

**City of Salem Massachusetts
Public Meeting Minutes**

Board or Committee:	Redevelopment Authority, Regular Meeting
Date and Time:	Wednesday, December 14, 2022, at 6:00 pm
Meeting Location:	Virtual Zoom Meeting
SRA Members Present:	Acting-Chair Dean Rubin, Cynthia Nina-Soto, Christine Madore
SRA Members Absent:	David Guarino, Chair Grace Napolitano
Others Present:	Tom Daniel – Director of Planning and Community Development, Kate Newhall-Smith, Principal Planner
Recorder:	Colleen Brewster

City Initiatives

1. Charlotte Forten Park

a. Charlotte Forten Memorial Project

Julie Barry, City of Salem Sr. Planner for Arts and Culture, was present to discuss the project.

Mr. Daniel stated that there is funding to support programming and there will be a collaboration with others in the city.

Ms. Barry reviewed how the city got to where they are today and noted the desire to commission a memorial statue and the community. In late 2019 she explored pathways to a memorial and in 2021 the New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA) received a grant to imagine the possibilities. The community selected Charlotte Forten as the person to honor with a memorial with the same grandeur as others. A bronze statue is proposed but the park is a heat island, so a shaded structure is also suggested. They've developed a partnership with the MAPC (Mass Area Planning Council) and have a grant to steward this project forward with a diverse group of individuals. The budget will be finalized in 2023, they will prepare a call for artists in January, convene a selection panel in March, receive submissions in April, with planning in June/July. In May 3-5 finalizes will be publicized for public feedback. The city provided \$50K, with a possible \$30K from NEA, and possibly \$25K from Essex County Community Foundation Grant, for a total of \$105K and possibly a curriculum for the City of Salem students. They are seeking an SRA member to help organize the call for a diverse range of artists, ensure the community's vision is upheld, and to support outreach. They are also seeking to fill three subcommittee advisory roles: the selection panel to assist in the review of Call to Artists responses and final selection of the artist, the commemorative work subcommittee to guide the commemorative elements and confirm information, and the technical review subcommittee to ensure the technical feasibility of the proposal with the least amount of disruption to the existing park. They are seeking people who haven't been part of the larger conversation.

Ms. Madore asked if the memorial direction will be a statue or if the context of the space is part of the design and if it's placement would impact the usability of the park. Ms. Barry replied that its placement within the park will be strategic, along with the pedestal shape and material, etc.

Ms. Madore noted one section on Commonwealth Avenue where statues are closer to the ground and not on pedestals to allow for more inviting public interaction. Ms. Barry replied that the advisory group has discussed where and how to place the statue, because Charlotte was modest, so they may want to raise her up, but they do want people to feel invited and interact with her. She could be writing or orating, but that will be determined.

Acting-Chair Rubin asked about the time commitment to be on an advisory group. Ms. Barry replied approximately 10 hours, with 3-5 hours of additional time if someone were to be on a subcommittee, from now until July 2023 and 2 meetings have already occurred. They meet remotely via Zoom with at least one on-site meeting at the park. Acting-Chair Rubin suggested this information be shared that Board members who aren't present and can create a deadline for Ms. Newhall-Smith to reach out to Ms. Barry. Ms. Barry requested a response by early 2023.

b. Future Programming

Ms. Newhall-Smith noted that activity has been quiet at the park since the pandemic, and they want to focus on programming in the spring and summer of 2023 to activate the space with a schedule of events. She suggested putting out an RFP for an entity to manage the park with a minimum of one family event per month from May through September for free public engagement and a consistent calendar of events at the park that may or may not be free programs. She asked that the Board provide feedback to include in the RFP before the end of 2022 so it can be sent out in January 2023.

Ms. Madore asked if the programming research done on site through the community engagement process was available to compare ideas. Mr. Daniel replied that Claudia Paraschiv with CBA Architects will use the information that was captured. Ms. Madore suggested that pre-pandemic desires for the park may have changed. Acting-Chair Rubin was in support of an RFP. Ms. Nina-Soto stated that having someone dedicated to programming would allow the full intent to be fulfilled, and she was also in favor of the RFP. Mr. Daniel noted that he was unsure of the responses could be, but he believes this is the best way to move forward.

Ms. Madore asked if the SRA captures some of the revenue made at the park. Ms. Newhall-Smith replied that she is proposing to structure the RFP as the October contracts are structured, which see the City receiving a percentage of vendor receipts. The percentage would be reviewed by the selection committee, but with such a small space the fees would be limited and used specifically for the park. Mr. Daniel agreed.

Executive Director's Report

Mr. Daniel stated that:

1. There will be a new experience at the park during the week between Christmas and New Year's for all ages and seeing the park fully programmed for multiple days with a package of activities will be good. Acting-Chair Rubin raised concerns with crowds and whether the park can accommodate that usage.
2. There are different business spaces turning over with new tenants. An idea is to continue to add any new information to the report. They work with the Salem Main Streets and the Chamber to reach out and welcome new businesses. Ms. Newhall-Smith requested any feedback from the Board moving forward.

Projects in the Urban Renewal Area

1. **41 Lafayette Street:** Small Project Review – Review of Proposal and DRB Recommendation for the painting of a mural on Central Street façade of Barrio, continued from 11/09/22, request to continue to January 11, 2023.

Ms. Newhall-Smith stated that the owner wants to pursue it, but she was busy during the Halloween season and needed to submit the Public Art Commission (PAC) application. Ms. Madore asked if the current sign was approved. Ms. Newhall-Smith replied that the applicant received DRB approval with changes and she will confirm that the sign installed matches what is approved.

VOTE: Madore made a motion to continue to the January 11, 2023 regular meeting. Seconded by: Nina-Soto.

Roll Call: Madore, Nina-Soto, Rubin. 3-0 in favor.

2. **East India Square Fountain:** Aurora Borealis Dance Company Performance – Liquid Spine, request to continue to January 11, 2023.

VOTE: Madore made a motion to continue to the January 11, 2023 regular meeting. Seconded by: Nina-Soto.

Roll Call: Madore, Nina-Soto, Rubin. 3-0 in favor.

3. **252 Bridge Street:** Final Design Review – Review of DRB Recommendation for The Exchange Salem – Part 1: Redevelopment of 252 Bridge Street into a six-story mixed use building with approximately 7,325 square feet of commercial space, up to 120 residential units that will be offered at varying levels of affordability, creation of public spaces, and site improvements.

Adam Stein (WinnDevelopment), Steve Prestejohn (Cube3), Michael Blier (Landscape Architect at Landworks Studio), and Attorney Joseph Correnti (Correnti & Darling, LLP) were present to discuss the project.

Atty. Correnti stated that they've spent the last several months before the DRB and received a positive recommendation. Mr. Prestejohn added that the presentation will focus on the Bridge Street design, feasibility of the curved exterior wall, materials, windows, and storefront systems.

Mr. Blier noted that multiple connections are being made to the building, which is a nexus of multimodal activity. They have improved pedestrian connections, traffic flow and site lines. The pull-over on Bridge Street has been made stronger to create a better entrance to the courtyard at Bridge Street. They've also retained the lower garden with robust planting for a cohesive design.

Bridge Street Architecture

Mr. Prestejohn noted the four key viewpoints of the building, the south elevation which has been highly developed by the DRB, and the dark bay windows have been replaced with other successful queues of the building. The floor lines have been expressed and the windows grouped together to manage the building length and provide a more human scale. They've helped bridge the areas for a more appropriate and modern design and scaled it with the intermediate element

and warmer materials. The street slopes up from right to left with a grade change of approximately 7-feet and a light grey base helps terminate the material above by incorporating bays and continuing the bays which conceal mechanical spaces raised up from the basement level and there is no longer a blank wall at street level, the design will continue. The east and west elevations are relatively unchanged. The north elevation remains curved, darker grey at the top level and a lighter grey below to distinguish them. The material will no longer be a faux wood grain, both will be solid colored and smooth, and the result will be a mix of the two colors. They explored alternative patterns and colors and arrived at a horizontal grouping of the two colors which will emphasize the curve which feels dynamic, and he presented renderings of the final design, that show textures and continues the rhythm of the public edge along Bridge Street. The darker material will turn the corner and touch the base of the building. At the river level, there will be a park and monumental stair to the upper level and to activate the space.

Ms. Nina-Soto thanked the design team for bringing back a building that doesn't resemble a prison. Ms. Madore stated that the building was an upgrade and noted her request for visuals at the street level as a pedestrian which weren't presented. She was in favor of the improved pedestrian drop-off and asked if anything can be done to make that area more comfortable for pedestrians. She noted that the new trees were not shown in the renderings. She stated that Bridge Street is a hostile environment for people to walk by and that experience should be addressed as a pedestrian or a visitor that may be forced to use this path. Mr. Blier noted that the island with trees was not included because the sidewalk at the building will feel more comfortable as it is now 18-inches wider. Ms. Madore asked whether the Planning Board (PB) could incorporate into their review. Atty. Correnti replied that the site plan is still being reviewed by the PB and will return in January for at least one more meeting. There have been some improvements, but they can refocus and possibly make more.

Mr. Prestejohn presented section drawings along the sidewalk to show the scale and feel of the edge at the widened sidewalk and noted the wildflower edge and planting plans at the sidewalk. Ms. Madore hoped the trees selected provide shade for a more comfortable walking experience and noted that she doesn't want the trees to shield the building's design or scale away from downtown residents. Mr. Blier agreed, noted that the trees will provide economic value as well as a balance, and the currently proposed Festig Oak tree won't crowd the building but will hold their leaves late into the season. Mr. Prestejohn noted that because they are long lived, they don't grow as fast but will get large.

Ms. Madore asked if changes to unit mixes or program were required as an outcome of the design changes. Mr. Prestejohn replied no. Ms. Madore requested the status of tenants to use the commercial space. Mr. Stein replied that potential tenants are unknown. Ms. Madore hoped potential tenants would be able to occupy the space quickly without needing to redesign any of the units and suggested that be considered as they move along the process. Mr. Stein noted that a co-working space and gym will be the first-floor use and they will consider build-out for potential tenants.

Acting-Chair Rubin asked how they addressed the curvature of the north façade. Mr. Prestejohn replied that it was discussed with the product representative, who advised them that the minimum radius for the product is 6-feet, and their smallest curve for the building is 10-feet-8-inches.

Mr. Daniel noted that a mock-up will be constructed to demonstrate the curvature.

Public Comment:

Ms. Newhall-Smith stated that she received the following letter:

1. Jim Rose, dated November 21, 2022

No one in the assembly wished to speak.

Ms. Madore suggested holding off on a vote until the two absent board members were present. Acting-Chair Rubin noted that it had been two years since the project was awarded. Acting-Chair Rubin replied that with a 3-meeting review he feels comfortable that the absent members would be in favor.

VOTE: Madore made a motion to approve the final design with DRB recommendations.

Seconded by: Nina-Soto.

Roll Call: Madore, Nina-Soto, Rubin. 3-0 in favor.

4. **231 Essex Street:** Small Project Review – Review of DRB recommendation for the removal of existing historic windows and replacement of same.

Ms. Newhall-Smith stated that this is a second story window replacement only. The applicant found an acceptable all wood window with mullions to match the original windows and the DRB made a positive recommendation for SRA consideration. The applicant is also working to repair the historic bay window on the first-floor corner of the building, and she will determine the timeline for the repair work. She noted that the application never included the bay window.

Ms. Madore questioned the proposed arrangement of the windows. Ms. Newhall-Smith replied that there was a mix, some were 2 over 1 and other were 1 over 1, and they will use the same window patterns as before, which were different. Ms. Madore preferred a symmetrical arrangement. Acting-Chair Rubin felt the application didn't need to return to the SRA.

Ms. Newhall-Smith stated that the bay window is an in-kind repair and doesn't require a meeting review. Ms. Madore questioned the cost of replacing vs. repairing. Ms. Nina-Soto stated that replacement could be more expensive. Ms. Madore wanted to ensure that their progress is followed, and the end result is symmetrical.

Public Comment:

No one in the assembly wished to speak.

VOTE: Madore made a motion to approve as recommended by the DRB. Seconded by: Nina-Soto.

Roll Call: Madore, Nina-Soto, Rubin. 3-0 in favor.

5. **23 Summer Street:** Request for review of proposed changes to approved elevation plans. Proposed changes include the removal of two ground floor windows on the East elevation, the removal of a third-floor balcony on the East elevation, and the removal of two ground floor windows on the South elevation.

Michael Becker (Owner) was present to discuss the project.

Mr. Becker stated that the DRB was on board with their requested changes and referred it back to the SRA. Ms. Newhall-Smith noted that the DRB was okay with removing windows, removing a balcony, and making the elements symmetrical.

Public Comment:

No one in the assembly wished to speak.

VOTE: Madore made a motion to approve with DRB conditions. Seconded by: Nina-Soto.

Roll Call: Madore, Nina-Soto, Rubin. 3-0 in favor.

6. **2 East India Square:** Small Project Review – Review of proposal to maintain installed white lattice fencing around outdoor dining area.

Ms. Newhall-Smith stated that the applicant was not present.

VOTE: Nina-Soto made a motion to continue to January 11, 2023. Seconded by: Madore.

Roll Call: Madore, Nina-Soto, Rubin. 3-0 in favor.

New / Old Business

Redevelopment of the Historic Courthouses and the Crescent Lot: Update on Project Status

Mr. Daniel stated:

Crescent Lot:

An S&P was executed with the MBTA for the sliver parcel, and they will be closing on it in January.

Historic Courthouses:

Ms. Newhall-Smith has been working with MassDevelopment on the Underutilized Properties grant of \$600,000. WinnDevelopment continues to work with development partner USG, and they continue to have regular meetings with DCAMM. UCH-TIF is being explored as a possible tool, although both sides of the street will require public financing tools, and Winn is considering Home Funds. DHCD said their application for tax credits will be considered in the spring round rather than January 2023, because they were inundated with applications. It's good they don't need to wait until the fall, and they have a back-up timeline to proceed with the projects if there was a delay.

Ms. Madore asked why the slip lane cannot be removed next to the courthouse. Mr. Daniel replied that it's possible and can be considered. During a meeting with Engineering Department and Traffic and Parking and Bridge Street between Flint and the MBTA driveway is the missing portion of a project completed 25-years ago. MassDOT is working on plans for that segment and the city requested they extend their plan to the eastern side of Washington Street side to include that intersection. The initial conversation about eliminating the slip lane and study of the intersection lead to the proposal of a roundabout. This consideration is required as part of MassDOT's consideration process, he believed the suggestion didn't take the significant pedestrian crossing into consideration, which would have an adverse effect and lead to traffic and back-ups. The city engineer reached out 4-5 months ago and MassDOT responded that they'd only go to the MBTA entrance and not to the Washington Street corner. The city engineer will ask MassDOT to reconsider and if the answer is still no, the city will study the intersection

on its own. Ms. Madore asked if eliminating the slip lane would be the goal. Mr. Daniel replied that a holistic look is needed that considers all modes of transportation need to make the intersection safe and functional for all. Its elimination could have a variety of impacts on vehicular or pedestrian and bicycle travel. If MassDOT doesn't advance the design the city will need to secure the funds for the redesign and construction. Ms. Madore stated that MassDOT doesn't seem interested in improving the pedestrian environment and the flow of vehicular traffic is being prioritized, showing their difference in values. There is no slip lane on the opposite side of Washington Street turning onto Bridge Street, so why square off both corners. Mr. Daniel stated that the work between Flint Street and the MBTA driveway is a Complete Streets approach, like the pedestrian and infrastructure improvement between Flint to Boston Street. There is less flexibility between the MBTA driveway and Washington Street because of the bridge and on ramp but there are trade-offs and a variety of impacts. Ms. Madore suggested blocking off the slip lane temporarily to see what happens because this corner is very important for the courthouse development. Acting-Chair Rubin agreed.

SRA Financials:

Acting-Chair Mr. Rubin was delighted to see the Salem Fire Water event had used \$5,000 in SRA funding.

Approval of Minutes

1. Review of October 12, 2022 Regular Meeting Minutes

Acting-Chair Rubin suggested continuing the minutes regarding 23 Summer Street and raised questions on the wording and comments made by the board members present. He agreed to provide revised text. Board members discussed his concerns and were in favor of his clarifications.

VOTE: Nina-Soto made a motion to approve with Rubin's edits. Seconded by: Madore.
Roll Call: Madore, Nina-Soto, Rubin. 3-0 in favor.

2. Review of November 9, 2022 Regular Meeting Minutes

VOTE: Nina-Soto made a motion to approve with Rubin's edits. Seconded by: Madore.
Roll Call: Madore, Nina-Soto, Rubin. 3-0 in favor.

Other

Acting-Chair Rubin asked if there are any plans for readjusting the new bicycle friendly street design along North Street due to the multitude of concerns from Salem residents. Mr. Daniel replied that the Traffic Department will continue to monitor the street and collect data, but this is a big shift for people to adjust to. Mr. Rubin questioned the snow removal method with the bike lane. Mr. Daniel replied that he did not know the details of when the dividers would be removed.

Adjournment

VOTE: Nina-Soto made a motion to adjourn the regular meeting. Seconded by: Madore.
Roll Call: Madore, Nina-Soto, Rubin. 3-0 in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 8:00PM.

Know your rights under the Open Meeting Law M.G.L. c. 39 §23B and City Ordinance Sections 2-028
through 2-2033