



Public Affairs Committee
February 11, 2025, 9:00 am – 10:30 am
Zoom OR 291 Geary Street, Suite 200
Minutes

In attendance: Brian Fenwick, Casey Neuberger, Pulkesin Mohan, Tammy Brock, J. Timothy Falvey, Wes Tyler, Eric Murray, Joshua Callahan, Stephen Brett, Lauren Ellis, Beau Simon, Jessie Kozar, William O’Daly, and Pamela Mendelsohn, Russell Keil, Jr.

Staff: Marisa Rodriguez (CEO), Daniela Vasile (COO), Ken Rich (Director of Policy and Economic Development), Melanie Medina (Executive Assistant), and AnaKatrina Cortado (Intern).

1. Call to order and Introductions.

Marisa called the meeting to order at 9:03 am, and introductions were made.

2. Public Comment

Marisa informed the committee that Union Square is rolling into an incredibly busy time for our district with NBA All-Star Weekend and the Chinese New Year Parade.

3. Announcements & Updates

• NBA All-Star Weekend

Marisa highlighted the busy schedule for NBA All-Star Weekend, noting that several pop-up events will take place such as a half-court set up in Union Square Plaza.

• CNY Parade

Marisa reminded the committee that the Chinese New Year Parade is approaching, featuring a firework display over the park. She invited the committee to join a viewing party at the office to enjoy the parade and fireworks.

• Union Square in Bloom 2025

Marisa emphasized the importance of starting the planning for the Bloom campaign and expressed a desire for the community to embrace the oversized flower’s theme. She encouraged the use of last year’s floral installations to promote sustainability. Brian Fenwick suggested that the Alliance commission a local artist to create botanical displays on boarded-up walls. Marisa encouraged the committee to reach out to Liza Bernard if they wish to connect with a floral design to create installations.

4. Action to approve the January 14, 2025, minutes.

Marisa directed the committee to review the January 14, 2025, meeting minutes.

Action: The committee unanimously approved the minutes from January 14, 2025, as motioned by Russell Keil, Jr. and seconded by Brian Fenwick.



5. Overview of Current Alliance Projects

- R-Evolution

Marisa explained that the installation of the *R-Evolution* statue was delayed due to engineering complexities. The Alliance collaborated with Building180 and Rec and Park to explore solutions, but for safety reasons, it was decided to relocate the station somewhere else in the downtown area. The donor sponsoring the statue has expressed interest in continuing to work with the Alliance to bring art to Union Square in the future.

- USP Stage Improvements

Ken provided an update to the committee on the installation of a professional sound system at Union Square Plaza, consisting of two steel pillars on either side of the stage, similar to the setup at Golden Gate Bandshell. The Alliance aims to have it operational by the end of the year. While the installation process is straightforward, there are some discussions around ownership and maintenance responsibilities. Rec and Park have suggested that the Alliance manage maintenance, but Marisa noted that since the sound system will eventually be a city asset upon completion, it raises questions about long-term responsibilities. Additionally, there is uncertainty about who will operate the system. The Alliance is currently working with David Zieses to review quotes for various sound systems.

- Powell Street Updates

Ken informed the Committee that the Alliance is optimistic about securing funding from Prop B for the Powell Street Improvement Project. Marisa highlighted the Alliance's advocacy efforts, including discussions with key stakeholders such as the mayor and district supervisors. She emphasized the need for the full \$30M allocation from Prop B, arguing that Powell Street's Improvement is urgent, and partial funding would be insufficient. The committee also discussed the potential use of funds for Hallidie Plaza, with concerns about ADA accessibility and elevator costs, but the Alliance remains focused on securing the full amount for Powell Street.

Ken further shared that the Alliance is prepared to begin the next phase of design development, with a contract set to be signed with Field Operations for a nine-month process. This phase will include outreach to property owners to address specific concerns related to their buildings as part of the planning process.

- i. SFMTA Safety Project

Ken updated the Committee on the SFMTA Safety Project, which focuses on renewing traffic signals at intersections. As part of the traffic signal renewal, new lights will also be installed. The Alliance and MTA have had ongoing discussions about the project, as we preferred not to have the work coincide with our major projects. After extensive back-and-forth, an agreement has been reached that allows MTA to proceed with their work next month, ensuring no conflicts with the Powell Street project. SFMTA will release a schedule for their project soon.



- Planters & Bollards

Marisa reminded the Committee that the previous mayor had promised the Alliance bollards and planters for Union Square, funded by the City. However, there is no mechanism that exists for a master permit to cover large-area installations of bollards. The Alliance is now working with the city and retailers to pursue two paths: 1) assisting retailers with bollard installations at their businesses, and 2) creating a cohesive district-wide plan for bollards and planters that reflect the district's historical aesthetic.

The Alliance is working with DPW to facilitate planter installations through the "Love Our Neighborhoods" permit. Challenges include design, logistics, and implementation phases. Due to high costs, the Alliance is exploring pro bono work from landscape architects. Marisa expressed concerns about funding cuts, but the City's commitment to providing bollards ensures accountability.

6. Upcoming Events

- a. Union Square Alliance Board Meeting – Thursday, March 27, 2025 – Location TBD
- b. Next Committee Meeting – Tuesday, March 11, 2025

Adjourned: 9:50 a.m.