



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

**JOSEPH A. CURTATONE  
MAYOR**

*PHIL ERCOLINI  
CHAIR*

**MINUTES**

Somerville Redevelopment Authority  
Thursday, October 17, 2019 at 5:30 p.m.  
Winter Hill Community School Cafeteria  
115 Sycamore Street, 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 Nick Schonberger, Economic Development Assistant.

Phil Ercolini, Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:30PM. Open session commenced. A quorum was present. This meeting was audio recorded.

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

- i. Draft September 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019 Meeting Minutes
- ii. Schematic of US2 Master Development
- iii. Draft design of Boynton Yards Development area
- iv. Schematic of Assembly Row Development Parcels
- v. Photo of 90 Washington
- vi. Preliminary sketches of proposed 90 Washington subdivision and future development sites

**Discussion and Actions Taken**

**1. Approval of September Minutes:**

- Mr. Ewen-Campen suggested an amendment to the September minutes to clearly state that the city will fund the MBTA elevator at the Union Square Green line Station entirely from contributions made by US2 and Boynton yards developers. Mr. Galligani confirmed this.
- Motion to approve by Iwona Bonney, seconded by William Gage.
- Unanimously approved

## 2. Assembly Square Update

Mr. Galligani provided the update for Assembly Square.

- Mr. Galligani disclosed the upcoming closure of Kmart and that Federal Realty Investment Trust (FRIT) had acquired lease for that space. FRIT now has full ownership of the Marketplace.
- Mr. Galligani stated that it is anticipated that Kmart will close sometime before Thanksgiving. A job fair in collaboration with FRIT and Somerville Community Corporation will be held on November 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>.
- Mr. McCormick asked at what price was the lease acquired for and what FRIT intends to do with the site. Mr. Galligani stated that they will potentially re-tenant the space to emerging tech companies looking for flexible space, which is difficult to come by in Somerville. The price is unknown. Mr. Galligani explained that the marketplace will be redeveloped in a future phase but it is unclear of its timeline at this time.
- Mr. Galligani provided the board with an aerial map of the development parcels owned by FRIT from the Assembly Row website.
  - Block 11 – Ruth Chris Steakhouse is slated to open on November 20<sup>th</sup>.
  - Block 8 – under construction and will add 500 residential units.
  - All apartments at Block 5A, Alloy, have been occupied.
  - Block 6 – American Fresh Brewhouse filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy. They have not been able to pay rent on time since the build out of the space. American Fresh Brewhouse has 120 days to accept a lease with FRIT. OSPCD, Economic Development will connect with American Fresh Brewhouse ownership to discuss options.
  - Block 7A and Block 8 will be the site of a new art project by Artists for Humanity. They will be installing a solar powered panel on Revolution Drive. The unveiling of this project will be held on October 28<sup>th</sup>.
- The Assembly Square neighborhood planning process is underway led by the OSPCD, planning department. Staff released a Request for Proposals and is reviewing 11 applications that have been received. The urban renewal plan is expiring in 2021. The document might provide direction to the SRA for a new urban renewal plan. The Planning Division is doing interviews with the final three firms between October 21<sup>st</sup> and October 25<sup>th</sup>, anticipating an executed contract by the end of 2019.
- Mr. Gage asked what was happening with Block 9 or buildings on Block 7.
- Mr. Galligani stated that those buildings are identified as lab and commercial buildings.
- Mr. Gage questioned why the City was doing a neighborhood plan.
- Mr. Galligani responded that the neighborhood plan will identify a vision for the remaining portions of Assembly Square.
- Mr. Gage asked who will be managing the neighborhood planning process.
- Mr. Galligani stated that OSPCD Planning Division will be managing and facilitating that process with the community and stakeholders.
- Mr. Gage stated that he believes strongly that the SRA should have a say in the management of the Assembly Square neighborhood planning process and that the SRA should participate to pick a consultant and review the work plan of OSPCD Planning Division.

- Ms. McGettigan added that the contract between the City and SRA is that members of OSPCD act as staff to the SRA for this purpose.
- Mr. Gage reiterated a strong belief that the SRA be a part of that process at the beginning and not the end of the neighborhood planning process.
- Mr. Galligani stated that OSPCD typically develops a neighborhood plan based on community input that identifies strategies like creating and amending Urban Renewal boundaries. Once the plan is completed, it becomes a tool that may be utilized by the SRA.
- Mr. Gage added that in this case where the SRA still controls parcels within Assembly Square then the SRA should be involved in the planning process.
- Ms. Hedeman asked if the SRA has any site control in the proposed neighborhood planning area. Mr. Galligani stated that the planning area goes beyond Assembly Row and is identified from River Street to McGrath Highway. Acquisition parcels that were identified in the 2001 Urban Renewal Plan are what has become the Assembly Row development. Now the City is looking at the areas beyond Assembly Row that were not identified in the 2001 plan update. The plan did identify Assembly Square in its entirety as the urban renewal plan area
- Ms. McGettigan added that it's part of the urban renewal plan area but not part of an action plan, because acquisition/disposition parcels haven't been named in the other part of the Assembly Square neighborhood. Technically the SRA does have jurisdiction, but the SRA doesn't have DHCD approval to do anything in that part of the urban renewal area because it's not an action plan.
- Mr. McCormick asked Mr. Galligani if the SRA could participate in another way as part of a task force for example.
- Mr. Galligani stated it is something that OSPCD could look into.
- Ms. McGettigan added that all of the affordable units in the Alloy condominium have closed and are being occupied by income eligible households.
- Mr. McCormick asked about an estimate of amount of jobs that will be created by acquisition of Kmart by FRIT.
- Mr. Galligani responded that the space would allow for an estimate of 150-200 jobs.
- Mr. Ercolini asked about the people that live in Assembly, if those people vote, where do they vote and what is the outreach strategy by City staff? The question may be directed towards the City of Somerville Elections office. He wondered how many occupied units there were.
- Mr. Galligani responded that there were an approximate amount of 1000-1500 units of housing.

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

Tom Galligani provided the update for Union Square.

- US2 received approvals on six Design Site Plan Review (DSPR) applications from the Planning Board, and the City Council unanimously voted on September 25<sup>th</sup> to transfer the remaining City-owned D2 Block parcel to the SRA. Environmental cleanup procedures are underway and vertical construction will begin next year.
- Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) negotiations have concluded with the Union Square Neighborhood Council (USNC) and have resulted in a term

sheet. The USNC membership ratified the term sheet with a referendum vote on September 26<sup>th</sup> with 161 votes in favor, 2 against and 4 provisional ballots.

- US2 will begin actively marketing the site for the commercial building, and project signage and screens will be posted on the fence.
- Ms. McGettigan clarified that preparation for the closing will begin with a confirmatory order of taking and a vote by the SRA. The SRA will also vote to convey a permanent easement to the MBTA along the railroad right of way.
- Mr. Gage asked when the City will get paid for the site. City staff estimates it will happen in January. All former owners of property taken by the SRA have been paid.
- There is one abutter appeal from the DSPR approval which has been transferred to land court. The appeal is based on the fact that all of the construction is going to make it hard to rent out apartments. The abutter is seeking two years of rent from US2.
- GLX is on schedule, and there is ongoing coordination with US2, City, MBTA and GLXC (the MBTA's GLX contractors).

#### **4. Boynton Yards Update**

Mr. Galligani provided the update for Boynton Yards.

- DLJ has closed on the Gentle Giant parcel.
- OSPCD staff is reviewing options for developing that site.
- DLJ requested to be on the next SRA agenda before the closing on their financing on November 15<sup>th</sup>.

#### **5. 90 Washington**

Mr. Galligani provided the 90 Washington Street update.

- A photo of 90 Washington was presented to show that a fence has been erected around the entire site and that the site was maintained as requested by the Board.
- An RFP for a project manager for the public safety building construction was released. Capital Projects is anticipating making a selection in the next two months.
- Draft sketches of a potential subdivision and possible future development sites were provided to the SRA. Ms. McGettigan explained that once a formal subdivision plan has been drawn, the SRA will be asked to convey the public safety portion of the site to the City.
- Ms. McGettigan provided a legal update on the 90 Washington litigation. The SJC decided the Yawkey Way case, which involved the BRA taking Yawkey Way by a demonstration project. The SJC ruled that the plaintiff did not have legal standing. While the SJC did not make any comments about the taking of the site by eminent domain for a demonstration project, the SJC did say that a redevelopment authority could transfer the land to anyone without following

G.L. c. 30B. That statute exempts redevelopment authorities from doing a public procurement process for land transactions pursuant to an approved plan. The statute doesn't specify the type of plan. The court held that a demonstration project plan was an approved plan, and therefore the BRA didn't have to comply with c. 30B in transferring the street to the Red Sox.

- Ms. McGettigan noted land swaps are sometimes contemplated by the board and noted that it is very hard to do a land swap under c. 30B, but if you do not have to comply with c. 30B it is a lot easier to do a land swap.
- There has been no decision yet in the action by Cobble Hill alleging that the SRA did not have the authority to take 90 Washington by eminent domain pursuant to a Demonstration Project Plan. However, when the Yawkey Way decision issued, we then received a complaint from Cobble Hill alleging that the pro tanto paid was not enough.
- OSPCD received approval for a bond authorization request by the City Council for \$810,000 for the purposes of demolishing 90 Washington.
- The city will continue the conversation with the community, city council, and the SRA to consider what that private development site will look like. The anticipation is that further analysis is needed to better understand what kind of public benefits may be anticipated for this development site.
- Mr. Gage noted that this is a change from what was originally proposed as a public private partnership where the private developer would build the public safety building for the city and hand over to the city, and then the private developer would get to develop the rest of the site.
- Ms. McGettigan stated that the public process will not be finished prior to the need for the public safety building, and so the city needs to separate the planning effort for the remainder of the site from the public safety building site.

## **6. Public Comment Period**

- None

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

- Ms. Hedeman updated the board on SomerVision 2040:
  - In April, Ms. Hedeman was appointed by the SRA as the representative for the SomerVision 2040 process. The comment period on the existing plan is until November 11<sup>th</sup>.

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

- Next regular meeting(s) are scheduled for the following dates:
  - November 14, 2019 at 5:30pm, location TBD.
  - December 12, 2019 at 5:30pm, location TBD.
  - January 16, 2019 at 5:30pm, location TBD.

## **9. Adjournment**

- Motion to adjourn made by Iwona Bonney and seconded by William Gage.
- Unanimously Approved.