



Somerville Redevelopment Authority

Philip Ercolini, Chair
Iwona Bonney, Secretary
Ben Ewen-Campen
William Gage
Patrick McCormick
Christine Stone

Meeting Minutes

Location: Virtual meeting via GoToWebinar

Date: October 20, 2021

Time: The meeting started at 5:30 pm

Attendance

SRA Members Present: Iwona Bonney, Ben Ewen-Campen, William Gage, Patrick McCormick, Christine Stone, Phil Ercolini (Chair)

Staff Present: Thomas Galligani (Economic Development Director), Eileen McGettigan (Special Counsel), Rachel Nadkarni (Urban Revitalization Specialist)

Agenda Items

1. Approval of the September 20, 2021 meeting minutes

- Mr. Gage mentioned that the Winter Hill section, page 5, should read Winter Hill Urban Renewal Plan Update.

Motion to approve the minutes, as amended, of the September 20, 2021 meeting by Ms. Bonney.

Seconded by Mr. McCormick. The motion was approved by a roll call vote, unanimously, by all present members.

2. Public Comments

- None

3. Boynton Yards Update

- Mr. Galligani explained that the DLJ team was present tonight to provide an update on their portfolio of projects in Somerville.
- Mr. John Fenton from DLJ Real Estate Capital Partners provided an update on the Boynton Yards project. He mentioned that at this time, the 101 South Street building has been nearly completed and is fully leased. They have started the next phase of their Boynton Yards project and have received a site plan approval for the second building.

- Mr. Fenton mentioned that they are currently working on the permitting process for the third building at 99 South Street.
- Ms. Idris from Leggat McCall Properties provided an update on 101 South Street. She stated that the building is fully complete, and tenants are in the process of moving in. She also mentioned that they provided a temporary civic space on the property.
- Ms. Idris mentioned some of the activities at the site that they had over the summer and the Oktoberfest event that will happen on October 23.
- They just completed Planning Board hearings where they received approval for the second building. This will be another lab building with space on the ground level as well as civic space.
- Ms. Idris provided an update on the Master Plan and mentioned that they are currently working on the amendment of the Master Plan for the Taza Building and Windsor parking lot. They explained that the landscape plan/open/civic space will be designed with the neighborhood and the city.
- Mr. Fenton explained that \$30 million dollars in combined community benefits will be paid in cash to the City. The overall project will produce over \$15 million in annual real estate taxes and \$12.5 million to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, \$3 million to defray the City's costs related to the Green Line Extension and \$70 million in infrastructure improvements.
- Mr. Gage asked about the heights of the buildings. Ms. Idris expressed that the presentation showed the maximum heights that were allowed.
- Mr. Gage asked about the height of building 6. Ms. Idris explained that is the Taza Building and it is 4 stories and will remain as it is right now. The permit they received only allows them to update the building. Mr. Fenton explained that that building was purchased seven years ago from the previous owner. The prior owner received a special permit that would allow them to convert that fabrication space into a technology office, and that owner was on the way to improving vacant tenant space and consolidating into technology spaces. DLJ is renewing the leases with fabrication and arts and creative enterprise tenants and even leasing space to some relocated tenants that were no longer at Artisans Asylum.
- Mr. McCormick asked Mr. Fenton to break down the \$70 million in infrastructure investments. Mr. Fenton explained that they are building a new road which is known as Windsor Place which currently is a private way that connects the properties. He mentioned that DLJ is also paying 60% of the cost of an underground detention tank at the northeast corner of the site.
- Ms. Stone mentioned that she works for Leggat McCall Properties and noted that she will not be taking part in any deliberations or any actions regarding this project.
- Mr. Ercolini asked Mr. Galligani if the Board could obtain a copy of the updated Master Plan.

4. Union Square Update

- Mr. Galligani explained that he will be providing some answers to the questions that this group posed last month about the elevator and some additional information about US2 and their scheduling and sequencing.
- Ms. McGettigan mentioned that the material that US2 sent to the staff was forwarded to the SRA members.
- Mr. Gage mentioned that the elevator will open in March of 2022, and the station is opening mid-December.
- Mr. Ewen-Campen asked for the update regarding Royal Hospitality. Mr. Galligani explained that the Economic Development staff has been working with the staff and management of Royal Hospitality for the last couple of months. He explained that the city is working with management to identify sites, hopefully, within Somerville to relocate this business and its employees.
- Mr. Galligani explained that Royal Hospitality's special permit expires in the next couple of years, and they will be required to leave that site. If a suitable site can't be found in Somerville, we will try to find one as close as possible to the city or as transit accessible as possible. Moreover, the city's workforce development team is doing some planning to think about other opportunities for those employees. Many of them are worried about what would happen if that site gets relocated and so we are trying to identify some of the skill sets of the existing employee base.
- Mr. Ewen-Campen asked how the timeline connects with the redevelopment plan of the site. Mr. Galligani explained that their special permit expires in 2024. He mentioned that US2 has a Master Land Disposition Agreement with the SRA that entitles them to redevelop the seven "D" Blocks. Mr. Galligani explained that at this point we do not know when US2 plans to relocate that site.
- However, Mr. Galligani explained that US2 is in discussions with the landowner and the building owner. He also mentioned that the building owner and Royal Hospitality are separate companies. Royal Hospitality is a tenant; they do not own the building. He expressed that in the next couple of months we will have more details about US2's timeline for that site.
- Mr. Gage asked if Royal Hospitality has another facility in Cobble Hill. Mr. Galligani explained that they do not have that location anymore.

5. Winter Hill Urban Renewal Plan Update

- Attorney Adam Dash, 48 Grove Street in Somerville represents Mark Development LLC. He introduced members of his team, Robert Korff, David Roche, and Russell Preston.
- Mr. Dash explained that Mark Development LLC has the Star Market/Walgreens site on Broadway under agreement to purchase at the moment. This is the property of 299 Broadway and 15

Temple Street. He explained that they have had two neighborhood meetings very highly attended and very supportive of the redevelopment of the site.

- Mr. Dash mentioned that currently there is an application before the City Council for a zoning map change. The team is now preparing a submittal for the zoning approval, and since the SRA is working on the Winter Hill Urban Renewal Plan which covers almost this entire site plus a little more, Mark Development LLC thought it would be best to show the SRA what they are doing and keep them informed.
- Mr. Korff, principal with Mark Development LLC, explained that the project is a mixed-use development with ground floor retail and residential above. He explained that the current zoning excludes a section of the overall development, and that affects the application submittal. They are requesting to change the zoning from the MR3 and MR5 to MR6. This is a proposal that came from the neighborhood meetings supported by the community. The goal would be to keep this site out of the urban renewal process.
- Mr. Korff mentioned that most important for the community is to put this on a more expedited track to development.
- Mr. Korff explained the differences of what is allowed with the current zoning and what would be allowed if the zoning change is approved. Under the current zoning the gross square footage would be 223,069 while 317,403 SF would be allowed with the new zoning.
- Mr. Gage asked if the house on Sewall Street would be part of this development. Mr. Korff explained that they are in discussions with the City and they would be happy to subdivide that lot to conduct their own RFP for affordable housing.
- Mr. Galligani mentioned that the Urban Renewal Plan approved by the SRA contemplates that lot being sold to a mission driven affordable housing developer.
- Mr. McCormick asked if that separate affordable housing project would count toward the inclusionary affordable housing that would be required of the development. Mr. Korff explained that they would consider that to be in addition to the development's required inclusionary units.
- Mr. Korff explained that the Walgreens would be moving to their old Walgreens location on Broadway so the neighborhood would not lose the pharmacy.
- Mr. Ewen-Campen explained that the requested zoning change to accommodate this project has to be approved by the City Council. The item is then referred to the Land Use Committee and there is a joint public hearing which is scheduled for Monday November 8, 2021 at 6:30 pm.
- Mr. Ewen-Campen mentioned that when the Board was initially presented with the Urban Renewal Plan, it was presented that the corner lots had to be included to make any

redevelopment successful. Mr. Ewen-Campen asked if including the corner lots was something that the developers tried to do but decided against or if it was never a discussion.

- Mr. Korff explained that they did approach the owners, but they have no interest in selling the property. Mr. Korff mentioned that the parking lot that is used by the liquor store is part of the property that is under agreement.
- Mr. Ercolini asked what are some of the retail establishments that the neighborhood would like to see. Mr. Korff explained that the goal is to try to create energy here, in other words to have uses that inspire gatherings, which lead primarily to food and beverage establishments. He explained that they just partnered up on the retail portion for this project with Graffito.
- Mr. Ercolini asked about the total number of housing units that they envision permitting. Mr. Ercolini asked if there is a home ownership component to this project and how many would be included in the inclusionary housing. Mr. Korff explained that the zoning change, if approved, would dictate the number, and that would be 282 units.
- Mr. Ercolini asked the bedroom mix of the units. The zoning encourages more of the larger units. It was also explained that all of the units would be rental.
- Ms. Stone asked if they could explain why they chose this site and what they are thinking in terms of the mitigation, the impact that this will have on the density of the neighborhood. Mr. Korff explained that the decision to purchase this site is financially driven; however, a site like this is an opportunity to help address the shortage of housing that the area is facing. He explained that in terms of mitigation they are doing all of the things that need to be done as prescribed by the City of Somerville.
- Mr. McCormick asked about the green roofs on the illustrations that were presented. Mr. Preston explains that this is part of the inspiration and they are considering solar panels, but they are still in conversations and that the green roofs pictured may not necessarily be what happens. Mr. McCormick mentioned that the use of green roofs would benefit the proposal, and that solar and green roofs are not mutually exclusive as is sometimes assumed.
- Mr. Gage asked how many parking spaces there would be in the project. Mr. Korff explained that they are still trying to decide the number. Right now they feel the number could be 0.7 per unit.
- Ms. Nadkarni mentioned that the City is currently working on building a Civic Advisory Committee. This was part of the agreement between the SRA and the City Council to form an advisory committee to enable the neighborhood to give specific feedback to the SRA and the Council.

- Ms. Stone asked if the members of the SRA could get a tutorial from Ms. McGettigan or Mr. Galligani as to what is the SRA involvement on this site with the Urban Renewal Plan with a private developer.
- Mr. Galligani explained that what was talked about in the plan was to go through a community process to articulate the specific vision of what the site would be. The plan was to issue an RFP to solicit a developer that would achieve our vision. Once the developer was selected, the SRA would use the power of eminent domain if the developer was not able to acquire the parcels through private transactions. That process would have required a vote from the SRA using its eminent domain power under the approved urban renewal plan. Mr. Galligani explained that now, however, we have a developer that has already entered into a private agreement to acquire most of the properties that are part of the urban renewal plan.
- Mr. Galligani explained that in the future, the developer may need a certification from the SRA that the developer developed the property in accordance with the urban renewal plan and that the SRA is not going to use the powers of eminent domain to acquire the property under them.
- Ms. McGettigan explained that what Mr. Galligani just explained is correct. She explained that urban renewal is a tool that can be used and one of the tools of urban renewal is eminent domain. However, we do not create an urban renewal plan just to exercise the power of eminent domain. This property was the most blighted property in Somerville, nothing was happening until the SRA passed the urban renewal plan and all of a sudden this incentivised development.
- Ms. McGettigan expressed that it was very appropriate for the developer to come to the SRA in the early stages to explain that their proposal aligns with the urban renewal plan. Ms. McGettigan explained that that if the City Council approves the changes to the zoning and the proposal aligns with the urban renewal plan, the SRA will not take the property by eminent domain.
- Mr. Gage explained that if the current owner of the property refuses to go forward, there is an urban renewal plan in place.
- Mr. Galligani expressed that the urban renewal plan provides the community with tremendous leverage. He mentioned that it is exciting that Mark Development LLC has an agreement with the private land owner and this is remarkable since this was the goal when SRA staff decided to write an urban renewal plan.

6. 90 Washington Street Demonstration Project Plan Update

- Mr. Galligani explained that the City has retained two consultant teams that are working with us to start a planning process on the two parcels that the City will not need for the public safety

building. There is a plan that shows the layout of the public safety building and lots A and C. There will be a public meeting late November or early December to talk about the details of these lots. The idea there is to start a dialogue for what kind of uses make sense on this site.

- Mr. Galligani mentioned that there is an urban design team, real estate, and financial analysis team so that the City can evaluate different development alternatives, to see what is feasible. It is anticipated that this process will take six months or so. The end product will have some guidelines and direction that can be included in an RFP in order to find a development team to implement that vision.
- Mr. Galligani explained that they continue to refine the plan for the public safety building and that would be on a separate track. The public safety committee is having their next meeting in early November.
- Mr. Gage asked how much land is left for private development. Mr. Galligani explained that it is somewhere around 2 acres. He explained that some of the land will be a new New Washington Street. The entire site is about 4 acres.

7. Assembly Square Update

- Mr. Galligani explained that the City has published a draft for the Assembly Square Neighborhood Plan. The City is currently taking comments on the plan until October 29.
- Ms. Stone asked where to find the plan. Mr. Galligani shared a link for the Assembly Square Neighborhood Plan.
- Mr. Ercolini mentioned that in the last SRA meeting he requested the number of total residents in Assembly Square.
- Mr. Galligani said that there are 1,475 units that have been permitted and all have been built except for those in one building that is across from the Partners Healthcare building. Almost all the units are occupied.
- Mr. Galligani mentioned that there are plans for a small fire station on the ground floor of one of the garages as part of a proposed lab building. A 30 year lease has been submitted to the City Council for approval.

8. Other Business

- To correct Mr. McCormick's name on the SRA website. It is misspelled.

9. Next Meeting: November 17, 2021 at 5:30 pm. Location: Virtual Meeting- Software GotoWebinar

10. Meeting Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 7:05 pm by Mr. Patrick McCormick. Seconded by Ms. Stone. The motion was approved by a roll call vote, unanimously, by all present members

Meeting Documents

- DLJ presentation
- Mark Development, LLC presentation

All meeting documents will be posted on the SRA's page of the City's website under "Meeting Materials".