

Hamilton Development Corporation
December 31, 2014

The Hamilton Development Corporation met at Hamilton Town Hall at 7:30 a.m. on Wednesday, December 31, 2014 with Brian Stein, Bill Gisness, Rick Mitchell present. DPW Director Bill Redford also present.

Call to order

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

Discussion: Trees at 59 Willow Street

Stein met with DPW Director Bill Redford acting in his capacity as Deputy Tree Warden at site last week to observe and get Redford's opinion on status of the Norway Spruce trees. Redford has sent the HDC a memo stating that per his authority and Board of Selectmen, the HDC has permission to remove the trees. Redford and the HDC worked together on this matter to ensure legal process was followed. Redford concurred with the arborist that the HDC had met with that the trees do not have much more useful life, one is dead and many have tops snapped off. The trees are a nuisance to the abutting neighbor and are causing damage to his building's roof.

Stein is waiting for a letter from the arborist containing his recommendation that the trees should be removed. This recommendation coincides with recommendation from arborist hired by abutter David Cutter. Stein summarized that with these three recommendations he thought the HDC should have the trees removed. Discussion ensued about how Cutter had said he would trim section of trees that overhang his property to get needles off of his roof since he had been waiting six months for decision on trees to be resolved. Discussion addressed how Cutter had offered to split cost of removing trees (i.e., \$2,700 is 50%). Stein described how the arborist had said the cost to trim the trees was going to be similar to cost estimate received to remove the trees. Discussion was on how all trees are on the former McRae property which was confirmed by a surveyor that had worked with Redford.

Abutter Barbara Lawrence stated that the HDC had done its due diligence and that it was a shame the trees had to come down especially since they provided wildlife habitat and function for neighborhood. Another abutter Elaine Whipple spoke to shield the trees had provided against downtown street lighting and noise. Rick Mitchell described liability for HDC if trees remained and one fell on Cutter's property. In response to Whipple, Stein explained that the trees have been balancing each other so a few could

not be selectively removed. Discussion was on how some replanting of trees will occur at the Cumberland Farms site downtown. In addition, that replanting could occur in the future at the HDC site once the use for the site is determined.

Mitchell moved to approve taking down the 12 trees on the HDC property that abut the Cutter property. Bill Gisness seconded the motion. VOTE: Unanimous. The HDC will speak to Cutter and send him a letter as well as discuss finances with him associated with removing trees.

Discuss Design Guidelines and agenda for January 10 planning session

Discussion addressed how presentation would contain mostly photographs with images that foster discussion about what people want to see in the downtown (mass, setbacks, colors, dormers, trees, etc.).

Discussion ensued on focus of this meeting not being on what has previously been addressed such as education of zoning by-laws, height with resolution to recommend dropping 35' height as well as uses. This meeting will analyze look of sidewalks, materials on buildings, massing, setbacks, crosswalks, lighting. Photographs of roof lines, windows, store fronts and where they should face, will be reviewed. The feedback will be used to write design guidelines that will be presented to the Planning Board. Next steps will be a Planning Board public hearing process on the guidelines that will be available for review on the Town's website.

After the trio of visioning meetings are completed, the HDC will return to meeting every other Wednesday morning. Discussion will continue to finalize guidelines with a goal for adoption at fall Town Meeting along with some zoning by-law changes (i.e., height from 35' to 28') and other modifications identified from the visioning meetings.

Discussion addressed if there are any specifications from Mass. DOT about width of crosswalks and what could be done downtown to make it pedestrian friendly. Redford opined that Route 1A being a state highway is regulated by Mass. DOT requirements. Beyond that the Town can do what it wants outside of the state guidelines for sidewalks and crosswalks. Bill Gisness noted that the state can be flexible in making modifications in residential areas and developments around train stations relative to pedestrian friendliness. Discussion was on need to visually notify drivers of crosswalk relative to railroad tracks sooner than is done now. Gisness suggested a future task for the HDC would be to clean up the area from the Hamilton-Wenham townline to Asbury Street to make it more pedestrian friendly.

Also mentioned was a meeting to be scheduled with Police Chief Russell Stevens, Gisness and Stein to discuss a uniform, coordinated approach to parking downtown (i.e., public lots not being used as commuter lots and vice versa). In addition to understanding what is allowable or not (i.e., overnight parking on Willow Street) and post this information and enforce it (i.e., 2 hour limit on Willow Street). The HDC noted the importance of a cohesive parking plan for the downtown that should be put in place before any development in the area occurs.

Discussion ensued about how the public parking nearest the railroad tracks is owned by the Hamilton shopping center and if this area could be used for the business owners and their employees for a minimal fee to rent spaces. This land where this parking is situated was sold to the shopping center by the Town in an agreement to swap land for the Community Package Store. Discussion was about how there is not a parking space supply problem, there is a designation and walking problem (i.e., people want to park as close as possible to where they want to shop or work). In addition, others are seeking a place to park for free to take the train (i.e., Willow Street). Redford noted that he and Patrick Reffett, Director of Planning and Inspections, were going to meet with Police Chief Russell Stevens to discuss the parking situation downtown. Gisness is trying to set up a meeting with Stevens and Stein for next week after New Year's. The police have a taskforce that is listening to the neighbors and business owners as a preliminary step.

Discussion reiterated for the January 10 meeting the importance of using images versus words in presentation, to review outcome of previous meetings, and discuss design guidelines as well as topics such as parking and sidewalks. Also reiterated was in preparation for fall Town Meeting the design guidelines will be presented to Selectmen and Planning Board. Next steps are to get feedback on design guidelines, get an article in newspaper, send an email to previous meeting attendees, identify if HWCAM can videotape the meeting at the library.

New/Old business

Stein updated the HDC about his meeting with Town Manager Michael Lombardo and Finance Director Deborah Nippes-Mena regarding administrative staff for Corporation. Recommendation was to discuss with Rachel Meketon, Community Projects Coordinator, who is working 19 hours a week for the Town, about supporting the HDC on a contract basis four to five hours a week being paid by the Corporation. This solution would be less expensive than hiring an outside contractor and there is benefit in using an employee affiliated with other boards and departments. Discussion ensued

about Director of Planning and Inspections who is supportive of HDC mission. Meketon will attend the next HDC meeting.

Discussion was on Bob McRae's son cleaning out his father's house and expected completion date in spring since he is paying rent for the property and HDC wants to maintain income stream. Also addressed was whether or not supervised inmates would be used to paint the interior of the house before the HDC rents it to a tenant. The house is in overall good shape although the interior is dated. Three people have expressed interest in renting the two-bedroom house which is expected to bring in as much as \$2,000 a month. Maintenance of the yard could possibly be done by a tenant. Also noted was whether or not the spotlights on the property could be addressed so they don't bother abutters.

Discussion ensued about how contact should be made to David Geikie and Emilie Cademartori in Wenham to facilitate their further attendance at HDC meetings.

Mitchell moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 a.m. Gisness seconded the motion. VOTE: Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted by Jane Dooley, Minutes Secretary

ATTEST: _____
Brian Stein, President