

MINUTES

Somerville Redevelopment Authority

Wednesday, August 19, 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 5:30 PM. Open session commenced. A quorum was present. This meeting was audio recorded.

Documents and Other Exhibits Used at the Meeting

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

Discussion and Actions Taken

1. Approval of Minutes:

- July 22, 2020 Minutes - No edits or discussion

Motion to Approve to Approve the July 22, 2020 Minutes by Iwona Bonney, seconded by Ben Ewen-Campen.

Roll Call Vote:

Iwona Bonney, Yes

Ben Ewen- Campen, Yes

William Gage, Yes

Emily Hedeman, Yes

Patrick McCormick, Yes

Phil Ercolini, Yes

2. Winter Hill Neighborhood Plan/Potential Urban Renewal Plan Implementation Update – Presentation by Tom Galligani & Lauren Drago, Urban Revitalization Specialist, OSPCD

Mr. Galligani & Ms. Drago gave a presentation to update the Board on the Urban Renewal Plan process for Winter Hill. The presentation can be found here:

<https://somervoice.somervillema.gov/winter-hill-plan-implementation>

Mr. Galligani provided an overview of the Winter Hill Urban Renewal Plan submitted to the SRA for review and approval. On the heels of the Winter Hill Neighborhood Plan, the economic development team, with Lauren Drago as the project manager, has been working closely with the neighborhood for over a year to carefully consider their thoughts on tackling the vacant Star Market site.

Ms. Drago presented the details of the Draft Winter Hill Urban Renewal Plan to the Board. The project area includes approximately 2.8 acres with parcels including the vacant Star Market (Building A), existing Walgreens (Building B), 2 corner buildings on Temple Street and Broadway Street (Buildings C & D). The proposal imagines a subdivision to create three different parcels out of this project area. As depicted in the visuals provided in the presentation, D1 would become green open space, D2 would be conveyed to an affordable housing developer, and D3 would be the largest parcel for a commercial/residential development with additional open space. The Neighborhood Plan objectives include but are not limited to redeveloping vacant and underutilized properties into uses that better meet the community needs, minimize displacement by providing additional affordable housing, pursue equitable outcomes in the neighborhood, improve Winter Hill's main street commercial district, and create green and open spaces to support community life and the environment.

The development timeline is dependent on several variables but if the SRA approves the Urban Renewal Plan and obtains subdivision approval, then the SRA can convey D1 to the City to build a park and D2 to a mission driven affordable housing developer to develop housing. D3 will require additional community meetings and the creation of a Citizens Advisory Committee. This committee, City staff and the SRA would design and facilitate the community meetings and come to decisions based on input from various stakeholders and interested community members, then move to a Request for Qualifications or Request for Proposal process to select a developer.

The urban renewal plan draft was released in August for review with the hopeful expectation for an approval in September. If approved, the plan would also need to be approved by the Planning Board, City Council and the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD).

Comments from the Board:

The board questioned whether it would be easier for one developer to do D1-D3 parcels.

Mr. Galligani clarified that there are no developer proposals for these sites at this time and the steps to develop these sites come at a later phase. Based on the feedback from the community, the strategy as currently proposed for the three parcels seems to be the most logical approach.

The board was generally supportive of the City's approach and supports D1 & D2 to be developed by separate developers. The board asked for clarification on the approval process and how feedback is incorporated.

The approved draft from the SRA will be passed onto the City Council for comments. If the City Council makes any adjustments, it will come back to the SRA to approve before sending the final version for approval to the DHCD. The Planning Board does not have a similar review standard as the City Council or SRA. The Planning Board's review can happen concurrently as long as all approvals are received from the respective boards prior to sending the approved urban renewal plan to DHCD.

The board thanked OSPCD for not moving faster than what the community wants and being respectful to what the local community groups are trying to achieve. Most of the letters received to date were positive, and this is indicative of the process to date.

Public Comments:

Comment: Have you contacted the owners of the building that you are proposing to seize via eminent domain?

Comment: If a suitable developer comes along during the urban renewal plan approval process, can that developer be considered or is that a separate process? The possible 10 years to implement the Plan seems really long. Suggested changing low income housing or subsidized housing to truly affordable housing.

Comment: Will there be a relocation plan developed for the existing businesses in the project area?

Comment: Heard that their building was included in the drawing and why the City didn't reach out directly? Why is this building necessary for this project?

- Owners have been contacted at different points of this process by staff or by the Ward Councilor Jesse Clingan. However now that the Winter Hill Urban Renewal Plan has been drafted and submitted to the SRA, staff will mail information to both property owners and tenants with information. The building is important because previous developers have noted that it is necessary in order to achieve the goals the community hopes for the block.

Comment: What steps will be taken by the City to allow a higher percentage of affordable housing units for D2? Rents are going up due to the project which will

enhance the neighborhood but displace existing renters. Fully support the project but would like to know more as the process evolves.

- There are multiple community benefits that the neighbors are interested in-- community space, open space, affordable housing, etc. The City plans to hire a consultant to do a feasibility study to discuss tradeoffs and what's possible on the site.

Comment: Where were the conclusions drawn regarding the Temple Street (Sillari) property to be taken? Where is the data that says you need these properties to make it work? Or is it a conclusion that is being drawn?

- Much of the data being relied on is anecdotal data and interviews with developers who were unsuccessful in putting together a deal for the site. Once the site is acquired and the community process is completed, the City will use this information and augment it by supporting it with real estate consultants to develop a plan for the entire site. Development could happen on any individual site but we recognize the opportunity exists to create something more in line with what the community wants to see and the community benefits that will result from a consolidated development.

Comment: Thanked and appreciated the board for focusing on the Star Market site. Provided input regarding affordable housing for families and to keep the existing residents in Winter Hill.

3. Union Square Update

Ms. Thomas provided the Union Square update.

US2 is working towards an October closing and construction start. They are expected to go before the SRA at the September or October meeting to finalize the closing.

4. 90 Washington Project Plan Update

Ms. Thomas and Ms. McGettigan provided the update for 90 Washington.

Demolition has been completed despite COVID 19 delays. The City is working with the OPM to begin the RFP process for the public safety development process. The fire department trucks and tent will be removed by the MBTA in the coming week.

No legal update. The brief is not due until the 3rd week of September.

5. Assembly Square Update

Ms. Thomas provided the update.

84% of Federal Realty's tenants have reopened. Legoland and AMC remain closed under Phase 3. Development on Block 8 and 5B has begun. They are trying to make up for lost time due to COVID 19 delays.

6. Public Comment Period – See public comments under Winter Hill agenda item.

7. Other Business Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair

- Status on filling the vacant SRA position
- Staff explained that the interview process has been delayed due to COVID 19. However meetings are being scheduled again to resume the selection process.

8. Adjournment

Next Meeting Date – September 16, 2020 – 5:30pm - Virtual Meeting

Motion to Adjourn by Iwona Bonney, seconded by Patrick McCormick at 6:25pm.

Roll Call Vote:

Iwona Bonney, Yes

Ben Ewen-Campen, Yes

William Gage, Yes

Emily Hedeman, Yes

Patrick McCormick, Yes

Phil Ercolini, Yes