



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

**JOSEPH A. CURTATONE
MAYOR**

NANCY A. BUSNACH
CHAIR

MINUTES

Somerville Redevelopment Authority

Thursday, October 11 at 5:30 p.m.
3rd Floor Conference Room, City Hall
93 Highland Avenue, Somerville, MA

Present from the Somerville Redevelopment Authority (SRA): Nancy Busnach (Chair), Iwona Bonney (Secretary) and Phil Ercolini. Also present were Eileen McGettigan as Special Counsel and Thomas Galligani as Director of Economic Development.

Nancy Busnach, Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. Open session commenced. A quorum was present.

Documents and Other Exhibits Used at the Meeting

- i. Notice of Meeting and Meeting Agenda
- ii. Draft July 19, 2018 Minutes

Discussion and Actions Taken

1. Approval of July Minutes:

- Motion by Iwona Bonney, seconded by Phil Ercolini
- No discussion
- Unanimously approved

2. Assembly Square Update

Thomas Galligani provided the update for Assembly Square.

- **Assembly Row Update**

- Block 5A

- The Row Hotel – 158 rooms opened in August. The hotel is now fully-operational. The hotel reportedly is doing well and is a welcome addition as Somerville's second, full service hotel. Mr. Galligani attended an

event at the hotel on Monday and reports that the function space is attractive and the food is excellent.

- Block 6
 - Meritage is now 90% occupied.
- Riverfront Park
 - Mr. Ercolini asked about the status of the park.
 - Mr. Galligani indicated that the park is well used and attractive. Riverfest was held last month and was reportedly the most well attended Riverfest yet. The tot lot is an important attraction for young families and works well with LEGOLAND to provide street activity at Assembly during the day.
- Draw 7 Park
 - Mr. Galligani indicated that Draw 7 Park is a work in progress. It's owned by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Conservation & Recreation, which is conducting a park planning project. However, construction/improvement funds have not been identified. Brad Rawson, Director of Transportation & Infrastructure of OSPCD is the City's contact for the project.
 - Ms. Bonney mentioned that Draw 7 Park has considerable potential, but needs work.
 - Ms. Busnach indicated that in the past, the park was an asset. But due to its remote location it has never attracted enough activity.
- **XMBLY Update**
 - Mr. Galligani indicated that the developers of the XMBLY project appeared before the Design Review Committee recently to gain feedback on the design of their first building, a residential building along Grand Union Boulevard. The Committee provided extensive feedback, particularly as it relates to the first floor. It's important to ensure that this location, on a street identified as a future 'main street' in Assembly, encourages active street life.

3. Union Square Update

Mr. Galligani and Ms. McGettigan provided an update on Union Square related activities.

- **MEPA Phase 1 Waiver**
 - Mr. Galligani explained that US2's Phase 1 MEPA Waiver request was rejected by the Commonwealth. This will result in a six to nine month delay in the project, as US2 must now focus on submitting a full Environmental Impact Statement.
 - Ms. McGettigan indicated that this will delay the closing, which was anticipated to take place by the end of the year. The SRA had anticipated a year end closing, in which case US2 would pay the \$5M settlement related to Prospect Iron & Steel. City Director of Finance Ed Bean has represented to the Board of Aldermen that the City may now fund the settlement with its resources.
 - Mr. Ercolini asked if this will impact the timing of the GLX.
 - Ms. McGettigan explained that it will not delay the station opening. The GLX Project may now need to install a temporary trailer, which would house the break room and toilets until US2's building is built.

- Mr. Ercolini expressed disappointment that the waiver wasn't granted, given the importance of synchronizing the D2 project with the GLX.
- **Demolition of 26-30 Prospect Street**
 - Mr. Galligani explained that the demolition has been delayed slightly. Final demolition will take place next week and the SRA members will be notified.
- **D2 Permitting**
 - Mr. Galligani spoke about how the D2 project is winding its way through the local permitting environment. The second of two Design Review Committee (DRC) meetings took place in September. The DRC issued their comments last week. US2 has recently posted a revised design and will present this information at a neighborhood meeting on October 17. US2 will be seeking feedback from stakeholders.
- **CBA Negotiations**
 - Mr. Galligani passed along that negotiations between US2 and the Neighborhood Council are reportedly progressing. US2 has been meeting on a weekly basis with the Neighborhood Council since August.
- **Parcel Transfer**
 - Ms. McGettigan explained that the Board of Aldermen will discuss the transfer of the remaining D2 City-owned parcel to the SRA at the next meeting of the Finance Committee on October 22nd.
- **Infrastructure Update**
 - Mr. Galligani shared the latest information about the infrastructure work that's taking place in Union Square. The next phase of work will include subsurface work along Somerville Ave near Workbar. This work will require unique traffic detours for drivers traveling from the northwest (Porter Square).

4. Other Business Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair

- **BOA Confirmation of Appointments**
 - Ms. McGettigan updated the SRA on the results of a recent meeting of the BOA Confirmation of Appointments Committee. During a meeting on August 28th, the Committee voted not to approve Ms. Busnach's re-appointment to the SRA. From a personal perspective, Ms. McGettigan noted that the committee did not make this decision based upon Ms. Busnach's qualifications or her accomplishments as a member of the SRA, but instead was guided by their perception that the wrong master developer was selected for Union Square. Despite the vote, Ms. Busnach will continue to serve on the SRA until her successor has been appointed and confirmed.

- Ms. Bonney mentioned the recent Somerville Times opinion piece by former Alderman Jack Connolly, which provided interesting insight about the meeting.
 - Ms. Busnach mentioned that she’s spoken to many people who saw the meeting and were astonished at the 90 minutes of grilling that she endured. The word “despicable” was used by some.
 - Ms. Bonney saw the meeting video and was particularly concerned with the reference by one Alderman about the USQ developer selection meeting and his subsequent posting online of a carefully edited video of that meeting. Ms. Bonney feels as though the edited video does not present the complete story and that this inaccuracy has misguided public opinion about the selection process.
 - Ms. Busnach stated that, during the Confirmation of Appointments hearing, she confronted the Alderman about the inaccuracy of the altered video. He stated that he liked his version better.
 - Ms. Busnach shared that she was admonished at the BOA meeting for following the open meeting law (reference to Ms. McGettigan collecting SRA emails from the public and then compiling them for distribution to the members).
 - Mr. Ercolini asked who was the lone vote to approve Ms. Busnach’s reappointment. Ms. McGettigan stated that it was Alderman White.
- **Selection of 5th Member**
 - Mr. Galligani provided an update regarding the member selection process. A new solicitation of applicants is underway to identify the 5th member. Candidate resumes will be forwarded to the Appointments Advisory Committee, which will interview the candidates and send at least two recommendations to the Mayor.
- **Cobble Hill Urban Renewal Area**
 - Mr. Galligani provided an update of activity within an old urban renewal area. The Cobble Hill Urban Renewal Plan was approved four decades ago and resulted in the development of the Cobble Hill project in 1980. The complex includes senior housing and a retail strip mall and was developed by Corcoran, Jennison and Mullins (“CJM”). In 2015, the partnership initiated plans to close the strip center and redevelop that portion of the project into a mixed-use development with housing and first floor retail. The strip mall was abandoned and a permit was granted for the new development. However, plans were abandoned at that time due to a disagreement among the partners. The strip mall remains empty and CJM’s permit has since expired.
 - Over the past year, the City Administration has been studying potential sites for a new public safety complex. This would replace the current facility and make development possible for the D1 site in Union Square. A dozen potential sites were studied by the City and its consultant. A decision was made to prioritize the Cobble Hill strip mall property. An order of taking for 90 Washington was submitted to the Board of Aldermen recently and is under consideration. The BOA is considering this approach and is curious to know if other uses can become part of the project (parks, etc.).
 - Mr. Ercolini asked how large the parcel is. Mr. Galligani will confirm the size.

- Ms. Busnach asked if the City of Boston was involved with this project due to its proximity to the border. Mr. Galligani said no.
- Ms. Bonney asked what is happening to the nearby property owned by the City Club. Mr. Galligani indicated that the Club was recently purchased and may be part of a redevelopment project that extends to Washington Street.
- Ms. Busnach asked if the project has received permits. Mr. Galligani indicated no, but an application may be submitted soon.
- Ms. Busnach stated that it would be nice to do something there, as the Inner Belt has so many companies in the area. She noted that infrastructure needs are significant, including “The Tubes” and perhaps new bridges.

5. Selection of Date for Next Meeting:

- Next regular meeting will be November 15th. The December meeting will take place on the 13th.

6. Adjournment

- Motion by Ms. Bonney and seconded by Mr. Ercolini at 6:00.