

## **USNC Meeting Minutes: 10/11/2018**

- Vote on Minutes 9/27
- o 3 abstentions
- o 5 yes

## **USNC Board Attendance: Ben Bradlow, Michele, Bill, Ann, Joanne, Erik, Tori, Ganesh, Mike**

Public Comment: Question: how do we engage more members, actively in development?  
(Wig, Gary, Simon)

- Need to make the Outreach committee more active and not simply responsive to elections, votes, and other major efforts (Gary)
  - Engagement on development such as JJ Sullivan's, engaging local groups that are naturally forming in response to abutting development (Erik)
  - SCATV segments? Somerville Times columns?
  - o Joanne requested Gary to report back from SCATV on best ways to engage the public
- BEC: Tori needs more support. Joanne volunteers to meet with Tori this weekend.

### Status of CBA Negotiations

- Meetings continue. Have addressed sustainability, arts and creative economy, housing, workforce and permanent jobs, construction jobs. What remains are open space, traffic and parking, and completion of discussion around small businesses. Not talking much about the civic space thus far. Have spoken of an interim civic space while construction is ongoing. (Ben)
- There is a fatigue from the fact that the CBA / USNC has not moved to a next step. Participation is down because there isn't much to participate in. A very process-oriented political body usually provides for low participation. However, it is clear that when there are substantive issues on the agenda, more stakeholders come out, and we are likely close to such moments again soon. If there is no progress on the CBA, then the broader membership will need to be activated to come out as well. (Ben)
- Tori expressed disappointment that the topic of civic space and civic design has not yet been discussed as part of CBA negotiations.
  - o Ben: we thought that by bracketing that conversation to the side, we thought that we could provide space to allow stakeholders who wish to engage on this topic independently to do so.
  - o Michele: It's not that it won't be a part, or hasn't been discussed, it's just that there is a lot of interest in the civic space, and it takes more time and coordinated focus. What is it that everyone actually wants? What is the best thing? These are difficult questions. We are trying to be respectful of what the BEC, City, SCC, and others are trying to accomplish in parallel.
  - o Tori: civic space and open space has always been an important topic and is part of this. To assume that a few individuals are going to effect change without the backing of the USNC is underserving it.
  - o Bill, Mike: we are talking about indoor civic space, not open space.
- § Tori: retracts comment
- o Bill: there HAS been discussion of indoor civic space, however, it came early in the meetings with US2, and the two parties agreed to allow things that are ongoing outside of the negotiations to play out. At the time, the YMCA was involved in conversations.
- § We actually have a schedule on how to focus on this topic on indoor civic space, agreed on

with USNC and US2

o Ann: YMCA meeting: George Proakis and Stephanie Hirsch and David Gibbs, Greg, US2, YMCA, Tom Bent, CHA, SCC, Somerville Public Library. This is the Charlestown Street development that SCC is spearheading. It is ongoing and in parallel, but will be lagging to the initial US2 developments.

§ Tori: should we invite others and do a large broadcast about these meetings?

§ Ann: we should ask George Proakis, Ann with ask if we can promote these meetings.

§ The CDSP Special Permit conditions require the developer to meet with the USNC and negotiating team, and others to discuss the Civic Space.

o Joanne: can we get better updates and involvement around the Civic Space development? Tori agrees.

o Bill: reminder that the CBA negotiating team is meeting with US2 every week, usually Monday nights, and continue to report back to the degree possible without divulging strategic information. One of the reasons that there is not much tangible to report on other than the topics being discussed is that US2 requested and USNC agreed that all topics would be discussed first in turn prior to coming to an actual agreement on any single subject area. It is clear that US2 wants to understand all of "the asks" prior to committing to any single one.

o There has been some agreement, and it has been worthwhile so far.

Report from the BEC on Open Space Zoning Petition

· Tori: there was a public hearing on a section to increase open space requirements for mid and high-rise buildings, submitted by 18 residents. Request to have Bill Shelton describe the proposal.

· Bill: lack of green space and fields impacts and disincentivizes families and has an impact on public health. A proposal called Assembly's Edge was putting a 157 foot building on a fraction of an acre, with a very small footprint. Open space should not simply be based on the lot size, but instead above 5 stories to be based on the number of square feet of new development (above 5 stories). The proposal has a ratio for residential and a separate for commercial development. At the discretion of the planning board it could be used for a fund, and this could be used to fund off-site playing fields or other green space.

· The submitted petition was not heard, for reasons that are complex. Bill redrafted the amendment to apply to the entire City.

· George Proakis submitted a memo opposing it, saying that the City has its own plan, and that the City should first tackle the zoning overhaul. The City's plan has not materialized. Alderwoman Rosetti gave an impassioned speech in favor, followed by applause from the BOA. It was left that the BOA needs to see the City's plan.

· If this were applied to the D2 blocks, it would produce ½ acre of open space. Alderman Davis optimistically says that he would like to have zoning passed by December.

· What we need is to mobilize the parents of kids on sports leagues to call and email the BOA.

· Tori: Lance is keeping this in the Land Use Committee. The city is reporting in on this with their plan soon, and in the interim, Lance is keeping the citizens' petition on the books.

Bylaws Discussion

Erik reviewed the list of "big changes".

Clarification from Michele: the new attendance requirement is intended for new members only. Anyone who voted in the past can vote again.

There is general agreement to add Ann's idea of allowing volunteers to vote: "work with no pay" – need to define. Would need to get a letter on letterhead in lieu of a pay stub.

Andy: clarification: filling a vacant seat: won't necessarily add a new board member under the same category, because "re-tallying" the votes may lead to an existing board member being allocated to the now-vacant category (assuming that board member ran under both categories), and the new board member may then replace need to now fill a different category.

Discussion:

- Joanne: do we want to restrict the immigrant seats based on AMI?
- Ben: does not support a revision to the voting system. Does not support option 2. Would like to hear more if someone has a compelling argument about Option 3. Has concerns about an attendance requirement. Many people will have a stake on the CBA vote, and they possibly should not be required to have attended a prior meeting because it may be a burden. As for the immigrant seat, it may be problematic to have testing criteria on only a single category. There are too many imperfections trying to specify in this way. Additional questions: there is a bit about revising Robert's Rules use. Not in favor of the restriction for voting on the CBA to be on a single day.
- Mike: comments on some choices that we did not take on here.
  - o We have an inherently instable structure by requiring annual elections for the entire membership of the board at once. Have we thought about staggering elections? 2 year staggered terms?
  - o We could meet our diversification goals through appointments, as is common?
- § Michele: we had a hybrid structure proposed early in the working group, but it was broadly rejected at that time, which is why we did not pursue it.
- § Tori: we are in a new place now, and what we did in the working group should not restrain what we do here. Relating to the slate, we lost a section of the community at that time. We need people with skill and knowledge on this board. If we cannot get it otherwise, we need to have a category or an appointment for an architect or a city planner. 1-2 seats.
- Bill: lets' open this conversation to the public comment period, to combine the two. Board agrees.
- Simon: Mike touched on two words that are important: perspectives and backgrounds. The key issue is who gets to choose. The definition of an immigrant seat is extremely problematic, speaking as an immigrant.
- Gary: (speaking about the Charlestown St Development): SCC does not own all the land. It is a mixture of ownership, not all under control of SCC. Some is MBTA, some is in other hands. There are 3 alternatives currently sketched. Gary also wants people to help brainstorm how to best record and distribute recordings of meetings, both for public information and for the purposes of our own records.
- David Gibbs: no comments on particular proposals for the bylaws changes. It sounds like the debate can and should continue. Regarding representation: when we start from a position of inequity, neutral policies perpetuate that inequity. There is some merit of thinking about appointments.
- Joanne: regarding appointments, technical standards would be needed, qualifications, etc. It might make more sense to appoint them to being leads of the committees. It is very

valuable to have such non-board-member appointees involved in committees.

- Ben: there are two types of representation. The bylaws are intended to represent the perspective of different stakeholders. The issue of expertise is very problematic. Education qualifications would be problematic.

- Wig: this is a volunteer board that is also the work force. You may be able to augment that by reaching out to others. These groups persist only on the backs of the amount of working contribution that people make. How much work are you doing, and how relevant is the work that you are doing. The USNC has too little analytic depth. That being said, this is not a perfect world. If you're not paying attention, it doesn't happen right. You need analytical skills to get the results that match your ethics. You can't just be reactive.

- Simon: DRC meetings, infrastructure meetings, other important meeting are happening without USNC board presence.

- Erik: As a guiding principle, we were trying to make minimal changes to the bylaws while addressing known deficiencies, which is why we stayed away from moving back towards any appointments.

- Tori moves to continue the discussion. Ben seconds, board votes yes.

- Andy: appointments would be not democratic, and is a large change from current bylaws. With regards to the voting, he strongly supported option 2 (8 votes). Bill and others opposed that. The third option was a workable compromise. Andy encourages feedback via email.

- Mike: motion to end the public portion of the meeting to move into exec session for the purposes of discussing CBA Strategy. Tori seconded. Unanimous.

Exec Session