

MINUTES  
**Hamilton Affordable Housing Trust**  
July 25, 2017 – 6 p.m.  
Hamilton Council on Aging

HAHT Members present: Chair Russ Tanzer, Bill Wilson, Marc Johnson, William Massos

HAHT Members absent: Michael Lombardo

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

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Chair Russ Tanzer opened the Hamilton Affordable Housing Trust (HAHT) meeting at 6:06 p.m. A quorum was present. The meeting was attended by approximately 18 members of the public.

MINUTES—JUNE 15 AND JULY 11, 2017

The Trust reviewed minutes of the past two meetings and suggested a few changes. Marc Johnson clarified a section with the word “untangleable,” pertaining to complicated easements on the Longmeadow site. The Trust members briefly discussed the easements. A confusing sentence was scratched and a change was made to indicate a group decision rather than that of a particular member. Also, the word “typography” was edited to read “topology.”

Bill Wilson made a motion to approve the June 15 minutes as amended. Marc Johnson seconded the motion. The Trust voted unanimously to approve the minutes.

Mr. Johnson made a motion to approve the July 11 minutes as amended. Mr. Wilson seconded the motion. The Trust voted unanimously to approve the minutes.

59 WILLOW STREET / LONGMEADOW SITE—DISCUSSION OF THE HARBORLIGHT RESPONSE TO THE HDC RFP FOR REDEVELOPMENT

Mr. Tanzer introduced Andrew DeFranza of Harborlight Community Partners (the only respondent to the RFP) and Rick Mitchell of the Hamilton Develop Corporation (HDC), who were invited back to discuss where they stand with moving the affordable housing project forward.

Bill Wilson said he had asked the HDC whether it might have alternative plans for the property and was told no. Mr. Mitchell confirmed there isn’t currently any discussion of a commercial rate project on the site *unless* the HDC cannot work out an arrangement with Mr. DeFranza. Mr. Mitchell said they can’t sit on the property interminably. They are now starting to pay principal on their note with the bank.

Mr. DeFranza was invited up front to speak. He talked about the proposal of developing 20 senior units at Willow Street and approximately 40 units at Longmeadow. He discussed how the projects would be financed. He said Harborlight preferred linkage to give the financeable transaction more scale. If they linked the two, they would still expect to acquire the Willow Street site sooner than later.

William Massos asked Mr. DeFranza some questions about how the project would be financed if the 20-unit project was done as a stand-alone project or possibly as a 7 plus 7 project in phases. Mr. DeFranza addressed the different options, but concluded that doing the project as a stand-alone was not recommended. Once the property was acquired from the HDC, he said, the financial risk would be on Harborlight.

Mr. Tanzer asked Mr. Mitchell the timeframe for either making it work with Harborlight or partnering with someone else. Mr. Mitchell said they would like to have that happen by October and that the next Town Meeting would be an indicator. He thought that the 300K contribution from the AHT sought by DeFranza would have to be approved at Town Meeting; however, Trust members informed him that was not the case.

Mr. Mitchell said the HDC thinks it makes sense to link the two projects with Harborlight buying the Willow Street property outright and pursuing doing the 40 units at Longmeadow.

Mr. Wilson reminded everyone they have a citizen's petition to look at the Longmeadow property for potential use by the schools. Mr. DeFranza said he heard that February was the timeframe for the study. Mr. Wilson said it might be by January. In any case, DeFranza said they might not want to wait that long.

Rick Mitchell said it's important to remember that the school playing fields came up by the self-admission of the proposer as a ploy to avoid affordable housing on that property. The cost of the property is approximately \$3 million to purchase the two back playing fields or \$4 million for the whole thing. Speaking as a citizen and taxpayer, he said he thinks it's false to think the playing field option is a serious option that people would support. A \$1 million project for a turf field on school property is already being done so this additional purchase of fields needs more discussion to see if there is even an appetite for it.

Regardless, the Trust members agreed that the Town had given the go-ahead to study the Longmeadow site for potential purchase by the schools and had an obligation to walk through the process. If the will to spend the money isn't there, perhaps the discussion won't have to go all the way until January.

Mr. Wilson said he would bring up the issue at the Board of Selectmen meeting. He noted the track at the high school doesn't have the right number of lanes so the school can't hold state meets there.

Mr. Johnson said he is in favor of adding a request to this group to figure out some of these gating issues before the Town Meeting in October.

Mary Beth Lawton, Hamilton Council on Aging director, said that when people decide whether to buy a house, they figure out what they can afford. While there may be a desire by the school to have the Longmeadow property, the Town needs to find out if it can afford it and determine the will of the people. Mr. Wilson responded that the people did vote to look at it. Ms. Lawton replied, "Why not ask that other question?" (regarding what the Town can afford).

Mr. Johnson said that if the Town decides whether it can pay for the property, it also wants to know what it gets for it. Mr. Wilson suggested they start immediately to flesh that out.

Mr. DeFranza was asked what portion of the Longmeadow property he would want to keep or give up. He said Harborlight was likely to give up the front portion to the schools if they wanted that, but would reconsider according to the schools' needs. Regarding a question on site control, Mr. DeFranza said they are confident they can get site control of the front four acres but don't have it now. They are not going to do that unless the votes of the three boards (the Trust, the Board of Selectmen and the HDC) are positive.

Mr. Johnson said getting an early read on the issue from the Board of Selectmen would be good, as well as talking with the School Committee and School Administration. Mr. Wilson suggested Mr. DeFranza contact those school entities to see how the property might tie into the schools' master plan.

Mr. Mitchell mentioned the project offers a safe harbor so that, for example, a 150-unit 40B project won't be put there.

Mr. Tanzer clarified that if other entities come forward between now and October, the bid is closed. Mr. Mitchell said they extended the award date, which allows them to negotiate over a longer period of time.

Mr. Massos brought up the issue discussed at the last meeting of rezoning the Willow Street site to allow for first-floor residential units and have it be a by-right project rather than a 40B project. Mr. DeFranza said they'd be interested in that if it were the will of the Townspeople. Mr. Johnson said that if rezoning is to happen by October, the process would need to start *yesterday*.

Mr. Mitchell left the meeting early to go to a Planning Board meeting. Members discussed that the Planning Board would oversee the project if it were done as a by-right project; the Zoning Board would oversee it if it were a 40B. Mr. DeFranza said they could permit it either way.

#### DISCUSSION OF POTENTIAL SITES FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING ON TOWN-OWNED LAND

- PATTON HOMESTEAD SITE AT 650 ASBURY STREET

Mr. Tanzer brought up Mr. Johnson's position of sitting on the Patton Homestead's nonprofit board and whether this might be looked upon as a conflict of interest. Trust members determined that he had no financial interest, but for the purpose of transparency he should stick to the facts on the matter.

Page Fleming, 33 Essex St., said "for optics' sake" she thought it best Mr. Johnson recuse himself and not participate in the meeting. So as to make sure the discussion is "done the right way," she said the Trust should bring in someone from the Patton Homestead to address the topic.

Mr. Wilson said abutters to the property weren't notified of the meeting, but Mr. Fox commented it was on the agenda on the Town website. Mr. Fox and Patrick Reffett put the list of town-owned sites through a screening process and wrote up their findings.

Mr. Tanzer read from those findings about the Patton Homestead site. Having affordable housing there doesn't conflict with the gift agreement if they do a 99-year lease. An issue might exist about having events held there along with housing, due to noise, parking, etc. Ms. Lawton commented there already is housing there. Mr. Fox said it was his understanding the site may become a wedding venue.

Mr. Tanzer noted the Selectmen took a look at additional parking there and had approved it, although Mr. Wilson said the parking is temporary and can be moved.

Members discussed work that's needed on the building, including a new roof and dormers. Mr. Tanzer recommended bringing the operators of the Patton Homestead in for a meeting to see what their plans are for the property.

The Trust decided it could do some work in the meantime and put the property through the lens of the new template. Mr. Fox advised that there is a Powerpoint presentation available, and it was decided to watch it at the next meeting. In addition, those in charge at the Patton Homestead will be invited.

- WINTHROP SCHOOL, PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING SITE, COUNCIL ON AGING—299 BAY ROAD

Mr. Tanzer recapped what happened with this site in the past. A consultant had been hired to look at the property and plans proposed then were shot down. He asked if anything had changed. Mr. Massos said the only difference is the number of units proposed is much less. The location (across from Patton Park) poses traffic issues. The site development cost would be high and municipal functions would be impacted.

Ms. Fleming brought up Doug Trees' plan that was discussed in January. She noted that discussion had gotten loud and fierce. Drainage problems were a big factor. She brought up what she says is Mr. Johnson's conflict of interest again because he is an abutter. He replied

that he isn't affected by it any more than anyone else. He said he spent a lot of time with Town Council and went to a conflict of interest training. He is comfortable it's not a conflict.

Mr. Tanzer said he thinks the site, as a Town-owned asset, should be looked at.

Ms. Lawton said she wanted the Trust to walk away from it since it had already been voted down before.

Mr. Johnson said Mr. Trees had presented 28 units and then another 28 units. This time the context is to only 10 units. Mr. Tanzer said while it was decided not to do the giant plan, there is potential for something smaller that can maneuver toward the street. He said they are not talking about out back.

Mr. Wilson said if the school's long-term use is still in flux, he wouldn't want to "underutilize" the site with housing when the schools might want it for something else. This sparked speculation about what the long-term master plan for the schools might be.

Ms. Lawton said that seniors will be 35 percent of the population. She reminded the Trust that one of the things they had talked about was the ability to decide if the Winthrop school site was viable for senior housing. In the current COA building, she said, they could get six units upstairs tying in to the roof line, but they don't have enough parking there now and the COA will have events three or four times a month. There are other ways to do senior housing that don't mean putting up projects, she said, added that affordable housing can look like regular houses.

Mary Lou Groesbeck, 163 Railroad Ave., said school enrollment is going down and the 10-year lease on Winthrop school will be up in nine years. She asked if the Trust couldn't just table the discussion because the school building could become the spot.

Ms. Lawton said she is going to the upcoming capital improvement planning session, where they're working on a strategic two- to three-year plan. They want to see how strong numbers will be between 2017 and 2027, she said, proposing "Why not make this project your 10-year plan?" In response to questions about plans at the COA, Ms. Lawton said they'd like to make one additional office out back and one additional activity room plus two storage rooms.

Rick Fiery, 6 Carriage Lane, a civil engineer who is an abutter, said from an engineering perspective the site is poorly done. He gets bad flooding. If you don't address the drainage and jam in affordable housing, it will not work. The idea of putting something smaller on top kind of works, he said, but then you have the issue of parking. He said if the Town were to use the Winthrop school, it could solve a lot of issues.

The Trust members agreed to check in with the schools and look at longer-term use for the building. Mr. Fox will invite the pertinent parties to the September meeting after school is underway.

Mr. Massos asked if there was a projection that student population will continue to decline. Mr. Wilson said yes, there are two studies that say that, although a lot of people feel those studies were “papers that were paid for.”

Jennifer Broyles, 4 Plum Tree Court, said the incoming kindergarten class is largest they’ve seen in the last 16 years. An observation was made that if you put affordable housing in, the number of school children will increase.

Mary Cookson, 89 Essex St., suggested contacting the engineer who previously looked at the drainage issues on this site and having a chat.

- CHEBACCO LAKE SITE ON LAKE SHORE DRIVE NEAR BIRCH ROAD

Trust members discussed that the title on this property is a mess. The Town hasn’t been collecting any taxes on it because it is unclear who owns it. The last evidence of taxes paid was in the 1940s. The Town couldn’t find anyone in the chain of the family who used to be the directors of the association that owned it. The Town would need to spend approximately \$20K to clear the title.

Mr. Fox said he didn’t think the site was viable for more than three to four units. It had been previously thought to be better used as a park, perhaps a site for kayak rentals.

The Trust said it would be a good idea to clear the title. They cannot really discuss it until they have a clear title. In a worst-case scenario the property could be sold to recoup the \$20K. Mr. Johnson said that Mr. Lombardo was not excited about putting current year money into it, but it is something to be done at a future date.

- TOWN LANDFILL SITE ON CHEBACCO ROAD

Mr. Tanzer read the findings about the site from the list and described its location. The Manchester water supply is there and a solar array is anticipated to be located there. The Rod and Gun Club is also there. Its lease was recently renewed, although it is not a long-term lease. The Gun Club could be a problem for family housing.

Perhaps a business would like to locate there. It is zoned as a business district. Mr. Johnson said the site can be developed vertically.

The members discussed bringing in someone from Cape Build to discuss the site’s potential for affordable housing. Mr. Tanzer said he will reach out to Rob Brennan.

## TEMPLATE FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Wilson and Mr. Massos have worked on the template, which was tweaked and skinned down. Mr. Fox had taken a first pass. The document is too long to be a one-pager as it stands now and may need to be presented differently. Mr. Massos will take another look at it along with Mr. Tanzer for discussion at the next meeting.

#### NEW OR OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Tanzer asked about the field used for soccer games that is behind the Hamilton/Wenham Library, and whether it might be considered. Mr. Johnson said it is Town-owned but probably wouldn't work due to lack of sufficient parking and traffic issues. The Trust members were not sure where the Wenham town line was but knew it is near Pingree Park. Mr. Wilson asked Mr. Fox if he can find out where the line is and the acreage of the field.

John Dickey, 42 Essex St., asked if the Schooling Fields property owned by Myopia that is next to Patton Park could be considered. He was told this is highly unlikely considering that the Town had asked the Trustees of that land for 15 feet so they could have a more efficient pool layout and were turned down.

The next meeting will be August 22 at 6 p.m. at Town Hall. If a Planning Board meeting is scheduled that night, the Trust will move its meeting to August 23.

#### ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Wilson made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Tanzer seconded the motion. The Trust voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at approximately 8:30 p.m.