



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

**JOSEPH A. CURTATONE  
MAYOR**

*PHIL ERCOLINI  
CHAIR*

**MINUTES**

Somerville Redevelopment Authority  
Wednesday, June 10, 2020 at 5:30 p.m.  
(Virtual Meeting)  
Software: GotoWebinar

Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. C. 30A, s. 18, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, as well as Mayor Curtatone's Declaration of Emergency, dated March 15, 2020, this meeting of the Somerville Redevelopment Authority was conducted via remote participation.

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

Phil Ercolini, Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:31PM. Open session commenced. A quorum was present. This meeting was audio recorded.

**Documents and Other Exhibits Used at the Meeting**

- i. Draft April 22, 2020 Meeting Minutes
- ii. Winter Hill Neighborhood Plan Implementation Presentation

**Discussion and Actions Taken**

- 1. Approval of April 22, 2020 Minutes:**
  - Staff requested to defer approval of the April Minutes to the next meeting.
- 2. Winter Hill Neighborhood Plan/Potential Urban Renewal Plan Implementation Update—Community Engagement – Presentation by Lauren Drago, Urban Revitalization Specialist, OSPCD**

Ms. Drago provided a presentation to update the Board on the community process for the long vacant Star Market, 399 Broadway. A workshop with a relocation consultant had been previously proposed but will be rescheduled due to COVID. She is preparing to draft the urban renewal plan. Staff is conducting additional meetings about the Urban Renewal Plan (URP) process because it is important to the community and to staff to have a meaningful community process. The process is still ongoing to determine what sites should be included and excluded. Once the plan is approved, there will be additional opportunities for community comments during the approval process locally and with the State. When it comes time to select a developer for the site, Ms. Drago suggested a committee be formed for this project that includes elected officials, residents, business owners and other stakeholders. A suggestion by a community member was to start with an RFQ (Request for Qualifications) and the committee would help generate the qualifications. A short list of developers would then be generated from that process; mission driven developers, working in the Boston area, with a history of working well with the community, etc. With the short list, the City can issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for specific project ideas and finally the SRA would run their selection process and select a developer.

**Comments from the Board:**

The Board agreed that a committee made up of community stakeholders and elected officials is important because they have a better idea of what they want to see developed. The Board is hopeful that each member and their sphere of influence will attract more engagement towards the project. The Board noted that it's also important to identify a balance of what the community wants and whether it's financially feasible. The Board asked for clarification of whether a Request for Information, Request for Proposal or Request for Qualifications would be used to solicit developer feedback and whether the plan could be implemented in a phased approach. However, some board members thought it was also important to have a holistic approach because it is still considered to be a long term plan. The Board would also place an emphasis on open space early in the process. The Board also requested clarification on the SRA's powers during a developer selection process, whether they have the power to require additional affordable housing measures or whether that process would be determined by the Planning Board.

Ms. McGettigan clarified that the right of reverter is a powerful tool that the SRA has in development agreements which gives us the right to take the property back if certain conditions are not met. Mr. Galligani added that if programs like affordable housing and others come out of the community process as a priority, it would be included in an RFP with a scoring rubric which would award higher points to depict the weight of importance of each priority.

Ms. McGettigan also reminded the Board that when members of the public email all members of the SRA in one email, it is important to not "reply all". Instead, share the email with Board staff, Sue Thomas, to avoid violating any potential violations of the Open Meeting Law. If

you get an email and forward it to one another sequentially, that's a violation of the Open Meeting Law. If you all get the e-mail and hit "Reply all", that's also a violation of the Open Meeting Law. Every deliberation and discussion about a matter that is before the board has to be in front of the public. That is why we ask that any public comments be directed to Sue Thomas who will then direct them to the Board.

#### Public Comments:

- Resident of Winter Hill – Why would the owner of Star Market be more inclined to an urban renewal than eminent domain?
  - An urban renewal plan is a tool that allows the SRA to use eminent domain on a property. However, first a plan has to be created and approved by the State Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) in order for the SRA to exercise the eminent domain power.
- How do we provide input on a plan that is not created yet?
  - Current community process is to inform the community about the plan and determine what sites should be included. Once the plan is created, it doesn't mean the SRA will use eminent domain on all the parcels right away. Development on some sites will take longer than others. Once the plan is drafted there will be an opportunity to provide feedback on the plan itself.
  - Ms. McGettigan added that it's not a choice between urban renewal or eminent domain. There are a number of steps that need to occur to pass an urban renewal plan to be able to exercise eminent domain. SRA needs to adopt the plan and the City Council will conduct a public hearing and vote on the plan. Once approved by the City, it will be reviewed and approved by DHCD. Only then does the SRA have the ability to take the property by eminent domain under the urban renewal plan.
  - The state law also requires that owners and renters receive relocation benefits if their property is acquired by eminent domain under the urban renewal plan.
- What is the targeted timeline for the urban renewal plan to be submitted for approval?
  - Ms. Drago anticipated providing a draft plan to the SRA in July or August.

### **3. Union Square Update**

Ms. Thomas provided the project update.

GLX construction has continued throughout the COVID-19 shutdown and they are targeting a Q2 2021 Union Square Station opening. Schedule, design, easement and logistics coordination between the GLX/MBTA, City and US2 is ongoing albeit slowed due to MBTA's pandemic response efforts.

Somerville Avenue Infrastructure & Streetscape Improvements (SAUSI) project was on hold for a period of time during COVID-19 shutdown but work resumed May 19, 2020. Significant underground work on the Somerville Avenue & Prospect Street intersection will begin shortly

and will result in changed traffic patterns. US2 is coordinating with the City's project team relative to construction logistics for both projects.

Despite the COVID-19 impacts, US2 continues its work to advance all facets of the D2 project (permitting, contracting, financing, land closing, MBTA coordination, etc.). An updated project schedule is being finalized given COVID-19 impacts and a Q4 2020 D2 construction start is targeted.

US2 collaborated with the City and Union Square Neighborhood Council (USNC) to unlock \$214,000 of pre-paid Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) monies that US2 funded in June 2017 to accelerate filling new staffing positions for Union Square Main Streets and the Somerville Community Corporation – First Source Jobs Program. Both of these organizations are resource constrained and under additional service demands given the current pandemic. In May, US2 agreed to an early release of the monies, the City Council voted to appropriate the funds, and the City released grant RFPs for both initiatives. The grants are scheduled to be awarded on July 1, 2020.

To promote small business during an unprecedented time, during the month of May, US2 partnered with local Union Square restaurants to provide outstanding food to front line workers in Somerville and Cambridge. Over 75 meals were served to staff at Cambridge Health Alliance's Emergency Department in Cambridge, CHA Somerville's Urgent Care and Covid testing tents, and Batelle's PPE decontamination facility at Assembly Row. Individually wrapped meals were accompanied with letters of gratitude and contact information for our local restaurants.

#### **Vote: D2 Parcel - Acknowledgement of Receipt of EPA Approval**

Ms. McGettigan explained that the Board received a letter from EPA addressed to the MBTA and to the SRA as the D2 parcel owner. The narrow strip of land that runs along the railroad right of way will be conveyed to the MBTA for the Union Square Green Line station. In 2012, when the City entered into the original MOA with the MBTA for the GLX station, the MBTA agreed that it would be responsible for the remediation of their easement areas to the level required for a transit station. The MBTA put together a plan because there were PCBs that were sampled, hot spots removed, and contaminated soil disposed. Ms. McGettigan spoke to MBTA's LSP and confirmed that 95% of the work is done. Kim Tisa from EPA has approved the plan but they require the property owner to sign and acknowledge the site approval letter. The land will be conveyed to the MBTA when the closing process with US2 has concluded.

Board members requested that documents be dated and a clarification as to why the transit area is classified as a low occupancy area.

Mr. Paul McKinley, Licensed Site Professional (LSP) for MBTA, explained that it is related to the number of hours in the day that people would be present and exposed. It is a train station but because service is running frequently, the actual time spent on site is limited to minutes or hours versus days. Because of the nature of the usage of the site, EPA agreed that it met the definition of low occupancy. Part of the risk evaluation is the final disposition and because it's a concrete platform it also reduces the risk of exposure from the buried, impacted soil.

**Vote: Motion to Approve and Acknowledge the Receipt of EPA Approval for D2** by Emily Hedeman and seconded by Iwona Bonney.

Roll call vote:

Iwona Bonney, Yes

Ben Ewen-Campen, Yes

William Gage, Yes

Emily Hedeman, Yes

Patrick McCormick, Yes

Phil Ercolini, Yes

#### **4. 90 Washington Project Plan Update**

Ms. Thomas provided the update for 90 Washington.

The Washington Street Bridge is now open which means the fire tent and apparatus will be removed off the site. The City is in the process of doing a site survey for the subdivision, which will allow the SRA to transfer the public safety portion of the site to the City so that respective departments can begin their work on the site. Until then, it is controlled by the SRA. Demolition was approved by ISD to resume. The contractors will be filing for their demolition permit however the timeline is still uncertain due to Eversource delays and other COVID related delays.

Capital Projects and Asset Management and other City staff had their first introductory meeting this week with Colliers, selected OPM on the public safety project.

Ms. McGettigan provided the legal update. Due to COVID, the courts are closed and dates of reopening continue to be extended. Due to the delay, the Cobble Hill entity has had an extended period of time to finalize their appeal brief. Once they file, then the City has 30 days to reply.

#### **5. Assembly Square Update**

Ms. Thomas provided the update.

25% of retailers are open today with more anticipated to open in the next few days. Restaurants have applied for outdoor seating applications and will resume service once their socially distant plans and health and safety plans are approved. Economic Development

conducted working group sessions with restaurant operators throughout the City to strengthen and clarify State and local guidelines to reopen.

Projects being heard by the Planning Board:

74 Middlesex Ave (Edge Assembly) Master Plan Special Permit

5 Middlesex Ave (XMBLY) PUD-PMP Update

133 Middlesex Ave (Kmart) - Special Permit to enable office uses within the existing footprint.

**6. Public Comment Period - None**

**7. Other Business Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair**

Board Member Ben Ewen-Campen left the meeting to attend a City Council meeting.

Next Meeting Date – July 22, 2020 – 5:30pm - Virtual Meeting

**8. Adjournment**

Roll Call Vote – Motion by Iwona Bonney, seconded by Patrick McCormick

Iwona Bonney, Yes

Ben Ewen – Campen, Absent

William Gage, Yes

Emily Hedeman, Yes

Patrick McCormick, Yes

Phil Ercolini, Yes.