

**City of Salem Massachusetts
Public Meeting Minutes**

Board or Committee:	Redevelopment Authority, Regular Meeting
Date and Time:	Wednesday, July 8, 2020 at 6:00 pm
Meeting Location:	Zoom
SRA Members Present:	Chair Grace Napolitano, David Guarino, Dean Rubin, Russ Vickers, Cynthia Nina-Soto
SRA Members Absent:	None
Others Present:	Tom Daniel – Director of Planning and Community Development, Kate Newhall-Smith, Principal Planner
Recorder:	Colleen Brewster

Chair Grace Napolitano calls the meeting to order at 6:10PM. Roll call was taken.

Projects Under Review

Executive Director's Report

Daniel stated:

1. Daniel welcomed Cynthia Nina-Soto to the SRA Board.
2. Economic Development Update: The City has set up PPE provisions for businesses, small business grants have been provided, they've created outdoor dining, retail, and marketing for downtown businesses. In all, 51 small businesses were awarded small business grants, passed out 300 PPE packages at Salem High School, and provided technical assistance too. The weekly newsletters and town halls are continuing too. Their next strategies will be to focus on funding through economic development grant agencies and are working on a new grant this month with the help of many partners. They are receiving a positive response from their efforts. Also, Newhall-Smith and John Andrews from Creative Collective have worked on organizing outdoor dining area for restaurants.

Rubin asked if they've received feedback from restaurateurs. Daniel replied the response has been positive, some have more exterior capacity outdoors than indoors but it's going well. They will reconnect with them on Friday.

Chair Napolitano asked how long the outdoor measures will last. Newhall-Smith replied that Governor Baker is allowing a relax of the liquor sales that ends Nov 1st, unless it's extended. The local process in place for outdoor retail is for it to end the last day of September.

Rubin asked if Halloween plans were in place. Daniel replied that October is the biggest visitor month of the year, events haven't been determined but it will be different than it has been in the past. Decisions will be made over the summer.

Nina-Soto asked if a conversation with local hotels and inn's have taken place to determine their bookings and a 2-week quarantine advisory. Daniel replied no, but they plan to track that down. The hotels will be open but with new requirements.

Projects in the Urban Renewal Area

1. 9-11 Dodge Street, 217-219 and 231-251 Washington Street, Hampton Inn/Mixed Use Development: Review of Hampton Inn Sign

Ken McClure, Owner's Representative, was present to discuss the project.

McClure stated that the DRB was supportive of their proposed sign along Washington Street and they will appeal the decision to get the temporary sign approved. They provided a Hampton Inn standard design that's a hexagon sign hung from chains, but they were told it didn't fit the architecture. They were told to make the sign rectangular with steel connections. Planning will conduct an administrative approval. A night-time view will be provided, it will be halo lit. They will use the existing steel members and add wiring for lighting. It won't be easily visible through trees, but it will fit regulations. The DRB wrote in their decision that they should return if the appeal isn't accepted.

Newhall-Smith stated that the DRB felt the other sign fit much better but will wait to see how the appeal plays out since the business does need a sign. They want a sign that fits the space. Many DRB members hope the mock-up sign gets approved.

Chair Napolitano asked when the sign was denied. McClure replied June 8th. Daniel noted that they sent a letter in support of the petition to the ZBA and explained the process and they want their support for the relief. Chair Napolitano asked why it was denied. McClure replied on basis that it wasn't a necessary hardship to make the sign this particular sign and it didn't warrant the variance. Negative comments were procedurally based, and one board member felt it was done to go around their opinions. They chose to install it as temporary, but he hasn't received any notice from the Building Department to remove it yet. The images portrayed the views and how the trees would block the sign. They didn't want to set a precedent, but this is a hotel not a residence and new people will continue to need to find it. It was voted down 4 to 1. He appreciates the SRA's support.

Chair Napolitano and Guarino were disappointed by the end results and noted that a ZBA appeal could take months. McClure noted that it could take up to a year or less since it's for a sign not a building. The second sign is a strong candidate for appeal, but they want the larger sign that they feel fits the development.

Newhall-Smith asked if the Board would like the applicant to return to the DRB pending appeal. Daniel suggested an approval through Dec 31, 2021 or after the ZBA appeal has been decided. Rubin suggested they approve the sign should it become permanent. Daniel noted that the new sign is good and conforms to the requirements, but he preferred the current temporary sign, which is more in keeping with the standards. It can be approved for the next 18-months.

McClure noted that the proposed sign can't block the other signs on building, placing it on the building won't allow drivers to easily see it, and they can't do more with the current sign regulations so they are very limited.

Vickers agreed with the 18-month timeline. Nina-Soto suggested the decision make sure we indicate that it is temporary.

Chair Napolitano opens public comment.

No one in the assembly wished to speak.

Chair Napolitano closes public comment.

Daniel suggested using "interim sign" not "temporary" which means something else in the sign ordinance. The DRB can't be required to look at the revised sign, only the SRA. McClure noted his hopes that if the appeal doesn't happen, there is a change to the signage ordinance and an ability for them to apply for a sign at a later date. No one on their team is happy with the current proposed sign and it's probably the smallest sign they've ever made.

Rubin: Motion to approve the proposed sign as presented interim sign with the understanding that they are appealing to the ZBA's for an exception at which time they will return with a revised sign. If they fail, they will advocate for a new sign or keep the current sign, and for the applicant to return within 18-months or at the completion of the ZBA appeal process.

Seconded by: Guarino. Guarino, Nina-Soto, Rubin, Vickers, Napolitano. Passes 5-0.

New / Old Business

1. Superior Court and Crescent Lot: Update

Daniel stated that they've received 3 proposals. Barnat didn't submit because they felt there was too much uncertainty in the market. Comments were sent back to the MBTA regarding the MOA and they are waiting to hear back from them. They meet with DCAMM every other week and have an MOA with them too. They are working through the rights to the driveway to the West of the Superior Court Building and are working with the trial court to resolve that. They will identify a surveyor for a subdivision of that property.

Executive Session

To discuss the development proposals submitted in response to the Request for Proposals for the redevelopment of real property located at 32-34 Federal Street and 252 Bridge Street, Salem, MA because an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the public body.

Rubin: Motion to begin Executive Session. Roll call vote to adjourn to Executive Session.

Guarino, Nina-Soto, Rubin, Vickers, Napolitano. Passes 5-0.

Chair Napolitano stated that the Open Session will not reconvene at the conclusion of the Executive Session.

Executive Session begins at 6:55PM

Rubin: Motion to end Executive Session. Roll call vote to end meeting.
Guarino, Rubin, Nina-Soto, Vickers, Napolitano. Passes 5-0.

Approval of Minutes

1. May 13, 2020

Rubin: Motion to approval May 13, 2020 meeting minutes.

Seconded by: Vickers Guarino, Rubin, Vickers, Napolitano, 4-0 passes. (Nina-Soto was not a Board member at the time of the May 13, 2020 meeting.)

Upcoming Meetings

1. DRB: July 22, 2020
2. SRA: August 12, 2020

Adjournment

Guarino: Motion to adjourn the meeting.
Guarino, Rubin, Nina-Soto, Vickers, Napolitano. Passes 5-0.

Meeting is adjourned at 8:15PM

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