

**City of Salem Massachusetts
Public Meeting Minutes**

Board or Committee:	Redevelopment Authority, Regular Meeting
Date and Time:	Wednesday, November 8, 2023, at 6:00 pm
Meeting Location:	Virtual Zoom Meeting
SRA Members Present:	Acting-Chair Dean Rubin, Christopher Dunn, Christine Madore, Cynthia Nina-Soto
SRA Members Absent:	Chair Grace Napolitano
Others Present:	Tom Daniel – Director of Planning and Community Development
Recorder:	Colleen Brewster

The Board welcomes its newest member, Christopher Dunn. Mr. Dunn stated that he's lived in Salem for 19 years and is from Beverly. He is a father of 3, provides administrative services for U. Mass Amherst working out of Boston, and worked in state government for the past 20 years.

Executive Director's Report

Mr. Daniel stated:

1. Halloween 2023 has come to an end and the messaging about visitors not driving to Salem went well; Parking Director, David Kucharsky noted fewer cars downtown. The holiday season will begin after Thanksgiving with various programming currently being organized.
2. Acting-Chair Rubin noted that the Charlotte Forten memorial project has been awarded to an artist, endorsed by the Mayor, and has funding. He presented an artist's rendering who was chosen by a selection committee. The selected statue will be a nice addition to the park and should be ready by April 2024. Mr. Daniel thanked Acting-Chair Rubin for serving on the committee, noted Julie Barry's hard work and organization over the years, through social justice planning, community engagement, and a collaboration with MAPC to demonstrate a robust public art engagement process. Acting-Chair Rubin noted that the community's popular vote did not win. He presented the four semi-finalists and the selected winner, Ai Qiu Hopen, of Humanity Memorial. He noted that the popular selection by the community was showing Charlotte Forten breaking through a shackle, but she was never a slave, which may have led to the wrong conclusion about Charlotte Forten.
3. Ms. Newhall-Smith noted that the RFP for programming at Charlotte Forten Park went live on November 1st. It will cover programming for the next 2 years with a goal of consistent and lively community space.
4. Ms. Newhall-Smith shared that the construction design drawings will begin on the shade structure at Charlotte Forten Park. It will be placed on the Speedway side of the park and cantilever towards the center. The construction documents will be completed in the next few months, and will be reviewed by the SRA soon, and installed in the spring. She noted that Ms. Barry has been a phenomenal resource with all park-related endeavors.

5. Mr. Daniel noted that the Frozen Fire Festival will return this December.
6. Ms. Newhall-Smith noted that Koons is rebranding into Moon's after the new year.
7. Ms. Newhall-Smith noted that the commercial condominium at Brix sold and the new owner, Chef Aaron Chambers from Settler, reached out to her. It's not known if this will be a second location or a relocation from Lynde Street.
8. Acting-Chair Rubin asked if there were any surprises during the Halloween season since some felt this was their best year ever. Ms. Newhall-Smith replied that her business recruitment team is meeting next week, and she will get the anecdotal information then. Mr. Rubin noted that Kylie Sullivan felt the number of visitors was over 1.1M. Ms. Nina-Soto felt that her travels downtown were easier despite all the visitors.

Projects in the Urban Renewal Area

1. **23 Summer Street: Review of DRB Recommendation** – Request to remove slate roof and replace it with GAF Slateline fiberglass/asphalt shingles.

Mike Becker was present to discuss the project.

Ms. Newhall-Smith stated that Mr. Becker asked for SRA permission to remove the existing roof and review the condition of the slate and the structure below. He completed that task and returned to the DRB, was able to salvage enough of the slate for three of the sides, which pleased the DRB. The Board was okay with him installing the Slateline shingles on the new addition on the east slope of the roof that will face 38 Norman Street. That roof will be minimally visible and with 38 Norman Street permitted and if constructed, this side of the existing roof would be less visible. The DRB also approved the installation of a cricket at the chimney to divert water.

Mr. Becker noted that two skylights were previously approved, and he felt there was room for a third skylight to add more light to the north side unit. Acting-Chair Rubin asked if the additional skylight would be on the east roof and if it would be visible. Mr. Becker replied that the roof would be mostly blocked from view from the east. Mr. Daniel asked if the three skylights would be evenly spaced. Mr. Becker replied yes noting the revised elevation that was submitted.

Christine Madore joined the meeting.

Public Comment:

No one in the assembly wished to speak.

VOTE: Nina-Soto made a motion to approve the DRB recommendation with the incorporation of a third skylight as presented in the drawings provided by the applicant. Seconded by: Madore. Roll Call: Dunn, Madore, Nina-Soto, Rubin. 4-0 in favor.

New / Old Business

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

Mr. Daniel stated:

USG communicated with the Winn team that they are no longer able to move forward with the courthouse project, though Winn can still benefit from the due diligence work that USG completed. Staff had their regular meeting with Winn this afternoon, there is a new prospect that will tour the buildings soon, so they should know by the end of January if Winn will move forward with them. Adam Stein was meeting with the leadership of that group separately and the interested party that is returning with a separate team is positive. After discussions with Winn regarding the perspective tenant, the other plan would be like one of USG's concepts with a variety of flexible spaces for programming and rentals, such as artist/live workspaces, and the grey County Commissioner's building to be housing. Plan B is also moving along since time is of the essence and they need to start accruing historic tax credits and lining up financing, the two timelines need to come together since there are two separate permitting and financing tracks. Lance from USG saw this as a passion project, and they were pleased to know the company would continue but that has changed. New ideas and resources are always being offered to keep up the momentum with the help of consultant Matt Zahler.

Crescent Lot: They are waiting to hear about the results of the mini rounds, they have applied for home funding from the North Shore Consortium, the Salem Affordable Housing Trust Fund board has a funding request that needs to be submitted.

Sliver Parcel: They have yet to close, though they continue to get closer to a closing.

Courthouses: Ms. Newhall-Smith added that regarding the Underutilized Property Funds, it's been one year since the funds were received and the work hasn't begun. They are trying to find the best way to use the \$600,000 without it being taxed as income, so Winn partnered with non-profit Blue Hub Capital to disburse the funds allowing them to use the full grant amount on the buildings. That work should begin soon and may fast track Winn into delving into the courthouses. Mr. Daniel noted that Urban Center Housing TIF that was used at Leefort Terrace, wasn't a good fit at this location/project, but there could be a way to use it on this project and they need to see how things advance with this new prospect. Acting-Chair Rubin asked if the district could be created to include the crescent lot with the possibility of expanding to where there could be future housing. Mr. Daniel replied that certain criteria must be met, but it could include the crescent lot, two court buildings and the probate court property. It can be broader geographically which could raise questions, so he suggested it remain smaller. Acting-Chair Rubin asked if the ARPA and CPS funds have been awarded. Mr. Daniel replied yes.

Ms. Madore asked if USG will revisit this project. Mr. Daniel replied that Aaron, who took over the project and Lance's estate said they no longer have the capacity to take this project on, which was one of the SRA's concerns. Ms. Madore asked if there be another Executive Session would be required to review the potential partnership. Mr. Daniel replied yes. This would once again be a 50/50 partnership, the SRA hadn't vetted USG, the SRA's consultant Matt Zahler met with them, and it was discussed during the executive session. It wasn't a formal change but would have led to an amendment to the agreement and this entity would be a tenant rather than a partner. Ms. Madore asked if Winn was still exploring other leads or if this who they want to work with. Mr. Daniel replied that this is their most serious prospect, but it would include a variety of uses in the superior court and housing in the county commissioner building. He thinks it would be a great fit and meet the activation goals for this end of downtown well. Ms. Newhall-Smith agreed.

SRA Financials:

The SRA has no questions regarding the finances.

Approval of Minutes

1. Review of September 13, 2023, Regular Meeting Minutes

VOTE: Nina-Soto made a motion to approve the September 13, 2023, meeting minutes with Rubin's edits, including a funding request for Charolette Forten and to clarify the goals within the annual meeting are actionable. Seconded by: Madore.

Roll Call: Dunn, Madore, Nina-Soto, and Rubin. 4-0 in favor.

Other

Adjournment

VOTE: Madore made a motion to adjourn the regular meeting. Seconded by: Dunn.

Roll Call: Dunn, Madore, Nina-Soto, and Rubin. 4-0 in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 6:50PM.

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