



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
SOMERVILLE REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**

**JOSEPH A. CURTATONE
MAYOR**

*NANCY A. BUSNACH
CHAIR*

MINUTES

Somerville Redevelopment Authority
Thursday, April 25, 2019 at 5:30 p.m.
Public Safety Academy Room
220 Washington St, Somerville

Present from the Somerville Redevelopment Authority (SRA): Iwona Bonney (Secretary), William Gage, Phil Ercolini, Ben Ewen-Campen, Emily Hedeman, and Patrick McCormick. Also present were Eileen McGettigan as Special Counsel and Sunayana Thomas as Senior Economic Development Planner.

William Gage volunteered to preside over the meeting as Interim Chair and called the meeting to order at 5:32PM. Open session commenced and an announcement was made that the meeting was being audiorecorded. A quorum was present.

Documents and Other Exhibits Used at the Meeting

- i. Notice of Meeting and Meeting Agenda
- ii. Draft March 7, 2019 Minutes

Discussion and Actions Taken

1. Approval of March Minutes:

- Motion by Iwona Bonney, seconded by Phil Ercolini
- No discussion
- 4 approve, 2 new members abstain.

2. Welcome & Introduction to New Members

- Mr. Gage welcomed Ms. Hedeman and Mr. McCormick to the Board.
- Ms. McGettigan informed the board that the new members are sworn in and able to vote.

3. Election of Officers

- Previous Chair Nancy Busnach served until her successor, Ms. Hedeman, was qualified.
- The Board accepted nominations for Chair and Secretary.
- Mr. Gage nominated Phil Ercolini as Chair and Iwona Bonney as Secretary.
- Discussion
 - Mr. Ewen Campen asked Mr. Ercolini if he would be willing to allow public comments during meetings, as he deems appropriate.
 - Mr. Ercolini confirmed that he would invite more public comments and would defer to legal counsel as to when it is appropriate.
 - Mr. Gage also noted that it would be helpful if the board introduced themselves at the beginning of a meeting.
 - Mr. Ercolini requested that members of the board report back if they attend public meetings. That information should be brought to the entire board because ex parte communication is of concern; that some gain information over others on the board. He emphasized that following the law will be the utmost importance to this board.
 - Ms. McGettigan mentioned that per the open meeting law requirements, it is up to the Chair to invite public comments. If the board invites public comments, it should be on the agenda to allow individuals to have a fair opportunity of notice.
 - Mr. Ercolini noted that he would also invite written comments similar to other City boards and commissions.
 - Ms. Hedeman affirmed Mr. Ercolini's notions for the public comment process. She supports the nomination and new ideas to ensure that the community is aware of the tools that are available to the SRA that help to make the changes the community wants to see.
- **Motion to vote for Phil Ercolini as Chair. 5 in favor, 1 abstention.**
- **Motion to vote for Iwona Bonney as Secretary. Unanimously approved.**

4. SomerVision 2040

- Mr. Ercolini updated the Board on the SomerVision 2040 meetings he attended as the Board's representative.
- Mr. McCormick and Ms. Hedeman were both interested in being designated as the Board's representative for SomerVision 2040. Mr. Ercolini appointed Ms. Hedeman as the Board's SomerVision 2040 representative and Mr. McCormick as the alternate.

5. Assembly Square Update

Sunayana Thomas provided the update for Assembly Square.

- Assembly Row Update

- Block 5A
 - La Cucina - open
- Block 5B
 - Puma – lease signed for 150,000 square feet out of 275,000 square feet of total building. Anticipated number of employees is 550.
- Block 1
 - Temporary Tenants – Thrive Exchange and New Age Astrology – opening in April
- Block 3
 - Levi’s – opening in May
- Block 11
 - Ruth’s Chris – opening in Quarter 4 of 2019.
 - Parelli Optical – opening in August
 - AR Nail Bar – opening in May
- Block 4
 - Somerville Media Center pop-up
- Alloy – lottery completed
- Montaje – 99% leased, 96% occupied
- Construction continues on Blocks 8 and 5B

6. Union Square Update:

Greg Karczewski, President of US2 gave updates on Union Square.

- US2 continues to work diligently on their project by implementing the elements of the neighborhood plan, Coordinated Development Special Permit (CDSP), and MLDA. They met with GLX Constructors to ensure there is a seamless process for D2 and GLX teams to be on site in regards to design elements, schedule and easements. GLX anticipates beginning work Q3 of this year with completion mid 2021.
- US2 continues to have regular meetings with the Union Square Neighborhood Council (USNC). The negotiating team hosted a public meeting on March 27 and invited US2 to join. It was well attended and provided an opportunity to update the community on the negotiating process. US2 continues to work with USNC and their priorities. They are optimistic that they will sign a Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) soon.
- US2 submitted six different applications to the Planning Board for the D2 site: subdivision; thoroughfare network; D2.1 lab building; residential D2.2; residential D2.3; and open space. The Planning Board has approved the subdivision application. Under review is the D2.1 lab building and thoroughfare applications. Obtaining the approvals to these applications are a precondition to obtain a building permit, which is a precondition to purchase the site from the SRA.
- Skanska and US2 continue to work towards an agreement for the D2.1 lab building.

- US2 received positive comments from MEPA on March 8th regarding their DEIR. US2 has prepared a draft of the final EIR and requests comments from the SRA to be submitted by May 10TH to file on May 15th.

Questions & Comments

- Mr. Ercolini asked whether there were specific topics that were delaying the negotiations with USNC.
- Mr. Karczewski replied that the negotiations were subject to a confidentiality agreement between the parties, but he broadly listed affordable housing, sustainability and indoor civic space as unresolved issues.
- Mr. Ewen-Campen will share with the Board the statement that was released by USNC regarding their perspective of the negotiations.
- Mr. Ewen–Campen summarized the Planning Board meeting and the community’s perception of the issues that need to be resolved:
 - Underground parking – the City’s third party analysis states that the most affordable version of underground parking would be to locate it under the lab building. The concern with the community is that it precludes having below ground parking under the residential building. There were multiple different strategies for putting the garage underground but two out of the three resulted in premium pricing of over \$20M.
- Mr. Karczewski confirmed that based solely on hard costs, the option with the least premium was over \$10M.
- Ms. Bonney asked whether it was feasible to put the parking underground with the high water table under Union Square.
- Mr. Ewen-Campen asked if there was any progress regarding the elevator for ADA access to the station from Prospect Street.
- Mr. Karczewski provided some background and explained that when the station was originally designed at \$50-60M, it had a two story headhouse that went from grade to upper level Prospect Street with facilities built in: employee break room, escalator, two elevators, and stairs. When the MBTA went through the process to bring the project to budget, they removed the headhouse, which eliminated the elevators and stairs. US2 contributed to resolving the budget shortfall by agreeing to construct some of these amenities on the D2 site—The Ride drop off for transit program, bike racks, and the employee restroom and lounge. That is a suite of improvements US2 agreed to make but unfortunately the elevator at the bridge is still missing. US2 has expressed to the MBTA their willingness to pair an elevator with the stairs. They are pursuing conversations with the MBTA and the City to find a solution. The elevator would largely serve the area south of the station, which is about 50% of the service area, which includes D3, Boynton Yards and Cambridge. Ultimately the elevator serves the MBTA, and US2 hopes that the MBTA will step up and realize it is an important element to their project.

- Mr. Ercolini assumed that because the project is funded through state and federal funding, that it should be ADA compliant.
- Mr. Gage asked whether Mr. Karczewski had the costs for the elevator?
- Mr. Karczewski explained that the MBTA has very detailed specifications for an elevator. It includes vandal proof cages, glass to see through the elevator and the landing area that is larger than typical. US2 does not have those specifications from the MBTA to do a cost analysis.
- Mr. Gage asked if this would be on US2 property.
- Mr. Karczewski stated that there are a number of locations it could go. The logical place is between the tracks to get off the bridge and face the platform right away. US2 is flexible if MBTA improvements need to encroach into the areas US2 is working on and would be happy to provide them easements.
- Mr. Ercolini inquired about who the point of contact is within the City for GLX.
 - Brad Rawson, Director of Transportation and Infrastructure and Viola Augustin, GLX Project Liaison.
- Mr. Ewen-Campen added that Cambridge and the Somerville City Council has passed resolutions on this issue. The state and local delegations have been trying to come up with a solution. Councilor White pointed out at the last City Council meeting that the original GLX budget was \$3 billion then cut to \$1.3 billion and that was the condition in which Somerville provided \$50 million and Cambridge provided \$25 million toward the project. The actual budget came in at \$1 billion so there should money to be able to build out the elevator. The messaging from the MBTA has been frustrating because they have stated that this will not happen because it is a Design Build contract, and they have no control over the contractor.
- Mr. Gage wanted to know if the two or three warnings in the Certificate MEPA issued on the DEIR have been addressed. Mr. Gage is concerned that if US2 does not adequately address those issues, they would need to complete a supplemental EIR.
- Mr. Karczewski explained that at each filing, US2 has engaged a team of experts to respond to the MEPA comments that have been brought forward through the process. He is confident that they are providing a comprehensive response.
- Mr. Gage questioned why there were no changes to the plans submitted in the MEPA document. He is concerned about the support US2 will get for the current parking and open space plan from the Planning Board. He believes US2 will need to file a Notice of Project Change and restart the process if US2 moves the parking or the open space.
- Mr. Karczewski explained that the plans submitted to MEPA reflect what was in the approved CDSP. He understands that there is an alternative to the open space and parking that the community is exploring. It is very risky and costly because constructing parking below grade to what was the Millers River imposes

significant challenges. The development team is trying to find a way to balance the various requests of the community.

- Mr. Gage has not heard that it was not feasible to move the open space from Prospect to the center of the site or that the parking couldn't be under the lab building.
- Mr. Karczewski stated that the order of magnitude of costs is not supportable with the income of the project and the city's other expectations of the project: 20% affordable housing, which is market leading and largest number of affordable housing for this scale of a project in Somerville; the arts and creative space; a tower that is square instead of rectangle which is less efficient; and the MBTA improvements. However, US2 continues to work with the City on these issues.
- Ms. Hedeman asked if there were significant design changes, does it need to go back for any other approvals.
- Ms. Thomas clarified that the analysis for the alternative designs are being evaluated through the Planning Board process. The Planning Board requested City staff to provide an explanation as to why or what the hardships are for the underground parking as well as the relocation of open space. OSPCD has hired Barry Abramson to gather additional information and conduct a financial analysis of what is feasible. The peer review analysis did not consider the environmental work or other soft costs that would be incurred. The City anticipates having that report in the next few weeks and will submit it to the Planning Board. Ms. Thomas will provide a copy of the update to the SRA as well.
- Mr. Ercolini explained that when you are subsidizing or funding projects, there is a capital market in financing that you have to go through to finance. He wondered what was a reasonable return on investment?
- Mr. McCormick questioned the type of improvements to bicycle facilities in conjunction with the City's expectations, improvements to intersections and connectivity.
- Mr. Karczewski explained that there are 1,800 bicycle spaces across the development. The D2.1 lab building has a shower and restroom for tenants in the building to encourage bicyclists to use. The City is working on Somerville Ave improvements, which will ease the bicycle traffic. Brad Rawson and team have put forward a funding request with the City Council to do the next phase of improvements. US2 is also making infrastructure contributions that should help support the City's work as well.
- Mr. McCormick continued to question the environmental sustainability and energy production specifications. He acknowledged the specificity around 4,000 square feet of roof dedicated to photovoltaic cells. He wondered whether there is anything preventing a commitment to actual energy generation through solar power.
- Mr. Karczewski explained that in the FEIR there is a commitment for all the roofs in the project to be solar ready. In addition to that, US2 has worked with a solar company to identify areas of the roof that will be most productive for solar. An

influence on how much area that can be dedicated is how much lab space will be built. Labs inheritably have more rooftop and HVAC equipment requirements. In the application, 4,000 square feet is indicated but US2 is currently working on making a larger commitment.

- Mr. McCormick continued to question what the industry perspective is on the number of parking spaces on site. Leaving aside that it could be underground, what are the incentives to decrease automobile use and who will manage the parking spaces.
- Mr. Karczewski stated that they would prefer less parking and have compressed the number of spaces in D2 to what is competitive in the market. As part of the Transportation Management Agreement (TMA), US2 has committed that 60% of all trips will be non-automotive trips. If those goals are not reached, they will have to re-evaluate and increase their incentive programs.
- Mr. Ewen-Campen stressed that in the conversation regarding the cost of underground parking, there should be a continued conversation with the City Council for other ways to close the gap legislatively through zoning or other initiatives. He stated that if the cost is the issue, it's not the end of the conversation.
- Mr. Ercolini wondered whether the neighborhood would be willing to concede on other items to achieve underground parking.
- Mr. Ewen-Campen explained that the community wants to get things on a broader level across the board. There are other options for providing US2 additional buildable space to achieve these goals but these need to be explored.
- Ms. McGettigan reminded the board of the need to submit MEPA comments by May 9.

7. Other Business Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair

- None

8. Selection of Date for Next Meeting:

- Next regular meeting will be Thursday, May 23, 2019 at 5:30.
- Ben Ewen-Campen left the meeting prior to the Executive Session to attend the City Council meeting.

9. Executive Session

- Mr. Ercolini announced that the Board would be convening in Executive Session for the purposes of litigation strategy in the matter of Cobble Hill Center. LLC v. SRA (90 Washington Street). The Board will not be reconvening in open session.
- Motion to move into Executive Session by Phil Ercolini and seconded by Iwona Bonney.
- Roll Call:
 - Emily Hedeman – Yes
 - Phil Ercolini – Yes
 - Iwona Bonney – Yes

- William Gage – Yes
- Patrick McCormick – Yes.

Open session concluded at 6:48 p.m.