

MINUTES  
**Hamilton Affordable Housing Trust**  
May 16, 2017 - 6:00 p.m.  
Hamilton Town Hall

Members present: Russ Tanzer, Marc Johnson, Michael Lombardo and Bill Wilson.

Town staff present: Dorr Fox, Hamilton Community Projects Coordinator.

---

Russ Tanzer, interim chair, called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

Michael Lombardo asked what was decided about making a permanent chair assignment. Other Trust members answered that it had been decided to hold off on the vote until the vacant seat is filled.

**MINUTES**

Dorr Fox asked if the Trust could hold off on approving the April 18, 2017 minutes because Marc Johnson made a few modifications and the Trust had not yet seen them. In the interest of time, Mr. Lombardo also suggested postponing the vote on the minutes until the next meeting.

**DISCUSSION ON THE ROLE/SCOPE OF THE TRUST AND ABOUT ESTABLISHING GUIDELINES**

Mr. Lombardo asked if Agenda Item #5 could be taken out of order because much of the other agenda items depended on this discussion. The other Trust members agreed.

Mr. Wilson reported that on May 1, the Board of Selectmen met about making a recommendation on the "basket of sites." They decided not to make a recommendation, but to let Andrew DeFranza of Harborlight Community Partners make his recommendation and then to opine on it. During that meeting, they discussed if there should be a lens (or template) for the Trust to look through as it goes through the process of deciding on lands and projects to consider. This template could be much like the Planning Board guidelines. For example, they thought that an amount of 40 to 50 units for an affordable housing project might be a good number for the template.

Mr. Tanzer and Mr. Johnson commented that the number is contingent on where this project it is and what it is, and 40 units might be appropriate at one location but not another.

Mr. Lombardo said he has heard loud and clear that the valuation of private property isn't the approach the Trust should be taking. Coming up with templates that serve as guidelines would help the Trust react to a project and respond about whether the number was too many or too few.

Mr. Johnson asked what the guidelines should look like and what the aesthetics would be. The 40B guidelines aren't that helpful, he said.

Mr. Wilson said a lot of the discussion has been focused on smart growth and where the money should go, for example, to schools or transportation. While 40 or 50 units could work one site, the number might not be appropriate on a smaller lot. He suggested that perhaps there might be a matrix with such factors as height limitation, a requirement of certain services, aesthetics, landscaping or open space to be considered.

Mr. Tanzer asked if these guidelines should look carefully at smart growth.

Mr. Johnson said the smart growth guidelines are pretty broad in their concept. While the principles are nice, he said, it is hard to turn them into a yes/no list.

Mr. Lombardo said he's trying to understand the purpose of the Trust and its work moving forward. The Trust is limited in terms of land transactions and have to go to the Selectmen. In light of the last meeting, he said he feels like the Trust's role is up in the air and wonders if it even needs to exist.

Mr. Johnson said he's struggling with that idea, too, but not because of the last meeting. The Trust was put in place without authority, he said. The Community Preservation Committee (CPC) designates a fair amount of money for housing, and he said he feels the community does believe in affordable housing at the individual house level rather than the large project level. For years, he has heard people say the Town to do Affordable Housing to be protected from the 40B requirement. The Trust does have a role in shaping this, but when it gets to a larger project, it is a struggle.

Mr. Lombardo said that if all the Trust is doing is vetting projects and providing a recommendation to the Selectmen about whether to fund them, then why can't the Selectmen just do that for themselves?

Mr. Johnson asked whether the State insists on having housing trusts. Mr. Lombardo said the way the law is structured, it is discretionary and autonomous. In the Town's case, he feels that the Trust is limited in what it can do. If all it does is vet Town-owned land and make fairly low-level recommendations then perhaps that can be accomplished more efficiently in another way, perhaps with just the Selectmen or the CPC or a combination of the two.

Mr. Tanzer asked about reaching out to outside experts for guidance on the matter. He noted that he and Mr. Fox attended a recent affordable housing seminar led by a quasi-State agency and suggested inviting someone from that community outreach team to come and talk with them. Mr. Lombardo added that this meeting could be held in concert with the Selectmen.

Mr. Tanzer said the contact he met was Susan Connelly, director of Community Assistance at the Mass Housing Partnership. Mr. Fox said he made another contact at the seminar named Shelly Goehring.

Mr. Tanzer mentioned the Trust could speak with other area trusts (for example, Ipswich).

Mr. Johnson said the unique politics of the Town make it so it doesn't necessarily scale to other communities and whatever lessons are learned have to be imported to this Town. He said they will end up with some project that is either economically sustainable or will be subsidized by them to make it affordable.

Mr. Lombardo asked if Wenham has a Trust. The other members didn't know. (Later in the meeting Mr. Lombardo said he found out they do.)

Mr. Wilson said he did not think the role of the Trust was seeking and finding projects, but that developers should know that their first stop is with the Trust and then they can be given a template that guides them in developing the project before they file a Pell.

Mr. Wilson said maybe the idea is to react to projects that come to the Trust and not let them get too far ahead of themselves if they don't meet the criteria.

Mr. Johnson said that while most homeowners are not developers, they could be asked for an actual letter of agreement.

Mr. Tanzer said the Trust shouldn't get in between sellers and developers but should be alongside the potential partners in the Town.

Mr. Wilson said the value of the letter would be for applicants to commit that they are willing to work with the Trust. He added that maybe the role is as simple as the Trust saying that if applicants want to move to the next phase with a Pell, they must conform to the guidelines. This takes the Trust members back to the original question: What should the guidelines look like?

Mr. Fox said that someone had sent him something that the State uses for a guide and that they could add to or subtract from that.

Mr. Tanzer mentioned there are lots of case studies of other communities that could be looked at to see what others are doing, the good and bad.

Mr. Fox noted that at the seminar he learned that many other communities put a lot more money into affordable housing than Hamilton does (300K vs. \$125-150K). William Massos (attending the meeting this evening as an applicant for the vacant Trust seat) added that normally affordable housing money is supported by public funds by a percentage, for example, 30% or 60%.

Mr. Tanzer said he will reach out to Ms. Connelly and invite her to the next meeting, which is tentatively set for May 30 at 7 p.m.

## APPLICANTS

Mr. Lombardo suggested they skip ahead to Agenda Item #6 to give time for the applicants for the Trust's vacancy to speak.

Tanzer said applications were received from two residents. He introduced Jack Lawrence, a politically active resident since 1941, who has previously served on other Town boards, including the Finance Committee, Board of Selectmen and Dump Re-Use Committee until it was disassembled. Mr. Lawrence gave a brief statement about his background in finance and commercial banking.

Mr. Wilson asked Mr. Lawrence if he wanted to comment on the shifts discussed this evening.

Mr. Lawrence responded that there's been a semi-schizophrenic approach to efforts to date—a passive approach in which developers bring in plans to have them vetted and shaped and another approach, which is to look at different sites and see where they might fit in with the culture of the Town. Those two approaches have butted heads, and he thinks they have gotten in the way of doing things. His sense is that it's important to try and keep the local control element because the Town, as every town does, has a structure. Surveys over the years say that people who live here value open space and these projects eliminate some of that open space. He thinks the Trust will take a role in seeing how these things shape out because whatever it takes to get to the 10% threshold will be important.

Both Mr. Wilson and Mr. Johnson spoke favorably about Mr. Lawrence and his experience.

Mr. Tanzer then introduced the other candidate, William Massos, who has lived in Hamilton since 1987. Mr. Massos said he has watched the community get no-parking signs. He noted that in the past, people parked for free at the train station. He stressed that the character of the Town and especially of the downtown, is important, mentioning that Patton Park and its new swimming pool and the Myopia Hunt Club and the big fields provide a sense of place that is unique and attracts people to move to Hamilton. Big assets include being able to take the commuter rail into Boston and good schools, he added. Massos said he has 40 years of experience in real estate finance, has owned apartments and converted them to condos and has run large projects for banks. He has worked in affordable housing and assisted living projects in other states. He noted the 10% threshold set by the State and the price to pay if the Town doesn't get to that. He said he would want to know how 40B relates to the Town and if its mission is to work to develop affordable housing or to avoid affordable housing. One way to maintain the Town's character, he said, is to document the housing in Town that is affordable and perhaps see if it can be restricted in some way to make it qualify.

Mr. Tanzer commented that the backgrounds of Mr. Lawrence and Mr. Massos are a nice blend of experience and skill. Mr. Wilson agreed and said he would like to make a motion to approve both of them and move them forward to the Selectmen.

Because there is only one vacant seat, Mr. Lombardo commented that the Trust could get two for one if it added Mr. Massos and Mr. Lawrence agreed to keep coming to the meetings. Mr. Lawrence joked that he would vote for Mr. Massos because he'd like to see him do the work more.

Mr. Wilson said he is interested in candidates who want to discuss things at the table at the meeting rather than going out and talking to neighbors.

Mr. Johnson said he liked Mr. Massos' skills and approach and commented that Mr. Lawrence's participation in finding projects has in the past sometimes caused issues.

Mr. Tanzer made a motion to pass both candidates along to the Selectmen. Mr. Wilson asked Mr. Massos to meet with for coffee sometime before the next meeting.

Mr. Lawrence gave a final comment that the May 1 meeting was useful in that people who attended gave feedback. He said that if there is a possibility of getting a project through without litigation, whether it is bottom-up or top-down, everyone can buy into it through open communication.

#### **LANDFILL SITE**

Mr. DeFranza is invited to the podium. Mr. Tanzer mentioned that he had also invited Rob Brennan of Cape Build to give an update on the RFP, but Mr. Brennan couldn't make it.

Mr. DeFranza gave a brief statement regarding the Chebacco Road landfill site and said that while the project was not looked at in depth, he would say that putting affordable housing on the dump is not good and they wouldn't do it.

Mr. Tanzer said that Mr. DeFranza was only one who responded to the RFP for 59/63 Willow Street and asked him to give an overview. DeFranza noted there is retail on first floor and there was a condition of finding a tenant for the retail or office space and getting another site in Town so that the partnership could receive funding. They are going to be discussing the matter tomorrow morning.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

The date for the next meeting will be set through email. Mr. Lombardo suggested trying to find a place where the Trust would have more than an hour to meet. (Tonight's meeting was held just prior to the Planning Board meeting, resulting in a bit of a time crunch with people already arriving for that meeting.)

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Wilson made a motion to adjourn the meeting at approximately 7 p.m. Mr. Johnson seconded the motion. The Trust voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting.