



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

**JOSEPH A. CURTATONE  
MAYOR**

*PHIL ERCOLINI  
CHAIR*

**MINUTES**

Somerville Redevelopment Authority  
Thursday, December 12, 2019 at 5:30 p.m.  
Somerville High School Cafeteria  
81 Highland Ave, Somerville

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 5:33PM. Open session commenced. A quorum was present. This meeting was audio recorded.

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

- i. Draft November 14, 2019 Meeting Minutes
- ii. Letter Agreement Re: 2-8 Harding Street Land Disposition Agreement
- iii. SRA-City Contract Renewal

**Discussion and Actions Taken**

**1. Approval of November Minutes:**

- Comments: None
- Motion to approve by Iwona Bonney, seconded by Bill Gage
- Emily Hedeman abstained because she was absent for the November meeting.

**2. Assembly Square Update**

Ms. Thomas provided the update for Assembly Square.

- Ruth's Chris opened Monday, November 25<sup>th</sup> and offers valet parking
- Construction projects Blocks 5B and 8 are making good progress and continue to be on schedule even with the weather changes.

- Kmart is officially closed and the liquidation process is complete. FRIT has possession of the space and is working on securing temporary innovative tenants for a 3-5 year lease.

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

Ms. Thomas provided the update for Union Square.

- US2 is working on closing documents and coordinating with the City for construction on D2. No other updates to report.

### **4. DLJ Capital Partners Boynton Yards Development – Title Issue**

- John Fenton presented to amend the condition in the existing land disposition agreement (“LDA”) that required the parcel to be a parking lot until 2035. This parcel is not the first piece of the property they are developing but have intentions to develop a 300,000 square feet office/lab building on that property. DLJ came before the SRA at a prior meeting to terminate the LDA, which also included a reverter provision. However, the SRA recommended keeping the reverter and amending the LDA as long as the SRA is indemnified as to environmental matters and the developer redevelops the site subject to the AUL and in accordance with the Union Square Neighborhood Plan and the zoning.
- Total build out could be 1.4 million square feet of mixed use development. Preliminary plans have been shown to OSPCD. Mr. Fenton explained that they will be investing in Boynton Yards by making water, sewer and road improvements as well as deeding back to the City 15,600 square feet for a future underground storm water run-off tank. The South Street farm would be relocated to that site.
- Mr. Galligani explained that OSPCD and Engineering is working on a broader infrastructure plan and conceptually trying to distribute the cost proportionally across other potential private developments in Boynton Yards.
- Mr. McCormick asked about the type of agreement which will be created for this.
- Mr. Galligani explained that it is too early to determine because it is not a process similar to the Union Square or Assembly Square project where the City and SRA had the leverage to control the process.
- Mr. Gage requested the developer to provide more clarity on the sketch plan and raised concerns regarding unit size for the residential buildings.
- Mr. Fenton explained that it is too early in the process to determine unit size, and the sketch is meant to be a block diagram to depict location strategy.
- Mr. Gage asked the developer if they have met with the Union Square Neighborhood Council (“USNC”).
- Mr. Fenton said they have met with USNC but no further discussions since the permitting process has not begun.
- Ms. Hedeman asked whether USNC has jurisdiction in Boynton Yards.
- Mr. Gage affirmatively said yes as a part of Union Square.

- Mr. Ewen-Campen expressed the Ward 2 Councilor’s support for this project and noted that it is important to understand the legal perspectives of USNC and their role. USNC’s role in the Union Square development was specific to Union Square. However they are an informative group and he encouraged the developer to meet with them based on their past experience.
- Mr. Fenton assured the board that they are trying to take proactive actions and he anticipates having conversations with USNC and others when they have something to discuss. DLJ is still trying to explore and finalize the financing for this project.
- Ms. Hedeman clarified that the purpose of this agenda item is to vote on the letter agreement to bring the discussion back to topic.
- **Vote to Approve Letter Agreement re: 2-8 Harding Street Land Disposition Agreement**
  - Motion to approve by Ben Ewen-Campen and seconded by Patrick McCormick
  - Unanimously approved

#### **5. SRA-City Contract Renewal**

- Ms. McGettigan explained that the contract allows the SRA to use City staff as its staff. The City also agrees to fund SRA projects, provided that any proceeds from the sale of SRA assets goes back into the City’s accounts.
- No discussion
- Motion to approve by William Gage and seconded by Iwona Bonney.
- All in favor.

#### **6. 90 Washington Street Demonstration Project Plan Update**

- Ms. Thomas provided an image of the temporary fire tent and trailer constructed on site in order to provide a faster response time for emergency services due to the Washington Street bridge closure.
- A Request for Proposals (RFP) for demolition of the existing strip mall was released and it is anticipated that an award for a contract will be done by the end of the month.
- Capital Projects, OSPCD and Office of Sustainability and the Environment (“OSE”) are involved with the selection of the Owner as Project Manager (“OPM”) for 90 Washington. The selection committee is scheduling interviews and hopes to announce a selection in January.
- Ms. McGettigan updated the board on the litigation. SRA received a very favorable decision from the superior court upholding the SRA’s right to take the property by eminent domain through a demonstration project plan. The court was very impressed by the demonstration plan itself and quoted it extensively. The former owners have appealed the decision to the Appeals Court, and it is possible it could ultimately go to the Supreme Judicial Court (“SJC”).

- Mr. McCormick requested clarification on how long this would take for the Massachusetts courts to make a decision.
- Ms. McGettigan explained that it could take years because they first have to go to the appeals court and then they may go to the SJC. However, the city will not need to pay interest on the taking because our interest obligation stopped when we made the pro tanto payment.

## **7. Winter Hill Update**

- Ms. Thomas provided the details of the next Winter Hill community meeting which will be on December 19 from 6-8 at the Healey School Cafeteria. The topic and goal of the meeting is to solicit feedback on how to move forward on the Star Market site using the urban renewal tool and whether the community wants to include additional sites to further implement the Neighborhood Plan.
- Mr. Ewen-Campen requested an explanation on the difference between demonstration plans and urban renewal.
- Ms. McGettigan explained that while we may have received an extremely favorable court decision about our ability to use demonstration plans, each existing court decision regarding demonstration plans concerns only one parcel. If we only want to redevelop one parcel, then a demonstration plan is the tool to use; however, if more than one parcel is required to create a cohesive redevelopment then it is best to use an urban renewal plan with DHCD approval. It has to do with protections that are given to the SRA with urban renewal plans. Every single parcel included in an urban renewal plan does not have to be blighted or decadent. A well maintained parcel can be a part of an urban renewal plan, but a demonstration plan can only address blighted parcels.

## **8. Public Comment Period – 6:13pm**

- David Schwartz – Did the Boynton Yards project go through competitive bidding
  - Ms. McGettigan explained that this is a privately owned parcel that was transferred through an arms length transaction. Since it was not publicly owned, it did not require competitive bidding.
- David Dahlbacka – David was unclear on the status of the reverter and the LDA
  - Ms. McGettigan clarified that if DLJ gets their permits, then SRA will execute an amendment to the LDA to terminate the reverter.

## **9. Other Business Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair**

- Ms. Hedeman highlighted that the online public engagement portal ([somervoice.somervillema.gov](http://somervoice.somervillema.gov)) OSPCD has created is outstanding.
- Ms. Thomas explained that SomerVoice is an online community engagement portal that Economic Development and others from OSPCD initiated in hopes to involve more residents who are not able to attend scheduled meetings. The site is

live and projects are on the site for feedback as part of a soft opening. With the positive feedback received to date, they anticipate posting more projects in 2020.

- Ms. Hedeman inquired about the status of the open SRA position.
- Mr. Galligani informed the board that the Appointments Advisory Committee has yet to start the interview process for the SRA vacancy and anticipates them to do so in the New Year.

#### **10. Selection of Date for Next Meeting:**

- Next regular meeting is scheduled for the following dates:
  - January 16, 2020 at 5:00pm, location Somerville Library Auditorium.
  - February 20, 2020, location to be determined.

#### **11. Adjournment**

- Motion to adjourn made by Iwona Bonney and seconded by Emily Hedeman at 6:21pm.
- Unanimously Approved.