

HAMILTON DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

MINUTES OF MEETING

May 16, 2018

Members Present: President Brian Stein, Bill Gisness, Rick Mitchell,
Anthony Nickas and Tom Goodwin

Members Absent: None

Coordinator: Dorr Fox

President Brian Stein called the Hamilton Development Corporation (HDC) meeting to order at 7:35 a.m. with a quorum present. Three members of the public attended.

Warrant for Bills

Mr. Stein presented a warrant for \$3,308.49. Most is for the insurance approved at the last meeting. In addition, there was a utility bill, as well as an invoice from Harborlight Community Partners for added time over their normal to follow up on painting and taking care of a heating issue.

Bill Gisness inquired about the status of the oil burner and whether it may need to be replaced. Mr. Stein said he will follow up. The problem recently encountered wasn't a major repair.

Tom Goodwin made a motion to approve payment of Warrant HDC-1821 in the amount of \$3,308.49. Mr. Gisness seconded the motion. The HDC voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the payment.

Approve Minutes

Mr. Stein made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of May 2, 18, 2018 as written. Anthony Nickas seconded the motion. The HDC voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the minutes.

59/63 Willow Street

The HDC is still working on renting #63. Mr. Stein said he received the note Dorr Fox had forwarded him from a woman who responded to the Craig's List ad.

Rick Mitchell was asked to update the board regarding 59 Willow St. He had already emailed them a summary. Andrew DeFranza of Harborlight also sent an email. Mr. Mitchell said he thinks Harborlight's board became tired of the prospect of a long legal battle and pulled the plug on Longmeadow. To proceed with the process at Willow St., Mr. DeFranza said they would need \$800K from the Hamilton Affordable Housing Trust (HAHT). (Previously the Trust had approved a grant of \$600K—\$300 each for Longmeadow Way and Willow Street, so this is an increase of \$200K over that and an additional \$500K over the previous price for just Willow Street.)

Mr. Mitchell said he had an informal conversation with HAHT member Marc Johnson and they brainstormed some ideas and ran some numbers. One involved the idea of exploring financing through local investors for building 20 units at Willow Street. Mr. Johnson thought there was potential for a good return on the investment. If market-rate rentals were developed, two of the rentals (10%) would be affordable; another idea was to sell the units as condos.

Mr. Fox said Mr. DeFranza is scheduled to come to the next HDC meeting and has a thought of still doing a seven-unit family affordable housing project at Willow Street. He is seeking the HDC's input. Town Meeting would have to authorize the additional \$200K. Harborlight's board is meeting May 21, and a HAHT meeting is scheduled for May 22.

Elaine Swensen, 6 Linden St., questioned a conflict of interest on the part of Mr. Johnson if he were to invest personally. Mr. Mitchell stressed the idea was only conceptual and cautioned her from jumping to conclusions. Ms. Swensen asked how the idea of market-rate rentals would help better the Town or help the Town reach its goal of affordable housing. Mr. Stein said market-rate housing is just one alternate possibility, not something they are driving. He detailed some history of the project, and said the Town is in need of both affordable and market rate housing. The HDC is keeping their options open. He said he was interested in hearing the neighbors' thoughts. (Three were in attendance—Ms. Swensen, her husband Carl Swensen, and Julia Maycock, 62 Willow St.)

Ms. Maycock pressed the board for its opinion on the six to seven family units proposed by Mr. DeFranza. Mr. Gisness said it wasn't his preference. He said in the past, they had been looking for businesses to support people living downtown and that's why they bought the property. What came out of their brainstorming sessions is that the Town needed affordable housing, as well as rentals and condos. They put out an RFP to see if they could attract some interest. That's when Mr. DeFranza became involved. Mr. Mitchell said everything looked like it was moving forward until the meeting of May 8. The board hasn't had time to digest the news and form an official view.

Ms. Swensen said the neighbors agreed to a friendly 40B with Mr. DeFranza. They are not in favor of the current bylaws. (40B allows some flexibility). They do not like the height

specifications in the bylaw or having all commercial on the first floor, which means a lot of light, traffic, and noise. She said having 20 market-rate rentals with commercial on the first floor would ruin her neighborhood.

Ms. Maycock said the neighbors were in favor of the six to seven family units proposed as a 40B. Her guess is they would much rather see six or seven affordable units than 20 market-rate units. She said the HDC's keeping of #63 takes that parcel down to less than an acre. However, she likes that it provides a buffer. The thought by the neighbors is that 20 market-rate units would mean a three-story building, as opposed to Mr. DeFranza's plan for keeping to two stories. Mr. Mitchell said there is no plan in front of them and cautioned them from jumping to conclusions. The neighbors said they were just stating what was allowed by the zoning. Ms. Maycock said she thought with market rate housing, more people would be living there. Mr. Mitchell said he didn't think there was a lot of difference in terms of the usage, but stressed they had no intention of rushing into anything.

Mr. Fox cited other slight possibilities—for example, if the Town would approve \$2.9 million for purchasing the remainder of the Longmeadow property. Or if there's a partner site somewhere else that they might pair with Willow St., allowing them to go ahead with the original proposal. He added there's a site being discussed on Essex Street near Chebacco Road. Also, he said an idea was brought up at the HAHT meeting suggesting the HDC could lower its price on the property. Mr. Nickas said they could perhaps do that, but they would want a piece of the pie. It's an option that the HDC might decide to contribute in some way for a return on their money.

Mr. Mitchell said he didn't attend the recent Community Preservation Committee (CPC) meeting, but heard Tom Catalano had an opinion about the Rich property. Mr. Fox said it was a brief discussion regarding the approximately \$2 million to \$2.9 million, 66-acre property on Chebacco Road (the site of Meadowbrook Farm). It would be predominantly open space (woodland and wetland) for the purpose of protecting the well head for Manchester, and would also include affordable housing. A joint public hearing with the BOS and CPC is set for June 18 when it may be discussed. The idea is in an infancy stage. He is unsure whether they have a developer in mind. He believes the CPC is pushing the affordable housing component. Mr. Mitchell wondered how much land there would be devoted to open space vs. to affordable housing. Mr. Fox said it hadn't been determined.

Mr. Gisness suggested they table the discussion until the next meeting when Mr. DeFranza will be there. Mr. Nickas asked what they wanted from Mr. DeFranza. They decided to ask him to provide details on the new 7-unit project proposal, such as the structure, financing, timing for the process, etc. They noted this information will likely be presented at the next HAHT meeting on May 22. Mr. Fox mentioned the meeting time is currently in flux.

The Swensens asked if Mr. Mitchell's summary and the email from Mr. DeFranza were available for review. Mr. Fox said yes; he will email them to Mrs. Swenson.

HDC Budget

Mr. Nickas gave an overview of this year's budget and where they are to date through May 2. He has projected forward each of the categories and what they will need to complete the year through June 30. The big savings this year have been in repairs, maintenance of the building, and the legal fees. They are off on the rental income because of the one unit being empty. He shows in yellow what the actual amounts received are. He said he doesn't understand some of the debt service numbers, why the principals vary from month to month, but the actual payments are right.

The next packet was his first crack at the FY'19 budget. Most everything will stay the same. He estimated they will have someone renting the other unit in October. He said that what they're paying in utilities is less than what they budgeted last year. There were only three water bills included. Mr. Fox said that is because the tenant was paying the utilities for #63. Mr. Nickas lowered the budget for repairs. Painting will go into this year's budget. He increased the audit fee by 10%. There is a surplus of \$5K in the end, until the encumbrance calculation is done, which is pretty much what they ended up with last year. Downtown beautification comes out of the \$10K. He invited the members to look over the budget and offer comments. Mr. Stein noted it was pretty straightforward. Later on this year they want to look at the debt service.

Downtown Improvements

Carl Frushour, principal, and Jarod Kershek, senior landscape architect, from Carol Johnson (CRJA-IBI Group), and Department of Public Works (DPW) Director Tim Olson joined the meeting. Mr. Gisness showed the architects a map of Hamilton's downtown and gave them an overview, pointing out the highlights. He showed where there were some inconsistencies, such as places where there was sidewalk on only one side of a road. He noted some of the sidewalks are a mix of materials. He explained the HDC was a corporation so it has the ability to buy property and do work on property. He explained the HDC plans to make a presentation to the public about how they might beautify the downtown—to talk with the business owners to gather input about their needs and present a vision of what the area could look like. The plan to give the presentation the evening of June 20 or June 21 at the Library. The architects agreed it was doable to have some images and plans completed by then.

Tom Goodwin suggested producing two versions and price-points, one that involved burying the electrical wires.

Mr. Mitchell pointed out a dichotomy between the two sides of Route 1A and asked how they might make them more cohesive, perhaps with pedestrian bump-outs. They're looking for more visual continuity. Mr. Frushour said he understood they needed connectivity between the two areas. Mr. Stein mentioned Patton Park and said there isn't anything to draw people to walk down there. The big picture might involve picking some low-hanging fruit, such as adding more trees or a better organization of the wires since it would cost to put them underground. Mr. Mitchell said if there were interest, perhaps the townspeople might agree to a \$5 surcharge per month on their electric bill to share the cost.

Mr. Olson said the DPW is going to be doing some paving where they've torn up roadway to replace the water line. He wanted to check with them to make sure that was OK, as he didn't want to pave the road and then a year from now be tearing it up. Mr. Stein said he saw the email and it is OK to proceed with the paving. Most of the improvements the HDC is discussing involves upgrading sidewalks and curbs, not necessarily the roadways. Mr. Olson predicted it would take about three weeks for the paving work.

Mr. Frushour said after they walk the area today, he will take the information he has gathered and come back with a couple of concepts. They will present two versions—one with utilities buried below ground and one above ground.

Mr. Goodwin mentioned perhaps working on optimizing parking, perhaps making it an angled configuration. Ms. Maycock said she thought angled parking on Railroad Ave. would look nicer and solve the problem of people not knowing how to parallel park. Mr. Frushour had some thoughts on parking, as well, using some bump-outs, perhaps asking the bank for use of some parking space as a good neighbor.

Mr. Mitchell said the MAPC did some computer-generated visuals that the HDC could provide as background for generating ideas.

New/Old Business

Mr. Fox asked if they had a preferred date for the presentation between the two nights he had reserved. They decided on Wednesday, June 20 at 6 p.m. at the Library.

Adjournment

Mr. Stein made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:42 a.m. Mr. Gisness seconded the motion. The HDC voted unanimously (5-0) to adjourn the meeting.

HAMILTON DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

MINUTES OF MEETING

DOWNTOWN HAMILTON

May 16, 2018

On-Site Meeting on Railroad Avenue to Discuss Potential Downtown Improvements

At approximately 8:50 a.m. Bill Gisness led Carl Frushour and Jarod Kershek of Carol Johnson (CRJA-IBI Group)—the landscape architect firm the HDC is hiring for making a presentation to the community on beautifying downtown—on a short walk in the heart of the downtown business district. They started near the corner of Railroad Ave. and Willow St. and walked toward Route 1A, stopping about midway to look around. Mr. Stein and Mr. Fox participated in the walk, as well as one of the neighbors who read about the public meeting.

The architects inquired whether community events were held there and discussed ideas such as an event bringing in food trucks. Mr. Stein said some in the community wouldn't want that. Mr. Gisness mentioned many activities occur at the Myopia Hunt Club, as well as Patton Park and other places in Town.

They stopped and looked over at the shopping center, observing various views from the corner of Railroad Ave. and Route 1A. The architects asked about snow removal in the winter. The area is heavily salted. They discussed some ideas they had for curbing and parking. Mr. Gisness noted the trees in front of the shops are fairly new. Mr. Frushour and Mr. Kershek said they would get to work on the project.

The meeting ended at approximately 9:05 a.m.

Prepared by:

_____/_____
Mary Alice Cookson Date

Attest:

_____/_____
Date