

Hamilton Affordable Housing Trust
December 20, 2017 – 6 p.m.
Memorial Room, Hamilton Town Hall

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; Patrick Reffett, Director of Planning & Inspections

At 6:22 p.m. Chairman Russ Tanzer opened the Hamilton Affordable Housing Trust (HAHT) meeting with a quorum present.

MINUTES—NOV. 15, 2017

Bill Wilson made a motion to approve the minutes. Marc Johnson seconded the motion. The Trust voted unanimously (4-0) to approve the minutes.

MEETING PROCESS

HAHT members expressed concern about the tone of the last meeting and discussed remedies to keep meetings from getting out of hand. William Massos proposed that the Trust specify “Trust Discussion” followed by “Public Comment” under each agenda item. According to Mr. Wilson, this isn’t done by other boards, but perhaps on the back of the agenda they could write a meeting protocol that the Trust will do its due diligence first and then invite public discussion. However, Mr. Johnson said sometimes receiving pertinent public comment prior to and/or during the Trust discussion is helpful and should be left at the discretion of the Chair. Mr. Massos said raising hands and being recognized by the Chair and invited to speak would help. Mr. Johnson commented that the way the space is set up at the Senior Center makes it seem like the board is making a public presentation instead of just conducting business in the presence of the public. Mr. Massos said when they have a candid discussion and are just throwing ideas around, they should preface that. Mr. Tanzer vowed to “do a better job” to which the Trust members replied he *was* doing a good job.

REVIEW OF FIELDS NEXT TO THE HAMILTON-WENHAM LIBRARY FOR USE AS AFFORDABLE HOUSING, LOCATED AT LINDEN STREET NEAR UNION STREET

Mr. Tanzer said Town Counsel Donna Brewer reviewed the documents pertaining to the Winthrop Family’s donation of the Library property to the community. To change its use to housing, the Winthrop heirs would need to be approached, and if they showed interest in making a change to the existing agreement, they would have input, and then the agreement

would go to the State for further review. (Mr. Massos added it would go to Land Court if part of it is registered land.) Mr. Johnson said working with the family was the path taken last time the use was changed, but it might not be the only way to do it. Mr. Massos said perhaps they should decide first if they wanted to consider building there before finding out how to do it.

Bill Shields, 721 Bay Road, was asked for his input. He said Ms. Brewer would be advising the Trust, but, in general, the key to changing the property's use was to convince a probate judge that a new use was within the spirit of—or close enough—to the intention/spirit of the original gift agreement. Neighbors to the property also have the right to oppose it. It is a process that, with support in the community and from the Winthrop family, has potential to be successful. Mr. Massos again raised the question of whether they shouldn't first talk about whether it was something the Trust wanted to pursue. They discussed the size of the parcel. Mr. Wilson suggested they look at the old form they had written up about the site and information already gathered. Mr. Johnson said he will draft that and send it to Dorr Fox for distribution to the Trust.

Mr. Shields said he doesn't remember whether or not the Library land was sectioned off. Some of the playing field, for example, could be a part of the library parcel. Mr. Fox will investigate it. Mr. Johnson said they should consider the Library property through the lens of the Willow Street project since they are in fairly close proximity. Mr. Fox pointed out that Ms. Brewer's memo was in alignment with Mr. Shields' description of the process.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF WRITTEN AGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE HAHT AND HARBORLIGHT COMMUNITY PARTNERS REGARDING FUNDING FOR THE 59 WILLOW STREET PROJECT AND A SITE ON LONGMEADOW WAY NEAR BAY ROAD

Mr. Tanzer said he found this agenda item confusing since Longmeadow is not part of the agreement being considered this evening. Mr. Fox explained he worded it this way because Longmeadow is mentioned in the Willow Street Project agreement, which is for 59 Willow Street; 63 Willow Street is not included. Mr. Shields wanted to clarify they would not be discussing Longmeadow. In response, Mr. Fox noted it says in the agreement that there is an anticipation that there will be another project in addition to Willow Street. Also, Longmeadow is mentioned in a section regarding funding restrictions [\$250K of the grant money has a restriction that it cannot be used on Longmeadow and so those funds are being used on Willow Street.].

The Trust reviewed the redlined versions of the agreement. Mr. DeFranza of Harborlight Community Partners said he didn't have any questions/concerns. The agreement is to be signed by HAHT Chair Mr. Tanzer and Mr. DeFranza. Mr. Massos asked for some clarifying language about the term, which was explained by Mr. Fox to be two years to commence the project and then five years from the closing date of the purchase of the property for completion.

Decision:

Mr. Johnson made a motion that the Trust approve the grant agreement as presented and that the Chair execute it on behalf of the HAHT. Mr. Massos seconded the motion. The Trust voted unanimously to approve the agreement (4-0).

Mr. Johnson asked Mr. Tanzer if the Trust was going to address some of the other documents received in the email with tonight's agenda, although these documents aren't on the agenda. Among them was Harborlight's MOU (Memorandum of Understanding Concerning Development of Affordable Housing at Certain Sites in Hamilton and Potential Control of Certain Tract by the Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District). Mr. Tanzer said they will discuss the MOU and other documents at a future meeting.

Mr. Wilson said he will reach out to the Schools again. They are currently moving forward with a Letter of Interest to the State for potential reimbursement to upgrade the elementary schools. He suggested inviting the Chair of the School Committee or all the parties on the signature lines of the MOU to a future HAHT meeting. He asked for permission from the Trust to tell the School officials that the Housing Trust is interested in their opinion on these documents. Mr. Johnson added that the MOU is not binding; it just states where the boards stand. Mr. Fox will put the topic on the next agenda

REPORT ON THE CPC MEETING REGARDING THE HAHT GRANT APPLICATION

Mr. Tanzer attended the CPC meeting last Thursday and asked for \$100K on behalf of the Trust. The CPC granted eligibility and will decide on funding in January. Mr. Fox said there are four potential requests for grants (two have been made). The CPC has the money to fund all of them if it chooses. Mr. Tanzer said the eligibility meeting was cordial and the CPC listened to him.

Jack Lawrence, 105 Rock Maple Ave., clarified that CPC grants need approval at Town Meeting. Mr. Fox said that was correct. If the CPC doesn't vote to fund a project, it doesn't go to Town Meeting.

Mr. Fox mentioned there had been some concern about whether the CPC was eligible to fund the 10% Down Program, but he spoke with Mass Housing, the Community Preservation Coalition, and was told it was possible. At his suggestion, Trust members will check their calendars to see about attending the CPC meeting Jan. 11 to show their support.

HOUSING MASTER PLAN GRANT APPLICATION TO THE CPC

Patrick Reffett explained that the current Housing Master Plan, prepared in 2004, is out of date. While it is well-done, he said, there are things that need to be refreshed. One is to re-look at the housing element in light of how [cottage] housing failed at Town Meeting. The point of the project is to find out the type of housing that the Townspeople will support. It

will be a “roots-up” process. The proposal is that a consultant be hired to formulate a housing plan using current demographics. The 2004 plan looked at the 2000 federal census; this one would look at the 2010 census. Another important matter, he noted, is for the Townspeople to have a firm understanding of what the cost is to the Town when housing does get created—roads, utilities, infrastructure—and build public participation into the plan. Mr. Reffett has drafted an RFQ (Request for Qualifications/Scope of Services) document that was approved last night by the Planning Board with a couple of edits. One edit was to increase the consultant’s fee from \$20K to \$30K.

Mr. Reffett continued that the plan does not just focus on affordable housing, but on market housing, senior housing, and other housing that might fit the broad spectrum of people living in Hamilton. Mr. Massos asked if it was Mr. Reffett’s understanding that most people in Town want things to remain as they are. Mr. Reffett said there is that element of not wanting change, but family sizes are changing and housing styles need to change. Mr. Massos noted that Essex County’s population is declining. Mr. Reffett said current studies show that school enrollment doesn’t necessarily increase as housing is increased. He wants to look at the poverty level and ability of people to buy homes in Town.

Mr. Johnson said it would be important to have a graphic element of what the proposed housing might look like to share. He also cited the importance of an analysis of how the new housing would affect the Town pertaining to costs and the utilization of Town services. Sometimes, he said, a mathematical analysis doesn’t match how the Town is managed. Mr. Wilson said he’d like the consultant to give a presentation to the public. Mr. Reffett said his timeframe would be within the next six to nine months. Mr. Massos questioned the idea of using nearly eight-year-old information. Mr. Johnson said there are data sets available from the State that aren’t of the same rigor of the census that can be used. Mr. DeFranza agreed they could get data that isn’t as old as the 2010 census numbers. The Trust discussed the drawback of the census, which doesn’t share its information regarding the number of kids living in households. While a CPC grant is more expedient, Mr. Wilson wondered if they might get a State grant for the project. Mr. Johnson said it would be good if they could get a matching grant. Mr. Tanzer said he doesn’t think \$30K is enough to fund the project; the community services element is a lot of work. Mr. Wilson said perhaps the Town could pick up some of the work after the consultant’s job was done. Important to the task is hearing from the community, they all stressed.

Mr. Wilson mentioned doing another Town survey, but it would need to be better handled than the last survey, in which 70% of people polled said they wanted cottage housing and yet at Town Meeting, the idea was shot down. The Trust discussed price points for senior housing. Oftentimes developers offer a certain price point, but keep adding amenities so the price keeps increasing. Mr. Reffett said he spoke with seniors at the Council on Aging and asked: Where would you want to live in Hamilton? What type of place? How much would you be willing to pay for it? There wasn’t a preference for in town vs. out of town. Most wanted cottage-style housing that was just one floor. They wanted to pay between \$200K and the low \$300K range.

Kate Walker, 82 Ortins Road, praised The Maples in Wenham as “affordable and lovely.” There are 54 units with a sloping landscape set behind a larger residence that makes it aesthetically pleasing.

Mr. Reffett said the Planning Board wants to fit the broad demographic; there is a demand for housing that’s above the affordable range as well as for affordable housing. Mr. Wilson said he didn’t know why the Affordable Housing Trust would sponsor the Housing Master Plan project if that is the case. Mr. Massos said he doesn’t think the affordability requirement on new developments is high enough, since the developments being built are small in scale. It doesn’t add much in terms of helping the Town reach its 40B requirement.

Susan Lawrence, 105 Rock Maple Ave., said she thought the Town would like to see the HAHT going for outside grants, or matching grants, instead of CPC funding.

Ms. Walker expressed that a new survey would need better controls. She said with the last one, anyone could fill it out and could fill it out multiple times. Also she wasn’t sure people understood many of the questions. She suggested that the Town tap its many resources and utilize the expertise and skill of real estate and development experts living in Town.

Mr. Wilson expressed uncertainty that the HAHT should sponsor or co-sponsor the project.

Mr. Johnson said with Patton Ridge, the base price was \$675K set by the Board of Selectmen (BOS). There were a lot of extras, but not to the extent being mentioned. Mr. Massos said even if they had price points low enough to qualify as affordable, they couldn’t get credit for them. Mr. Tanzer said the project needs to spell out whether they are going to be rentals, sales, or a combination thereof.

Jack Lawrence, 105 Rock Maple Ave., asked why the Town would build market rate housing when they aren’t able to pick up 40B and why developers would build affordable housing when they could build high-end housing. For the project to be successful at Town meeting, he said, the consultant hired would need to work with a Town committee and have a citizens group monitor its actions. Otherwise it would be a waste of money. Also, he noted, there are a lot more young people in town since the 2010 census was done.

Mr. Reffett said many developers focus on workforce housing for young professionals and young families. Mr. Johnson said the Town does not have any zoning that allows for anything other than single-family homes. He noted when the previous master plan was done, they had about 80 citizens involved who stayed engaged for about 10 years.

Ms. Walker questioned the 10% ratio for 40B. Trust members said that had been verified, but Mr. Wilson said they can revisit it. Mr. Lawrence stressed the value of open space. He mentioned the landfill property as a perfect spot for workforce housing.

Mr. Reffett said you could build a case that the 40B development is going to happen no matter what to meet the 10% threshold. But what they want to do is to recognize that there are other types of housing, as well, that people want and need. Not everyone will fit into

the 80% of medium income criteria. He said that the topic of affordable housing will be part of the overall discussion. They want to look at a strategy and from that, be able to attain the 10%.

Mr. Wilson and Mr. Tanzer said there had to be a strategy regarding affordable housing for the HAHT to be supportive of it. They wanted to be sure that the consulting group hired would be the right firm for the job. Mr. Reffett said it would most likely be the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC). Mr. Reffett proposed that he rework some of the language to address the intent of what he's heard from the HAHT and send some paperwork to the CPC. He will send this information to Mr. Fox to forward it to Mr. Tanzer for comment. Mr. Johnson said he was OK with authorizing Mr. Tanzer to negotiate the document. Mr. Massos said he thought they should all look at it. He asked Mr. Reffett if he wanted HAHT support or funding. Mr. Reffett said he wanted the HAHT to be a co-participant to request funds from the CPC.

The Trust wanted Mr. Reffett to adjust the document and send it to Mr. Fox for distribution. Mr. Johnson noted all comments should go back to Mr. Fox so as not to violate open meeting laws. Mr. Reffett said he would get the documents to them in the next couple of days and then would like to have it back with the Trust input by the end of the week.

Mr. Massos said if the Trust is having its name associated with denser housing in Town, it has to benefit affordable housing. The more housing built, the harder it is to find space for affordable housing. Large projects lend themselves to helping the 40B requirement, but not smaller ones, which is what the Town has expressed an interest in. The members discussed Mr. Reffett's definition of "attainable" vs "affordable" housing. In their opinion, affordable housing means either subsidized housing or housing that has a restricted deed. Mr. Massos said he thought it would be better for the Planning Board to seek the funding alone and then if the HAHT wanted to join in later, it would. The discussion concluded with Mr. Reffett saying that maybe the cleanest thing to do is to just take the grant request for the Housing Master Plan to the CPC with just the imprimatur of the Planning Board.

DISCUSSION OF 10% DOWN FUNDING PROGRAM

Mr. Massos said he didn't have any big update. The Trust received word through Mr. Fox that the CPC can fund the 10% Down Program, so it's time to roll up their sleeves, he said.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF INVOICES

The Trust was presented with two invoices for work by Legal Counsel Ms. Brewer: one for \$4,355 for the Willow Street Project agreement with Harborlight and one for \$184.50, which Mr. Fox believed was for counsel regarding the Longmeadow property. The Trust decided to hold off on the second invoice until they had clarification on it.

Decision:

Mr. Tanzer made a motion to approve the invoice for \$4,355. Mr. Wilson seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously (4-0) approved.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Johnson said he wanted to ask the BOS to get to the next steps regarding the Longmeadow property. Mr. Wilson said that is in process. He explained that the matter is with the Schools; the Longmeadow Study Committee has been waiting a month and a half for the Schools' response. He said he felt the Schools are being careful about their words because they are working on school business and not in the business of affordable housing. Mr. Johnson said that, as a board, they want to get the Willow Street project completed and need it to be in line with another project. Aside from Longmeadow, there wasn't anything else in the queue. Mr. Massos pointed out that the Library site was a candidate.

Before Mr. DeFranza left the meeting, Mr. Fox suggested he and the Trust sign the Willow Street agreement, which they did.

The Trust set the next meeting for Thursday, Jan. 18, at 6 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Tanzer made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:18. Mr. Wilson seconded the motion. The Trust voted unanimously (4-0) to adjourn the meeting.