

HAMILTON DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
MINUTES OF MEETING
MEMORIAL ROOM, HAMILTON TOWN HALL
September 19, 2018

Members Present: President Brian Stein, Anthony Nickas, Rick Mitchell, Tom Goodwin
Members Absent: Bill Gisness
Coordinator: Dorr Fox
Also Present: Town Manager Joe Domelowicz

Brian Stein called the Hamilton Development Corporation (HDC) meeting to order at 7:32 a.m. with a quorum present.

Warrant for Bills

Mr. Stein presented a warrant in the amount of \$1,497.15. He said most of that amount was the final payment to Nunan's (Florist) for the flower baskets downtown. The invoice included payment for Minutes, as well.

Anthony Nickas made a motion to approve payment of Warrant HDC-1906 for \$1,497.15. Rick Mitchell seconded the motion. The HDC voted unanimously among those present (*3-0) to approve payment of the warrant. *Tom Goodwin had not yet arrived to the meeting.

Dorr Fox asked if the HDC wanted to order wreaths from Nunan's again. The response was yes.

Approve Minutes for Sept. 5

Mr. Stein made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of Sept. 5 as presented. Mr. Mitchell seconded the motion. The HDC voted (*3-0) to approve the minutes. *Mr. Goodwin had not yet arrived.

Downtown Improvements

Mr. Stein said he received a draft of budget estimates, line-item costs, for downtown improvements. [Mr. Gisness had sent out a proposal to the landscape architectural firm Carol Johnson Associates for having the firm provide cost estimates on the work required for the "lighter" and "heavier" touch plans that had been presented.]

Mr. Goodwin arrived at 7:35 a.m.

Mr. Stein said it was hard to tell which of the line item costs were firm and which of them were just place holders/estimates. This was just a draft, he noted, a tool they can present to the public. When the project goes out to bid, it will be more precise.

Mr. Mitchell brought Mr. Domelowicz up to speed on how the HDC had hired a consultant who had drawn some conceptual plans for beautification of the area, specifically Railroad Avenue. They discussed the number of power lines there and huge cost for burying utilities (at least a half million dollars). Mr. Domelowicz was familiar with the high costs of this process from his experience in Winthrop. Mr. Stein gave some highlights of the public meeting the HDC had held with Carol Johnson presenting its conceptual plans and said the response to the suggested improvements (parking, sidewalks, trees, lights, etc.) had been favorable. He explained the next step after figuring out what the project would cost was exploring how to fund it. He talked about the role of the HDC and what the HDC has been doing—flower baskets, wreaths at holiday time, and adding benches and trash receptacles.

Mr. Domelowicz was curious about technical difficulties mentioned concerning lighting for the holidays. [The explanation was basically that due to lack of power downtown for outdoor lighting, solar lights were used, which were underwhelming.]

59/63 Willow Street

Mr. Mitchell gave some further history of the HDC, how it is funded through the meals tax, which generates about \$70K a year in revenue. He talked about the HDC's property at 59/63 Willow Street and its current situation. He said the HDC is on two paths: 1) to get out of Willow Street (sell it) or figure out how to make something happen there with a private developer; 2) to follow through with the plans to make Railroad Avenue and surrounding streets better looking and more functional.

Mr. Domelowicz said he loved the plans, especially if there is buy-in from the community. He said on his first day of work he met with Andrew DeFranza of Harborlight Community Partners regarding Willow Street.

Mr. Stein said Mr. DeFranza cannot do 20 units of senior housing without pairing it with another project [Longmeadow] for financing. Mr. Domelowicz said that if 20 units at Willow Street is the neighborhood's preferred option they should talk with other developers.

Mr. Mitchell said the HDC was exploring alternatives. Bill Gisness (HDC member who was absent today) had spoken with Larry Smith, developer of Canter Brook, regarding a potential partnership for something at Willow Street. Mr. Goodwin pointed out that financing programs are problematic at that size.

Mr. Mitchell said he was reading about a MassWorks grant that might help. Mr. Domelowicz said that grant closed the first week of Sept. He has experience with Mass Works. Mr. Fox said he contacted the Mass Works office and found them discouraging. He had talked with State Representative Brad Hill and State Senator Bruce Tarr, who had directed him to Mass Works. He had then been directed by Mass Works to talk with Mass Development.

Mr. Domelowicz worked with MassWorks in his previous position in Winthrop. He gave Mr. Fox some of the contacts he has: Jay Ash, Secretary of Housing and Economic Development for the Commonwealth, and Erica Kreuter, Director of the MassWorks Infrastructure Program. He said a focus for the State has been workforce housing, which is 80%-120% of market, as well as transit-oriented development. The more boxes a project checks off, the more likely to get traction, he said.

Mr. Stein suggested having Rep. Hill come to the next HDC public meeting. Mr. Mitchell said it would be great to have a package together by then that listed what the HDC has done so far and where they want to go.

Mr. Domelowicz asked what the HDC's position would be on trying to pre-permit something for Willow Street. He said that might help if they put out another RFP [request for proposal]. The more answers they have, the less risk. Mr. Stein said it would be a site plan review rather than special permit, and didn't think they would want to pigeonhole someone with a fully permitted project. Mr. Stein said there was neighbor buy-in for affordable housing at Willow Street, but he didn't know if there would be for workforce or market-rate housing.

The HDC speculated about what might happen concerning the Longmeadow Way project. Mr. Stein said if the Town does vote for the \$1M project at Longmeadow, Harborlight has said it will still do the Willow Street 20-unit project. Mr. Mitchell did not think it likely that the Town would approve the \$1M; however, the \$1M could be amended on Town Meeting floor since the Town is expecting to receive about \$435K as a payment in lieu of affordable units as part of the Canter Brook project. If that happens, Town Meeting would only be asked to spend \$565K for Longmeadow (in addition to funds already allocated). This would also change the requirement of a 2/3 majority vote and make it 50% plus one. No matter what happens, HDC members thought there would be an appeal, most likely from neighbors on Ortins Road or Bay Road.

The HDC discussed which of their two projects (downtown improvements or Willow Street) should take precedence, as they are an all-volunteer board. The downtown improvements will require a longer time frame. Willow Street will be more complex. Currently nothing can happen on that until they see how Town Meeting votes.

Mr. Stein asked Mr. Domelowicz about Mass Works grants and he explained that they typically involve a two-year approach. They generally award the money at the end of the fiscal year and then the group has 18 months to spend the money. The grants don't require a match, but it helps to put in resources so the application is at a point where it will be accepted.

Mr. Fox said regarding Willow Street, he put together an extension agreement through Nov. 1. He was not able to reach the HDC's attorney Kathleen O'Donnell about it. He said Ms. O'Donnell had advised against the extension, but he thought they needed to do it.

Decision:

Mr. Goodwin made a motion to approve the extension agreement through Nov. 1. Mr. Mitchell seconded the motion. The HDC voted (3-0-1) to approve the extension agreement. Mr. Stein abstained.

The four HDC members signed the agreement.

Mr. Mitchell asked Mr. Domelowicz if there were funds available to supplement the HDC's relatively small resources to help them with a potential development project at Willow Street. He said he would do some research on it.

Mr. Mitchell explained developing a project there would take someone working constantly to keep it in motion. Mr. Stein said they would need someone to do the reporting, as well as run the project. Mr. Nickas said if they joint ventured with a developer, the developer would be that person; taking it on themselves was a different matter. Mr. Fox said he would contact firms who do a lot of permitting around the State and find out what would be required in terms of resources and where to go for funding.

New/Old Business

Mr. Stein said he received a call from Tony Passaretti, 85 Linden St., about a tree on HDC property he would like to "limb up." The man had wondered if the HDC might consider taking the tree down because it is a nuisance. The HDC decided taking it down wasn't an option, but agreed cutting the limbs was OK.

Adjournment

Mr. Mitchell made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:26 a.m. Mr. Nickas seconded the motion. The HDC voted unanimously among those present (4-0) to adjourn the meeting.

Prepared by:

Mary Alice Cookson
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Dore Fox
Attest

10/3/2018
Date