

**Hamilton Development Corporation**  
**May 25, 2016**

The Hamilton Development Corporation met at Hamilton Town Hall at 7:30 a.m. on Wednesday, May 25, 2016 with Bill Gisness, Brian Stein, Rick Mitchell, Anthony Nickas present. Community Projects Coordinator Dorr Fox, and DPW Director Bill Redford also present.

**Call to order**

Brian Stein called the HDC meeting to order at 7:30 a.m.

**Discussion with Nordbloom representatives**

Todd Fremont-Smith, Senior Vice President, and Todd Nordbloom, Project Manager, joined the HDC meeting. Bill Gisness provided an overview of Hamilton's downtown business district and location of the HDC's 59/63 Willow Street site. He explained that Hamilton has a mixed use by-law that allows for multi-family residential. Also, that there is an overlay district where a Special Permit is used. Gisness summarized how the HDC is having a survey done of its property and is talking to a civil engineer at Meridian Associates about septic system and drainage on the HDC property.

Discussion ensued with Nordbloom representatives about what options would be available for joint venturing if the HDC goes through site plan approval. Fremont-Smith commended the HDC for pursuing rental housing noting that Nordbloom is in favor of rental housing development from a tax standpoint and long term use. Fremont-Smith suggested the HDC should not be deterred by no response to its RFP and acknowledged that the 59/63 Willow Street site would result in a small development project. He mentioned that typically rental projects are in the 120 to 180 unit range. There is an advantage about the HDC site being near the commuter rail. The septic system would have to be addressed at the small site.

Fremont-Smith suggested joint ventures could include the HDC contributing the land, permit the land and sell it, or open book joint venture with Nordbloom. His organization would prefer to buy the land and design what is appropriate from an economic standpoint. He noted that the town of Wayland had a similar scenario with no responses to an RFP which was re-issued and responses are coming in for a friendly Chapter 40B. Wayland went through early Planning Board approval for a range of units from 150 to 190 with schematic drawings. The largest deterrent is that town was

mitigation and utility extension with septic and water issues to be managed by the developer. The infrastructure could cost more than the land value.

In response to inquiry about if grants are available for an HDC development project since the site is near the train station, Fremont-Smith said his organization has used Mass. Works grants if a project is TOD and is creating housing. The HDC could apply for these grants as a public project with 50% of funding from developer and 50% from the grant for public infrastructure associated with TOD housing. This infrastructure could include parking garage, roadway improvements, period lighting, brick sidewalk, new curbing, etc. since this spurs development as part of a streetscape plan. It was noted that the HDC site could support 20 units of housing. The Mass. Works grant awards are made in October.

Fremont-Smith acknowledged his working relationship with Gisness and offered to provide free consulting including creation of a development model with costs for building materials and land value. This could supplement the HDC's proforma that was missing construction costs. He suggested that the HDC should be seeking the best project that is appropriate in value that everyone is happy about and could use public funding (i.e., Mass. works grant) for lighting and trees. Typically this is a big political effort.

Discussion focused on joint effort possibilities where the HDC could contribute the land and Nordbloom would do the site plan approval process. Another option would be for the HDC to do the design and site plan approval permitting followed by Nordbloom doing the construction and marketing. As a public entity, the HDC would have to work out legalities and RFPs (outline of what developers would do). Fremont-Smith said most of the RFPs that his firm sees have been pre-zoned by a town and the developer purchases the property after conversations on vision for the project. Nordbloom offered to send Gisness written examples of pre-zoned project (i.e., Andover, and Union Square in Somerville) which has open language from a municipality.

Discussion ensued about the feedback the HDC had received from developers as to why they did not respond to the Corporation's RFP; primarily the concern about permitting in Hamilton. So this is why the HDC is looking into pre-permitting a project. Nordbloom stressed how it is important to understand what the market wants including details such as living room floor plans.

Also mentioned was the overlay district downtown that could allow development options. Now that it is mixed use there is more opportunity with height and density although parking and septic still remain as issues. In addition, if a larger septic system

for the downtown would be considered since there are open fields nearby. This could be a Mass. Works application (up to \$3 million grant). A treatment plant would be required for a large septic system and cost as much as \$60,000 a year to operate, and this is a large engineering project which could cost \$10 million to serve the business district.

The MAPC vision process done for the downtown was noted and how the HDC project is the first step related to that vision and work required to make it economically successful. The HDC mentioned the old Hansbury site and how Dodge Tree Service had bought the site, and how Mike's Auto was purchased by landscaping business. These business uses are not oriented toward retail uses or rental, senior and affordable housing.

The HDC is working on its proforma which will be reviewed by Nordbloom. Nordbloom could also run a theoretical model for the 59/63 Willow Street site that consist of 3-stories to 35' height limit, slab on grade and a commercial as well as residential space. Once the survey of the HDC's site is done that will assist Nordbloom with the model and with recommendations about the optimal use of the Willow Street property that drops down in the back. Also mentioned was the former school house building on the 1-acre property due to the streetscape and historical value. This structure could possibly receive an addition.

### **Board Business**

HDC member David Carey has resigned from the Corporation due to business time constraints so Tom Goodwin has offered to replace him. Goodwin has lived on Bay Road for 20 years and has an esteemed record in real estate finance specializing in commercial debt. Goodwin described his background in construction lending, and how he has his own business focused on commercial debt. Goodwin has had three children go through the HWRSD. He travels for business but will try to make as many HDC meetings as possible.

Mitchell moved to forward Tom Goodwin's name to the Board of Selectmen for approval and appointment to the Hamilton Development Corporation for the unexpired term of Dave Carey. Gisness seconded the motion. VOTE: Unanimous.

### **Warrant for bills #1621**

The HDC reviewed for approval the HDC warrant #1621 in the amount of \$4,816.08 for mortgage, Harborlight Community Partners oversight of the Willow Street property, and property insurance.

Gisness moved to approve HDC warrant #1621. Mitchell seconded the motion. VOTE: Unanimous.

### **Hamilton Downtown Improvements**

The HDC (specifically Stein and Mitchell) has not had a chance to reach out to the business owners to reinvigorate a merchant group to get them involved and market the downtown. Based on advice of legal counsel, the HDC could provide funding (i.e., insurance for the fall festival, advertising the business district) to the merchant group. Also, the HDC is managing the \$65,000 the Town receives annually from meals tax and it has historically contributed 10% to the Town, and will donate \$10,000 in FY'16. The HDC has suggested the funds could be used for downtown improvements including benches on Railroad Avenue. Also, planters, holiday lights and fireworks could be supported with some funds from the HDC.

Peter Clark inquired about if open space could be linked via bus services. Apparently the town of Concord does this and offers packages (i.e., boxed lunches). The merchants association could benefit from a similar program. The HDC noted that it had received a presentation from an organization that markets North Shore towns.

Russ Tanzer, 100 Ortins Road, acknowledged that there is a critical need for affordable housing in Town and that the Willow Street is an ideal location for that purpose. Mitchell mentioned that the former Hansbury site would also be ideal for mixed use.

Ray Whipple, president of the Hamilton Historical Society, described how the organization is looking into a location in Town where the Society could have more visibility. He described the history of the south school building that until recently housed Mac's Shoe and is now owned by the HDC and one half currently has a commercial use. Whipple asked the HDC to consider if the vacant side of the Willow Street commercial building could be a new home for the Historical Society. Stein concurred that there is a lot of interest in Town to keep the building. The HDC is looking to lease the remaining unused half of the building for \$500 a month including utilities. The most recent rent received for the space was \$700 a month.

Clark spoke to concept of pocket neighborhoods and CPC public hearing relative to interest in providing senior housing in the community. He suggested that housing similar to the Maples in Wenham could be affordable and might be possible for the Willow Street property and should be similar architecturally to what is seen in the downtown area. Discussion addressed how affordable housing especially rental is

needed in Town. Also mentioned was whether or not the HDC could or would want to manage a mixed use rental building. The HDC will continue to work with the private sector to understand what can be done on the Willow Street site.

Mitchell moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 a.m. Gisness seconded the motion.  
VOTE: Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted by Jane Dooley, Minutes Secretary

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
Brian Stein, President