

## **Union Square Neighborhood Council - Meeting March 29, 2018**

### Attendance

USNC Voting Members:

Rachel Weil, Jacob Kramer, Pennie Taylor, Michele Hansen, Tori Antonino, Ben Baldwin, Ben Bradlow, Erik Neu, Bill Cavellini, Joanne Berry

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Neighborhood Resident Members: Simon Hill, Peter Insley, Gary Trujillo, Van Hardy, Sal, Andy Greenspon, Wig Zamore

Co-Facilitators: Rachel Weil, Bill Cavellini

### **Agenda**

1. Welcome and Introductions
  - o Rachel welcomed the group and started off introductions
2. Recommendations from CBA Committee on next steps
  - o Postponed until Jacob Kramer arrives
  - o Do we need pre-prioritization before the negotiations committee is formed?
    - i. CBA committee felt that we want more of a process: 2 meetings to address 7 subject areas in CBA report. Goal: Whoever wants to come can go through report and pick out ideas that would be final recommendations from CBA Committee. Meetings to be scheduled.
    - ii. Will develop document of larger and smaller priorities
  - o Call for nominations has been sent out. None have been received.
    - i. How will the decision be made? This is something the board will have to deal with
  - o Put together package, sent to city, about our candidacy as designated negotiating body. Mike Firestone took this work on.
  - o Bill- Move to approve 2 subject meetings proposed by CBA Committee
    - i. Ben Bradlow- seconded
    - ii. Erik- board level or committee level?
      1. Jacob- facilitated by committee, but all are welcome to attend.
    - iii. Bill- I would word it differently- subject matter that has surfaced must be worked on more if we're going to make specific asks of the developer. We don't have specific enough asks.
      1. Also, we should be talking about overall strategy of how to approach the developer with these asks.
    - iv. Tori- This is the most important work on the CBA so far- we have done the outreach and now we have to prioritize and advocate. We should make a big deal out of these meetings.

- v. Ben Bradlow- Do we think it's realistic to get through all of these issues in 2 meetings?
  1. We should also have a discussion on strategy. There is some discussion in the report, but useful to have more.
  2. We could have regular council meetings, dedicated just to these issues. Pushing these discussions out to committee works for some issues but I think these should be done in plenary.
    - a. Jacob- We should go through topic by topic as a board. Doing so as a board will allow us to make decisions. Let's take up one thing in our next meeting and see how it goes
      - i. Michele- This isn't going to work given time limitations
    - b. Committee of the hall- could have multiple meetings per week
    - c. Erik- Jacob and Ben are right. These are important decisions and anything discussed in small group will have to get rediscussed in a big group.
- vi. Jacob- Propose that we place a significant amount of time on the next agenda to discuss a section of the CBA report
  1. Ben Bradlow- I suggest we try this out with a less controversial topic- things that have relatively little monetary impact. Traffic is very important, but I don't think it will cause a lot of fights.
  2. Next agenda will include discussion of traffic section of CBA Report on the agenda. Goal is to come out of this with concrete asks.
    - a. Ben Bradlow- Can Jacob send a small brief on what we will be discussing?
- o Negotiations Committee selection-
  - i. Joanne- Might be beneficial for the group to discuss a more detailed proposal
  - ii. Jacob- Most of the CBA Committee: Want a broad number of nominations from a variety of perspectives and expertises. Ultimate process should be done in executive session as outlined in bylaws.
    1. One committee member expressed concern that executive session would lead to a law suit.
  - iii. Gary - I would like to see a published list of criteria for the qualifications for members of the negotiating team
    1. Jacob- List of qualifications has gone out

2. Gary- We need something to keep the board accountable to membership to satisfy the needs represented in the report. We need Negotiating committee members to represent certain interests such as the community center.
  - a. Joanne- Sometimes the best representative of certain interests isn't the best candidate for the job.
  - b. Ben Bradlow- In any hiring process, criteria are made public. The board can be judged if they have used those criteria in their selection process.
3. Simon- Executive session bylaws violate open meeting law, this isn't so serious that it can't be done in a transparent way.
  - a. Michele- There are personal reasons why a candidate wouldn't want the process to be public. Deliberations may be limited if comments will be made public.
  - b. Executive session minutes eventually become public
  - c. Andy Greenspon-This has been made political. Votes would have to be recorded and anything discussed would eventually be found out. Executive session invites pushback from community.
  - d. Peter- Is board actually required to release minutes?
    - i. Yes
  - e. Michele- US2 won't be making their conversations public
4. Bill- Motion that the board initiate the selection process in executive session, Interviews of candidates take place in executive session, and final decision be made in executive session and reported back to USNC.
  - a. Pennie- seconded
  - b. Tori- I am curious how absent members of the council feel. If members of the board are nominated, will they be required to leave for those discussions?
    - i. Yes
  - c. Andy- point of clarification. Will applications and CVs be public?
    - i. Bill- I don't see why they shouldn't be

- d. Erik- will there be interviews?
  - i. Jacob- depends on applicant pool. Informational interviews could be done in open session.
  - ii. Bill- In terms of my motion- I do not accept that interviews be done in open session
- e. Simon- Article 2 Section 3 of bylaws are violated by going into executive session
  - i. Ben Bradlow- Is it possible to discuss interviews in open session? Or at least like to hear why against it?
    - 1. Bill- Have to plan on there being enough candidates that this would take too much time at a board meeting. All selection processes involve a winnowing down without interviews. My motion does not remove that possibility.
    - 2. Pennie- More clarification on this would help
- f. Tori- I would like candidates to be able to speak in public about why they're qualified, etc. Maybe not an interview but some space to advocate for themselves
  - i. Joanne- Public CVs and letters of intent may be the best form to do this in. This would resolve tension in terms of allowing applicants to see the experience of their competitors.
- g. Michele- People don't necessarily have the skillset of zoning etc and may not be able to answer public questions.
- h. Erik- The proposal of overall executive session would give us less tolerance for executive session in the negotiations process. We need to be judicious about when we use executive session
  - i. Ben- What are the alternatives to Bill's motion? Is there a better proposal?
  - ii. Erik- Don't have an alternate proposal
- i. Andy Greenspon- If interviews are chosen to be public, taking up time should not be an issue. We just have to advertise the meetings.

- j. Pennie- objective of selecting negotiating committee is to get the best team to represent all of us. This should be the most exciting thing- we need everybody's enthusiasm. I don't like beginning from a point of doubt and undermining the negotiating committee.
- k. Bill- I call a vote on the question of original motion.
  - i. Tori- clarification- does this prevent a public presentation of candidates, opportunity to advocate for themselves
  - ii. Simon- Role call vote?
  - iii. In executive session it has to be recorded who voted which way.
    - 1. Tori- Motion that the vote we are about to take be taken by role call vote
      - a. Bill- no problem with amendment
      - b. Erik- seconded

I. Role Call Vote:

- i. Pennie : yes
- ii. Michele : yes
- iii. Bill : yes
- iv. Jacob : yes
- v. Ben Bradlow aye
- vi. Ben Baldwin: yes
- vii. Joanne: no
- viii. Erik Neu: no
- ix. Tori: no
- x. Rachel: yes
- xi. Results: 7 yes, 3 no

3. Zoning and Affordability, a proposal

- o Jacob- Hearing next week (4/3). There may be some things we can support as a board:
  - i. Fred Berman will add the following to zoning: Much talk about neighborhoods being downzoned. Amendment says: existing 3 unit building, if demolished, could be rebuilt as 3 unit building. 2 unit building with a V-shaped roof would give option to square the roof and add additional unit if it is affordable. Incentivizes new affordable units. Can the USNC support this?
  - ii. Rachel- Do you suggest we show up to support this language?

- iii. Jacob- yes. We could vocalize our intention to support the amended zoning language. Asking for support of board.
  - 1. Tori- I'd like this to be discussed publicly. Worry of not downzoning in neighborhoods is that, let's say there are 2 3-bedroom units. Could become 3 2-bedroom units, decreasing stock of family housing
    - a. Jacob there is clear language about that saying it's not ok under the amendment.
    - b. Jacob- process is not limited to this public hearing. Will forward language to the public list.
- 4. Update on amendment to covenant process with BOA
  - o Rachel- Amendment from US2 received this week
  - o Jacob- We submitted revised language to covenant that was approved by the board and administration. US2 proposed their own language. We didn't have time to respond. BOA could not accept "item d" - "if there is monetary payment, that be credited on a dollar for dollar basis with what the city had negotiated for city benefits funds." They asked US2 if they would be willing to strike that portion, US2 said no. Gives us insight to their opening position, which is that they don't want to put any more money into this negotiation. BOA unanimously voted against US2's language. Recognizing USNC by mechanism provided in covenant through a Community Benefits Ordinance. They will probably come up with a stripped down version in the spirit of USNC's amendment.
  - o Bill- I think we need to take a position tonight re: US2's starting salvo- which is a non-starter from my perspective. They can't define limits of negotiations before they start. We received an email from US2 today. We should respond. Tone and content should come from the board.
    - i. Propose that we thank Paul for reaching out and define their changes to the covenant as a non-starter and leave it at that.
    - ii. Jacob- Didn't necessarily place a cap on negotiations, just wanted to be credited for their contribution to the city.
    - iii. Tori- Procedurally, the BOA has no power in negotiating to inform the covenant. The mayor should follow the BOA's lead on this. If the aldermen are clear, the mayor should respect that.
    - iv. Erik- We could avoid the term non-starter, "We were looking for a non-material, procedural change to the covenant, and you came in with a material change"
    - v. Jacob- Quite possible that language could continue to evolve into something the BOA can accept. In our letter we could express hope that they accept the language that we had proposed and accepted.

- vi. Simon- I saw an assessment on linkage that was going to cost US2 \$8million. That credit is a lot different from \$1million.
- vii. Pennie- US2 is saying that adhering to law is a contribution to the CBA
- viii. Ben Bradlow- Second Erik's suggestion. We should be as straight-forward as possible in response. We look forward to finding the most expeditious way to negotiate.
- ix. Andy Greenspon- I interpret this action by US2 - CBO would distribute funds to various communities. There had been a discussion...???

#### 5. Built Environment Committee Update

- o BEC met on Sunday, 1pm at Fortissimo. Topics
- o CDSP- What is timely for us to determine if US2 has negotiated their payment in lieu of civic space. That number has to be figured out before they're granted a special permit review.
- o Upcoming D2 design- maybe coming out in 4-5 weeks
  - i. Configuration of civic space is not well-formed right now (in the middle of a busy road)
  - ii. Feeling of the committee is a desire to combine
  - iii. Community should have an iterative process for civic space
- o Neighborhood parks location need to be decided 1 year from CDSP approval. We need to engage and get the community in on this
- o George Proakis and Sara White would like to attend a meeting on April 12 to answer questions on development. Tori asked a few questions and George said he wouldn't know the answer, but US2 would. Sara White is the main contact at the city for US2.
- o Current zoning admin process- Tori: I want to push for a follow up to the open house style process. That there be a subsequent meeting to address issues and concerns. US2 may be required to do this based on some things that they have missed.
  - i. Joanne- At what point do we reach out to people on civic space? USMS may have some ideas and insight. Best to reach out to people who are already working on this rather than adding more tasks for ourselves
- o We should begin paying attention to the Boynton Yards district overlay- requires certain amount of civic space, affordable housing, residential, commercial
  - i. Erik- Is it a real overlay or is it the changes in the zoning to the Boynton Yards area?
    - 1. Andy- It's an overlay
    - 2. Erik- Will there be a review process?
    - 3. Wig- 2 big Boynton Yards buildings are going up faster than US2 buildings

- a. Startup buildings and lab buildings. From NY and have more capital- able to move faster than most developers in this area
  - b. They're going to zoning board and planning board next week
  - c. Rachel- Can someone with the information send it out to the group?
  - d. Pennie- JT Scott is checking in on this. If you have questions send them to me and I can ask Alderman Scott.
  - e. Wig- Assembly Sq proposal will also be at that planning board meeting. Hotel and residential is blowing the height limit by over 100 ft. This has been unplanned- better to have a planning process.
- o Outreach to US2 and city of Somerville
- o Documentation of questions on development
  - i. Tori is creating a Google Doc to compile questions for George Proakis and Sara White on the 12th
  - ii. Also a document to compile questions for Dan Bartman
- o Rachel- How do people feel about this proposed meeting with the planning office on 4/12?
  - i. Rachel- We should get a list of questions out in advance about a week to George.
  - ii. Bill- I was hoping to have Dan Bartman instead of George and Sara.
    - 1. Tori- I want to dialogue with George on progress with US2
    - 2. Bill- There are some controversial things coming up critical to our position of influence on the US development. specifically: US2's suggestion for how to change the covenant. This could take some time in upcoming meetings. I don't want to set aside an hour for the planning office if we're unclear whether they will have answers. Keep that section of the agenda to 30-40 minutes.
  - iii. Erik- What are the relevant questions? We should have them together by the 5th, Dan Bartman is an expert at zoning but may not know about US2 progress.
  - iv. Ben Bradlow- We basically have a week to develop these questions, while we don't know who is best to answer our questions. Identify next week who is best to answer our questions and then set up a meeting with them either at the 12th or later.

1. Tori- Getting George and Sara together is tough so the 12th is key.
  - v. Pennie- This meeting could be a built environment committee meeting, especially given flexibility of schedules.
    1. Ben Bradlow- The committee should be bringing these issues to the whole board.
    2. Andy Greenspon- same. We suggested that before and the board was against it.
    3. Michele- This could be a situation of necessity where we don't get another opportunity.
  - vi. Joanne- Having Dan Bartman come the week after April 12th will give us a chance to ask questions that wouldn't be on George and Sara's radar
  - vii. Bill Cavellini- Move to have George and Sara visit the board for 30 minutes
    1. Rachel- seconded
    2. Vote: unanimous "ayes"
6. Outreach committee update
- o Gary- Replacing web site process. Site is ready to go. Need to make a decision about whether to continue using domain name.
  - o Bill- How many voted in the poll?, Recommendation of O&C committee was SomervilleUSNC.org
    - i. Pennie- no real recommendation to change the name
    - ii. Bill- I am convinced that we can change the name
    - iii. Ben - Propose that we vote whether or not to change the name
    - iv. Erik- Does changing name have impact on ability to launch web site?
      1. Gary- Yes
    - v. Tori- If we're not able to give keywords to improve searchability, is that because of platform we're using? You can modify search words to get the right hits.
      1. Gary- If we don't change the name we will not be able to use current search engine results. We're using different technology for the replacement site which doesn't follow the same structure. Changing name will allow us to map old search results to the new site.
    - vi. Pennie- seconded
    - vii. Vote: all in favor of keeping the name and not registering a new one:
      1. 4 ayes, 2 nays, 2 abstentions
      2. Domain name will remain  
unionsquareneighborhoodcouncil.org
7. Next meeting
- o To be determined via email in the next 24 hours

## 8. Public Comment

- Sal- Trees along somerville Ave are slated to be removed for drainage project. Asking that the USNC advocate for retaining them. There are no trees to replace them until 2020. This, paired with construction and drainage projects, will leave and ugly streetscape.
- Gary- Arborist will announce another hearing. Amount of time for public comment was insufficient. I'll make an announcement when I get more information.
- Tori- I've been attending PILOT meetings. Will be engaging Tufts with a laundry list of asks. Can create a document for people to