

October 18, 2018

TO: City of Somerville

Mayor Joseph A. Curtatone

Board of Aldermen

FROM: Jessica Turner

North Street, Somerville, MA 02144

RE: Union Square CBA / USNC

Dear Mayor Joseph Curtatone and City of Somerville Board of Aldermen,

I am writing this letter to express my concerns regarding the Union Square Neighborhood Council and the current Community Benefit Agreement that is being negotiated upon between Developers.

By now I'm sure you are very aware that I am an outspoken advocate in support of residents here at Clarendon as well as our local community. I feel as though it is my duty as a resident in Somerville to fight for others and their rights but also to speak up when I see things being done that seem to be unfair or wrong to me. I voice my opinion often on several subjects – the sky has no limit. Though some might not take my opinion as important or valuable, I voice it anyway. In any case I have always been a person to call out any type of corruption from any side of the fence. I do this because that is where fairness and equality lies for me.

With that being said, I encourage you to seriously consider my statement in this letter.

In July I wrote a letter to the City and Board of Aldermen to give my full support of the Union Square Neighborhood Council and their efforts to be recognized as the negotiating party for the project. My understanding of this was that there were specific things that the group and residents were looking for which were not included in the proposal but that the USNC felt were something that absolutely needed to be taken for consideration. These things were along the lines of “job training programs, more green and open space areas, indoor public space for community usage” etc.

When I wrote my letter I was under the impression that the group would be willing to negotiate towards a “best possible outcome” – similar to how I and Clarendon Residents United negotiated an agreement with our Developers. To try to get as much as possible for everyone in the community but to focus on things that were specifically for the community without bias. It appears that that no longer seems to be the incentive of this group. That – to me – is something that is unfortunate because they have a massive amount of potential.

The issue I have now lies on their focus to be in disagreement with the developers and potentially hold up the progress of the development from going forward because of certain union members' involvement. I'm well aware of Our Revolution leaders and their ties to the unions. And to clarify exactly

what I'm saying here, I do believe that workers have the right to fight for better treatment and pay and I support that, but I do not support the efforts which are so similar to what happened with Clarendon. To hold up a project that is beneficial to an entire community and in which affordable housing creation plays a major factor, based on the incentive of outside influential parties is morally wrong.

My support for the USNC was specific to negotiating on behalf of the residents and future residents of the community. **My letter was not in any way to support the Union's involvement.** Our Revolution (which started off well-meaning but has now been overtaken by those who did not support the Clarendon Redevelopment and stopped our project which creates new homes for 216 minority families dead in its tracks) or any support favorable towards fighting for financial aspects and labor wages.

I do not believe that it is up to the resident group to decide how a Developer or an investor's money is spent towards labor wages. I believe that this is something that is between the Developer and those specific unions. For USNC to become involved with the financial and wage aspect of the project leads me to believe that there is a major conflict of interest inside of that group. Where they were so convincingly declared as fighting for the future of what the project would look like and contain on behalf of the residents, they have moved into an area of focus that I do not believe they should be a part of or have a say in.

It is one thing to be supportive and negotiate an agreement for community benefits. It is another to halt a development – and in doing so doesn't seem like much actual consideration for ANY residents since **the result will eventually be for the project to not happen.** How is this beneficial towards ALL residents and the community again? It isn't, actually. You see, the current and future residents are entirely separate from the union or labor wages involved with the construction and building of the project. I do not believe that it is right for USNC to be fighting on behalf of or with Our Revolution Somerville or any Union. That is not the job of a community group to be incentivized by those not directly of our whole community. That is the job of those unions.

I also have further concerns of the conflict of interest with certain Aldermen whom are very much so members of Our Revolution and only supportive of such unions. I don't believe that it is a public official's job to make choices for the City as a whole, based on special interest groups because we all know how it ends up. They will and have ignored the base issue of matters that have been detrimental towards the vitality of our low-income community, affordable housing creation and the lives of residents who happen to not be involved with any of these groups. Where one is willing to not support projects that are not specifically catered towards these union group types and only because of that reason - it is **absolutely** conflict of interest and should be looked down upon. It is their duty to serve the community as a whole and everyone who lives in it. Not to favor any class group and most certainly not to only support proposals which have a gain for these specific groups when they otherwise should not. This is worrisome to me.

Whatever the case may be, this letter should be considered my rescindment of my support sent in July for the Union Square Neighborhood Council on behalf of their current incentives, questionable motives, and conflict of interest with the community and residents of the present and future Union Square area pertaining to the project proposal at hand. I do not believe that it is their job to fight the wage financials with a Developer on behalf of any special interest group. It is their job to fight for ***benefits of the***

community as a whole and without attaching themselves to other groups. This is a residential community issue and I believe it needs to remain focused as one and without any bias or catering towards any groups who will otherwise not be affected after the completion. It's apparent that they are no longer fighting for community benefits.

Thank you,

Jessica Turner

Co-President | Clarendon Residents United