



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

**JOSEPH A. CURTATONE
MAYOR**

NANCY A. BUSNACH
CHAIR

MINUTES

Somerville Redevelopment Authority

Thursday, November 15, 2018 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), William Gage, and Phil Ercolini. Also present were Eileen McGettigan as Special Counsel, Thomas Galligani as Director of Economic Development, and Sunayana Thomas as Senior Economic Development Planner, Michael Glavin, Executive Director of the Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning & Community Development, George Proakis, Director of Planning, and Sarah Lewis, Senior Planner.

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 October 11, 2018 Minutes
- iii. US2 Quarterly Report
- iv. 90 Washington Street PowerPoint presentation

Discussion and Actions Taken

1. Approval of October 11, 2018 Minutes:

- Motion by Iwona Bonney, seconded by Phil Ercolini
- No discussion
- Motion to Approve by Iwona Bonney, seconded by William Gage
- Unanimously approved

2. Assembly Square Update

Thomas Galligani and Sunayana Thomas provided the update for Assembly Square. Mr. Galligani also took the opportunity to introduce new staff members of OSPCD and announced the retirement of Michael Glavin, Executive Director of OSPCD. George Proakis, currently Director of Planning, will be the new Executive Director of OSPCD. Mr. Proakis looks forward to working with the SRA and continuing the collaboration of implementing SomerVision. Mr. Galligani also

introduced Sarah Lewis, Senior Planner, who will be the new Director of Planning. Mr. Glavin thanked the members of the board for the incredible work they have done through various transitions of the economy. The board has been a part of many of the City's transitional developments, always focusing on the benefits for the residents of the City. He noted that the board has been instrumental in some of the most successful projects in the region.

- **Assembly Row Update**
 - No significant updates for tenant leases
 - Block 5B and 8 under construction
 - Alta XMBLY was approved on November 8th by the Planning Board for an 8-story residential project with 329 residential units, 20% of which will be inclusionary housing.

3. Union Square Update

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

- **US2 Quarterly Report**
 - Ms. McGettigan transmitted US2's quarterly report via email to the Board as a late item and noted that it was a very comprehensive report with updates of their submittals to the Planning Board and the work to date with the community and on the Community Benefits Agreement.
- **Vote authorizing SRA execution, as Property Owner, of the D2 Design & Site Plan Submittal Cover Page**
 - Ms. McGettigan explained that as property owner of the D2 Block, the board would need to acknowledge US2's submission of its Design Site Plan Review application. Ms. McGettigan read the cover sheet and what the SRA would be certifying by signing the form. The vote would authorize the Chair, Nancy Busnach, to sign the cover sheet on behalf of the members of the SRA. If no signature is obtained, US2 will not be able to move forward with its application.
 - Motion to Vote made by Phil Ercolini, seconded by Iwona Bonney.
 - Discussion – Mr. Gage expressed that it was premature to sign off on the application because the neighborhood does not support the design. SRA would be going out on a limb because the Board of Aldermen has not transferred the remaining City-owned parcel to the SRA. US2 has made minor changes to their designs, but not significant ones and not those that the community wants.
 - Mr. Ercolini suggested postponing authorizing the SRA execution until alterations to the designs have been made.
 - Ms. McGettigan reminded the Board that the board has no authority to approve designs and not signing will hinder US2 from submitting its application to the Planning Board, which is the City board which has jurisdiction over design and site plan review and approval.
 - Mr. Gage emphasized that signing the application could be perceived as an endorsement of their application as is.
 - Ms. Busnach asked Mr. Gage if the community disagreed with the entire design or only portions.
 - Mr. Gage recapped the last neighborhood meeting held by US2 and recollected that the main points were the positioning of the buildings to accommodate public space in the center of the project rather than on the

edge of Prospect Street. The neighborhood also preferred that the project have underground parking.

- Ms. Busnach inquired whether the number of parking spaces has changed since the original submittal for the community to request underground parking.
- Mr. Gage mentioned that US2 was not providing alternative solutions but rather just said they would not be able to put the parking underground because it was too expensive. Mr. Gage stated that the designs should adapt to what the community wants. The neighborhood submitted three different alternative designs for consideration.
- Mr. Proakis informed the board that the public space along Prospect Street was what was in the Neighborhood Plan and that community process is informing the designs today. One of the alternative designs that was favored by most is creating a central open space with underground parking. The underground parking requirement creates a delta of \$22-25 million. The City has offered to hire a peer review cost estimator to review the costs of an underground garage. The City has concerns of how to close the \$22M+ cost difference. The Coordinated Development Plan calls for a more significant central open space on D-1, rather than D-2. The transfer of the D-1 parcel from the City to the SRA would be one of the preconditions to build open space on D-1.
- Mr. Gage questioned why there was no middle ground design.
- Mr. Proakis confirmed that the Planning Department is working with US2 to submit a thorough application.
- Ms. Busnach emphasized that in past processes, the review and changes to design plans were done through other City boards. Signing the application is an administrative step; it does not require the applicant to alter designs based on our preference and would not gain anything by holding it back.
- Mr. Glavin added that the SRA's role is to allow other boards to make the decision on design. Delaying the signature delays the application to be submitted. Without submittal there is no review or requirement to ensure US2 makes alterations to their designs.
- Mr. Gage believed that by delaying the signature, the developer is put on notice that entities involved in this project are not in agreement.
- Mr. Ercolini deferred to Mr. Gage as he has been attending more community meetings. He suggested that the vote be delayed for 30 days to hold the applicant accountable.
- Mr. Busnach emphasized that time is money for the developer but more so for the City. The SRA is not meant to be a roadblock to the redevelopment application process. This board has seen what a 10 year delay looks like in Assembly Square and the effort it took to execute the project that is there today.
- Mr. Proakis acknowledged that US2 did review the three designs submitted by the neighborhood and took it back to their team to estimate the cost of each change. The challenge of the cost difference of \$22-25 million is real; where does that money come from? The City has been having healthy conversations with consultants that the Neighborhood

Council recommended to do a few iterations once a cost consultant is on board.

- Ms. Bonney pointed out that the application goes to the Planning Board. Once submitted, it begins a 30 day clock in which if no decision is made it will require a re-submittal and signature.
 - Mr. Proakis doesn't expect that US2 will go to the Planning Board in December, however it would be a concern if the SRA vote is delayed until February. MEPA is also a critical path issue for US2.
 - Mr. Gage questioned whether the City has any more leverage.
 - Mr. Proakis assured that the City has the leverage because US2 is talking to us and accommodating changes.
 - Ms. Bonney questioned if the applicant is not listening to the community, would the Planning Board's decision weigh more.
 - Mr. Proakis confirmed that the Planning Board would either deny or approve US2's application with conditions satisfactory to the Planning Board through community input and staff review.
 - Motion to continue this item to next month.
- D2 Eminent Domain Cases – Status Update
 - Ms. McGettigan indicated that Judge Fishman ordered that she and the City's Director of Finance, Edward Bean, appear that afternoon for a status conference to report on whether the \$5M Prospect Iron settlement payment would be made by December 31.
 - At the conference, Mr. Bean reported that the City could meet this obligation by using free cash.
 - He also reported to the judge that an appropriation order would be submitted to the Board of Aldermen, to be discussed at the Finance Committee meeting on December 11, and then the full BOA on December 13.
 - The Deutsche Bank (Shelzi) case will be mediated before Judge Xifaras. The parties are looking for dates. The Chapian (49-51 Allen Street) case is scheduled for mediation before Judge Xifaras on December 11.
 - Ms. McGettigan reported that Mr. Fahey unexpectedly appeared at the status conference today with a settlement offer. The Board will need to go into executive session later to discuss the settlement offer. It is not on the agenda because it was not anticipated.

4. Other Business Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair

- **90 Washington**
 - Mr. Galligani made a presentation to the board regarding the acquisition of 90 Washington. The site is old, vacant, blighted and has been fenced in for the last 6 years in Cobble Hill. The City went through a process to select sites for the relocation of the public safety building from Union Square and has selected 90 Washington. Mr. Galligani outlined how the SRA could be instrumental in acquiring the site for the City.

- Mr. Ercolini was pleased to see that there was potential for a project on this site in Inner Belt.

5. Executive Session

- Discuss Litigation Strategy for the following cases:
 - Francis Fahey
 - Roll Call: William Gage, Yes; Iwona Bonney, Yes; Phil Ercolini, Yes; Nancy Busnach, Yes.
 - The Chair announced that the board would be reconvening in open session.
 - Executive Session commenced at 6:50p.m.

6. Open Session

- Open session recommenced at 6:58 p.m. The Chair announced that the board had approved the Fahey settlement.

Motion to adjourn made by Iwona Bonney, seconded by Phil Ercolini. Meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.