

Hamilton Affordable Housing Trust

September 20, 2017 – 6 p.m.

Town Hall

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

HAHT Members absent: None

Town staff present: Dorr Fox, Hamilton Community Projects Coordinator; Patrick Reffett, Director of Planning and Inspections

Russ Tanzer opened the Hamilton Affordable Housing Trust (HAHT) meeting at 6:32 p.m. A quorum was present. The meeting was well attended by members of the public. He said there had been some confusion regarding tonight's agenda that they needed to discuss. First, they decided to review the minutes.

MINUTES—AUGUST 22, 2017

Bill Wilson made a motion to accept the minutes as written. Marc Johnson seconded the motion. The Trust voted unanimously (5-0) to accept the minutes.

FINAL RECOMMENDATION ON HARBORLIGHT COMMUNITY PARTNERS' REQUEST FOR FUNDING FOR THE 59 WILLOW STREET PROJECT AND LONGMEADOW WAY PROJECT

Russ Tanzer said there has been some confusion because "and Longmeadow Way Project" was added to the posted agenda item. The change was not made within 48 hours of the meeting. Town Manager Michael Lombardo said the lack of notice in this case was OK because the two items had been discussed together all along. There was some talk in the audience that "final recommendation" pertaining to Longmeadow Way was a misstatement. The Trust replied that "final recommendation" didn't apply to Longmeadow. Since there was no Longmeadow project before them, it wouldn't be final for many meetings to come. However, they were comfortable discussing both sites together. Mr. Wilson said it was an oversight that Longmeadow wasn't on the agenda to begin with.

Jack Lawrence, 105 Rock Maple Ave., said it was his recollection that there should be no linkage of the two projects and asked why that was coming up now. Trust members gave their thoughts on linkage. Mr. Lawrence said the point is that the Longmeadow Study Committee is looking at the issue and a linkage discussion might undercut their activities. Mr. Lombardo said it could also reinforce their activities. He suggested the Trust proceed with its agenda and if the Trust goes into areas that undercut the Longmeadow committee, people could speak up and remind them of that.

Mr. Tanzer said it was clear at the last meeting that there aren't dependencies between the two projects. Mr. Johnson and Mr. Massos didn't think that sharp a line was drawn. Mr. Wilson said the Trust didn't want linkage on the financial package because of concern that if the second project (wherever it ended up being) didn't go well, it could prevent the first project (Willow Street) from happening.

Rick Mitchell of the Hamilton Development Corporation (HDC) said that the HDC would not move forward on a project with nine units at Willow Street; 20 units is the minimum they would do. He advocated not debating linkage, but rather moving ahead with the agenda. Mr. Lawrence said that if linkage were discussed, why were they not discussing the other town-owned properties? The Trust opted to move ahead with its discussion.

Mr. Tanzer said the Trust received an email today from the Accord Food Pantry, currently at 69 Willow Street, expressing an interest in relocating to the new space at 59 Willow Street as they expand efforts to accommodate clients, 50% of whom are Hamilton residents. He read that letter. When asked for comment, Andrew DeFranza of Harborlight Community Partners said if the building is permitted "by right," they would need to have commercial on the first floor and Accord seemed like a natural tenant. There aren't any use limitations on the commercial space. Whether it helps or hurts the project, from his perspective it's neutral. The rent stream isn't significant; they're just trying to break even, he said. Mr. Wilson asked what it would do to the number of units. Mr. DeFranza replied it would stay at 20, but the building would have to be three stories if it were a by right project with a commercial entity.

Mr. Lombardo said the Trust doesn't have much to say about who rents the commercial space. As long as it's under the height requirement, he's good with it, and as long as the rest of the deal can be put together and works. Mr. Johnson thought it easier and gentler on the neighbors to have a 40B two-story building. Accord's interest adds complexity relative to the neighbors, but doesn't change the affordable housing perspective. Mr. Wilson asked what integrates with the residential community better. Mr. Johnson said he thought the original purchase of Mac's property by the HDC was to develop something commercial. Mr. Lombardo mentioned the condos across from the property are already three-story. With the setback and slope there, he doesn't think it will look out of place.

The primary discussion was the Trust's contribution to Harborlight Community Partners for the project. Andrew has asked for 300K, said Mr. Tanzer. At 20 units, that's \$15K per unit. He asked Mr. DeFranza if the Willow Street project could be financed as a stand-alone deal for \$300K. Mr. DeFranza answered that financing something so small with tax credits isn't easy and they need to do a senior project in parallel with a family project. The short answer, he said, is that it's not likely. Having a family project in the wings will help get the senior housing financed. He said it would be better to do it all in one event although they were permitted separately. Mr. Wilson asked if there were litigation issues on one project, would it kill both. Mr. DeFranza said there are no guarantees, but funding with parallel tracks was better.

William Massos raised the idea of changing the Willow Street project to a combined senior and family housing and asked if financing would then be easier. Mr. DeFranza pointed out that environmentally speaking, the 20 senior units works better. Mr. Mitchell said that according to some preliminary civil engineering that was done, 30 bedrooms is the max that can be on that site. Also, he said, in the HDC's discussion with the neighbors, they prefer a senior housing development in that location as opposed to family housing.

Mr. Massos said it's hard for the Trust to commit funds to something that is difficult to finance. The Trust asked when their money would be given over and felt it should get locked into the permitting. When asked about the timeframe, DeFranza said that Harborlight would actually expect a \$600K (not a 300K) commitment for the 20 units. Mr. Massos clarified that Harborlight would want \$600K for building 20 units or \$600K for all 60.

Mr. Mitchell posed the question: Let's pretend that the Trust gave \$600K for the Willow Street Project, how would that impact your pursuit of another property for 30 to 40 units? Mr. DeFranza answered that Harborlight took time to look at other properties and aren't that confident that they can find another site.

Mr. Mitchell clarified that if Harborlight Partners received \$600K for the Willow Street project, they might abandon pursuit of another property in Town. He said that he hears from the Trust a reluctance to spend \$600K for 20 units. Mr. Tanzer pointed out that \$250K was spent at Asbury Street on the two Habitat for Humanity properties. The Trust talked about other options, such as a TOD project, but Longmeadow seems to be the best option currently.

Mr. Massos presented an idea that they give DeFranza \$600K (\$300 for Willow Street) and \$300 for another project (yet to be named) that is of 20 units of more. Mr. DeFranza was agreeable to this. He said that if the deal were approved, Harborlight could hold the site at Longmeadow for a period of time pending the schools' potential interest in using the property.

Mr. Lawrence said Longmeadow is a long bet. He expects it would go under appeal. He asked again about whether other town properties can be looked at. Elaine Swenson, 6 Linden Street, Wenham, said that Mr. Lawrence is suggesting putting two projects within a couple blocks of each other, if those other town properties were used.

Mr. Johnson needed to leave the meeting. He noted there would still be a quorum after he left. He had drafted a motion. He was urged to share it and was told that members of the Trust and the public could add their voices to it.

Some of the issues raised and language adjustments concerned a restriction that was placed on \$250K of the Trust's funds that it can't be spent on Longmeadow, the idea that no decision should happen until the Longmeadow study group arrives at its conclusions, and the proposal to add a sunset clause so the projects happen within a specified amount of time.

The final language of Mr. Johnson's motion was as follows:

"The Hamilton Affordable Housing Trust (HAHT) supports Harborlight Community Partners (HCP)'s applications to the Hamilton Zoning Board of Appeals for permitting "by right" or under MGL 40B of one 20-Unit Senior Housing Development at 59 Willow Street in Hamilton, and consistent with HCP letters dated June 30, 2017, and August 4, 2017, subject to scale, design, and pricing details to be worked out with the Hamilton Development Corporation, and a second affordable housing development project consisting of between 20 and 40 housing units in another yet-to-be-determined location in Hamilton. The HAHT supports the allocation of \$300,000 to each of the two projects from currently available funds for up to 24-months; the funding allocated to the so-called Willow Street Project shall include \$250,000 approved at the Hamilton Annual Town Meeting of April 7, 2016, which were subject to the proviso that the funds not be spent on development of a housing project on Longmeadow Way."

Mr. Tanzer expressed support. Mr. DeFranza commented on a couple of features – one was Harborlight's ability to respond to the HDC if they awarded them the RFP in a timely fashion. He said that was a weak point because they aren't going to be able to buy the HDC land without knowing about what the second parcel is. The other weakness is the question of how the second parcel would get determined and whether that might be a challenge.

Mr. Mitchell voiced that, as he understands it, if the schools were interested in the property, they would only need a portion of it. Harborlight could go ahead and carve out the parcel it wanted or work together with the schools to see what they each needed. Kate Walker, 82 Ortins Road, pointed out this meant giving Mr. DeFranza control over the price of the land offered to the schools. Mr. Lawrence said all of this was conjecture and he still wanted the other properties looked at, which can still be done.

Jacob Fiumara, 12 Hatfield Road, said he believed Mr. DeFranza to be "a sheep in sheep's clothing" and commended him. He also raised an issue about whether two Trust members (Mr. Tanzer and Mr. Johnson) might need to recuse themselves from the Longmeadow conversation if it affects them personally.

FINAL VOTE:

Mr. Johnson made the motion to support Harborlight's application (with the language cited above). It was seconded by Mr. Massos. The Trust voted unanimously to approve the motion (5-0).

The Trust discussed that this topic and subsequent vote should be put on the Board of Selectmen's agenda for their input. Mr. Wilson said he wanted to talk with the School Committee about it.

DISCUSSION OF 10% DOWN FUNDING PROGRAM

Mr. Lombardo recommended that the Trust table this agenda item to a future meeting so Mr. Johnson, who left the meeting, can be part of the discussion.

FINALIZE REQUEST FROM TOWN FOR FUTURE FUNDING

Mr. Tanzer asked Mr. Fox if the Trust had an automatic replenishment of funds. Mr. Fox said no, they had to get Community Preservation Committee (CPC) approval and Town Meeting approval to receive funds. The 10% set aside for community housing (which amounted to approximately \$45K this year) can go to the Trust or another entity, such as the Housing Authority.

Mr. Lombardo noted that the warrant closes Sept. 25. Mr. Tanzer said they won't make it in time to make a funding request then. Mr. Lombardo said the CPC meets Oct. 12. He can get on the CPC agenda and have a conversation with them early and then draft a warrant article for the April Town Meeting. He noted the Town Hall Building Committee was going to be coming forward with a proposal and funds are getting tight, so the Trust should ask sooner than later.

OTHER BUSINESS

The Trust members agreed they will discuss the 10% Down Funding Program conceived by Mr. Massos at the next meeting.

The next meeting date was set for Oct. 18 pending Mr. Johnson's availability.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Lombardo made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Wilson seconded the motion. The Trust voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 8:11 p.m.