*

### **14. Public comment**

**Gary:** We need to start thinking about how we will do the election. It's not too soon even if the election will be in May. I would like to meet with those who are interested in considering possible electronic options.

*Agreement to come up with possible options to consider on how to vote by the end of January.*

### **15. Executive Session for the purposes of developer negotiation strategies**

*Unanimous vote to go into Executive Session.*