

HAMILTON DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

MINUTES OF MEETING

April 18, 2018

Members Present: President Brian Stein, Bill Gisness, and Anthony Nickas

Members Absent: Tom Goodwin and Rick Mitchell

Coordinator: Dorr Fox

President Brian Stein called the Hamilton Development Corporation (HDC) meeting to order at 7:30 a.m. with a quorum present.

Warrant

Anthony Nickas made a motion to approve Warrant HDC-1819 in the amount of \$93.80 for Minutes Taker Marcie Ricker's time. Bill Gisness seconded the motion. The HDC members present voted unanimously (3-0) to approve payment of the invoice.

The group discussed the next invoice for \$2,500. Dorr Fox gave detail/history. The bill is for the HDC's portion of the Town's audit cost. It had been negotiated down substantially from what it had been in previous years (\$10K at one point). Town Finance Director Marissa Batista had asked if they would approve the \$2,500 payment and sign off on making the reimbursement transfer to the Finance Department.

Mr. Nickas made a motion to approve Invoice #1709813 in the amount of \$2,500. Mr. Gisness seconded the motion. The HDC voted unanimously (3-0) to approve payment of the invoice by making the transfer.

59/63 Willow St. Update.

Mr. Stein said a woman looking for space for her massage therapy business had approached him about 63 Willow St. and they had some back-and-forth communication, including a mix-up on showing the space to her. She has since found another space. Mr. Fox hadn't received any inquiries. They need to get a "For Rent" sign up outside. Mr. Stein's neighbor, who had expressed an interest in purchase, is not seriously interested. Mr. Stein said someone currently renting a small space in Willowdale was thinking about renting

#63 for flexible office space and may get back to them. Mr. Gisness said previous times when he has shown the property people have commented the bathroom is “quirky.” For example, there’s no ceiling. They discussed that if they decide to address the issue, they may have to bring the bathroom up to code.

The HDC has the option to keep the building and rent it out or sell it. They’ve decided on painting it. They are going to need to decide on what other updates to make, for example, whether to update the heating. Mr. Gisness said when the septic goes, they could look at the housing piece and perhaps whether to add rental units. Everything hinges on what happens with the Affordable Housing Trust (currently in negotiations with Harborlight Community Partners on #59 Willow St.) That process is stalled.

The fallen tree on the property was removed, according to Mr. Stein, and the bill has come in, according to Mr. Fox. He received two bids for painting at #63 and was waiting for a third estimate to come back. He said Steve Albanese, who handles maintenance for Harborlight, had asked another painter for an estimate—someone who said he would also fix the hole in the ceiling. The group questioned why there was such a big range for the same work. Mr. Fox said the work to fix the hole shouldn’t be more than about \$200. Mr. Stein said he spoke with John Halliday at the barbershop, who told him they would be painting there. The group discussed what other spaces in the area are empty and what the rents are—about \$2,800-\$3,200 per month. There is one other building for sale along Railroad Ave. Everything in the shopping center is filled with the exception of the space next to the bank because Somerset Home is leaving.

Mr. Gisness circled back to the need to get a “For Rent” sign up outside #63; Mr. Stein agreed.

Minutes

Bill Gisness made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of April 4, 2018 as written. Mr. Stein seconded the motion. The HDC voted unanimously (3-0) to approve the minutes.

Downtown Improvements

HDC members discussed they have gotten all the landscape architect proposals they need. They want to put something together to get out to the public and strategize the best way to get people engaged. Mr. Stein said the Planning Board over the next months will be looking at what’s right for the Town and particularly at mixed-use in the business district. He wants to also work with the Selectmen. The group discussed that the HDC seems to be the only voice in Town to get something done since the Town has so many other things going on.

The group discussed that the Town needs to find other areas of revenue. While they won’t find them by beautifying downtown, they will by focusing on the business district and

perhaps expanding it. The HDC discussed getting the issue of downtown improvement out for public discussion. Mr. Nickas commented none of this is new, but they would be presenting ideas in a new way. He suggested getting people in to discuss their opinions (pro and con). They talked about all the members of the community they'd invite, such as all the downtown business owners, Council on Aging Director Mary Beth Lawton, representatives from the two banks, and all the abutters. They discussed focusing on getting an up-to-date contact list for disseminating information and sending out an invite to a brainstorming meeting. Mr. Fox was asked to call the two banks and find out the best contacts.

HDC members discussed what their process should be—should they have members of the public come out and express their ideas and have the landscape architect develop a plan around those ideas or should they start first with getting conceptual plans from the architect and then opening things up for discussion? They decided on the latter approach. Mr. Stein said they had done this sort of thing before, but had never taken the next step. This would be the next step.

Mr. Stein discussed that people might want to have the issue of 59 Willow St. solidified first before they can figure out what can happen. The HDC has \$26K to put toward Willow St. this year. They expect next year they will have about the same plus the meal tax of about \$65K. Mr. Fox said the Affordable Housing Trust probably won't meet again until it appoints another member (Bill Wilson is stepping down). Mr. Gisness said the rent of the house at #63 and rent of the commercial space at #59 cover themselves. The deadline for purchase of #59 was supposed to be June 30, according to Mr. Fox, asking if they might need to extend it. Mr. Nickas said no matter what happens at #59, they still have work that needs to be done. Mr. Gisness said that is why they should start to look at it now—to go to the two banks and get a bond to do it. Mr. Nickas questioned whether they would be able to get the bond since they can't count on having \$65K every year from meal tax money.

Mr. Gisness said the perfect way to do the beautification project would be to do Railroad Ave., and then move on to the next road rather than just doing trees, just benches, etc. They need to know what the scope should be in terms of what would make the area look good. They have a list of what they'd like to see plus what the landscape architects recommend. Mr. Stein said there will be members of the public who won't want to see anything change. That's a reason to talk with the business owners—to find out if they're on board with it first; however, they will need to have drawings to show them. While they might not care whether the sidewalk is crooked, for example, they may be interested in the option to have outdoor seating. Mr. Fox asked about putting a flyer together and walking the downtown streets handing them out, in addition to sending out an email to those on the contact list. Mr. Gisness said they should craft it, and he would take a first pass.

New/Old Business

- The budget will be on the next agenda.

- They will wait until the next meeting to talk with the architects and will hold up on making a decision about who the landscape architect will be.
- Mr. Fox asked where he could find the HDC's business contact list. They will look for it.
- They decided to hold the brainstorming meeting with the public the end of May or beginning of June (school is out May 27) and to have it at 6 p.m. when most of the businesses close. They will hold the meeting at the Library. Mr. Fox will check on room availability for dates around the second week of June. If the meeting runs after 8 p.m., they will need to pay \$50.

Adjournment

Mr. Gisness made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:17 a.m. Mr. Nickas seconded the motion. The HDC voted unanimously (3-0) to adjourn the meeting.

Prepared by:

Mary Alice Cookson

Attest

Date