

Hello all,

I write this in an effort to maintain transparency in my role in the Amazon community advisory council process. The first general meeting was held on Thursday January 24th. It began with introductions of all in attendance. I would estimate the room was roughly split in thirds between community group representatives, Amazon representatives and economic development corporation representatives. After the introductions we reviewed the purpose of the CAC, which, to be honest was somewhat opaque. It is my takeaway that the door is currently open to the CAC functioning at a wide range of outcomes, from functioning as a rubberstamp for the deal as it stands, all the way to dictating comprehensive structural changes to the deal and guaranteeing that enforcement and implementation of those changes be binding within the terms of the deal. In a nutshell, as of now, the end result is up to us.

They then did subcommittee review and announced assignments. There will be three subcommittees. Project Plan (That's the building and the contracts, it has incredibly understated importance), Neighborhood Infrastructure (Amazon is supposed to provide a substantial amount of money directed solely for local neighborhood development), and Workforce Development. It should be noted that if the recommendations of the Infrastructure and Workforce Subcommittees are not included in binding terms within the contracts the Project Plan subcommittee develops, then, as far as I can tell the whole thing becomes toothless and Amazon can without repercussion ignore every recommendation made by the community advisory council. I have been appointed to the Neighborhood Infrastructure Subcommittee.

They then did a promotional period for Amazon and presented us with the best aspects of the company, their community engagement, their workforce benefits and their time and effect on Seattle. I will post the powerpoint. Every time when questioned on an aspect of the deal or Amazon's corporate behaviour like union-busting, taxpayer money subsidies or poor worker conditions they deferred and alluded to the fact that there was misinformation and false perceptions. Notably, they did not try to address them.

Finally there was an question and answer period of approximately 25 minutes. No pertinent issues that I recall were addressed that have not been previously touched on in this letter.

I have three conclusions from this meeting I believe will be of value to all of you. First this deal is in no way "set in stone", if the community engages, learns and works together, we can shape this deal to suit the people. Second, the community advisory council has many community leaders who as far as I felt, honestly seemed interested in making this work for the people they represent. This is a golden opportunity for us to coalesce, stand strong as a neighborhood and bend Amazon to our collective will. Finally, implementing enforcement mechanisms within the deal is of critical importance to ensure the deal doesn't fade into empty promises.

My first subcommittee meeting is February 6th. I will brief all of you afterwards.

-All the best,

Antonios Benetatos
Dutchkills Civic Association.