

HAMILTON BOARD OF SELECTMEN &

HAMILTON PLANNING BOARD

MINUTES OF JOINT MEETING

Town Hall Memorial Room, 577 Bay Road

November 18, 2019

Selectmen Present: Chair Jeff Hubbard, Rosemary Kennedy, Shawn Farrell, William Olson, and Darcy Dale

Selectmen Absent: None

Planning Board Members Present: Chair Brian Stein, Rick Mitchell, Richard Boroff, Peter Clark, William Wheaton, Daniel Hamm, and Associate Member Laura Walsh

Planning Board Members Absent: Chris Sheperd (Associate Member)

Town Manager: Joe Domelowicz

Other Staff Present: Director of Planning & Inspections Patrick Reffett

Chair Jeff Hubbard called the joint meeting to order for the Board of Selectmen (BOS) at 6:35 p.m. The Planning Board introduced themselves. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Chair Brian Stein called the meeting to order for the Planning Board.

**AGENDA**

**Review, Discussion, and Vote on Hamilton Housing Production Plan**

Town Manager Joe Domelowicz said he and Director of Planning & Inspections Patrick Reffett had spoken and because the consultants haven't yet finalized the plan it is not necessary to vote this evening. Per Town Counsel's advice, it is OK if the two boards vote (whether to approve the plan) separately at one of their respective meetings.

Mr. Reffett explained the purpose of the Housing Production Plan (HPP)—that the State has an expectation that every city/town provide an introspective accounting of what it does relative to housing. The plan informs themselves and the State on the number of affordable units, the type of housing in the community, how vacant or utilized the properties are, the

demographics based on age and incomes, who needs housing, and how many of each category need housing, etc. He said Hamilton's draft, posted on the Town website, has a tremendous amount of data relative to housing in Hamilton and how it compares to that of other communities. He noted the reason the State wants this plan is that it wants communities to be providing affordable housing for their residents, to have a strong working economy, a strong population, and the ability to address demands not just for today but for who will be here tomorrow, which he called a forward-thinking approach although not often talked about in that way. The plan, he said, shows the State what's been done, what remains left to be done, and provides the State with recommendations on how the community plans to get there.

He spoke about the review process and said while the Planning Board focused on the Housing Master Plan the board had asked the Hamilton Affordable Housing Trust (HAHT) to take the lead on the HPP, which it did. He said there are many similarities between the Master Plan and the HPP. [The two plans utilized the same research and data]. He said Mass General Law asks that the BOS and Planning Board be the two entities that vote on the HPP. He said they want to receive final comments, give those to the consultants to finalize the plan, vote on the plan, and then it will go to the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to be certified. Mr. Reffett said an important part of the plan is to show the State what it is doing to achieve safe harbor by meeting its affordable housing goal. He added that Hamilton has a significant elderly population, more than other communities in the area, and wants to have that population better accommodated with housing that fits within the guidelines of 40B, which is 80% of AMI (area median income).

He said he'd made a number of comments on the HPP draft, particularly regarding the consultants' recommendations, such as one that the Winthrop School might be used for affordable housing in the future. He said that would be a multi-community and probably multi-decade project to achieve; it would dislocate school functions; and the School Board and two towns would have to declare the property surplus. It would also likely affect the Public Safety Building and Council on Aging. He said it would be a difficult process to take pieces of public land and convert them to another use. Rosemary Kennedy said that would be a moot point for the next five years as the property isn't even available. He said he made another comment on the draft to have Longmeadow removed from the plan as a potential project. The deletion was recommended by the HAHT.

Mr. Reffett explained the consultants wanted the Town to pursue 40R projects and what's known as smart zoning, and this particular type requires 20 units per acre. He doesn't know any project in Hamilton that has a level of comfort or support to have that level of density. He said he asked the consultants to be more considered about how Hamilton could do a project with 40R. He's of the opinion that Hamilton couldn't obtain that level of density. Shawn Farrell added that mill buildings in other communities have been converted for projects like that, but Hamilton doesn't have anything like that.

Mr. Reffett said the consultants were heavily promoting use of Hamilton's Inclusionary Housing Bylaw, which was great but it "doesn't move the needle" much. [The bylaw asks for

one affordable unit after the first 10 units are developed at market rate and then one affordable unit for every 7<sup>th</sup> unit after.] Also, the consultants advocated that Hamilton make full use of CPA [Community Preservation Act] funds, which it has done and will continue to do, although that is highly competitive money going to many projects.

Mr. Hubbard asked if the Planning Board had any additional comments. Mr. Stein said many of their comments have been already included in the draft. He said he's only seen minor errors, one of which concerns language of the Mixed-Use Bylaw that needs some updating based on what was voted at Town Meeting.

Richard Boroff said mention of a Scenic Road bylaw should be eliminated because the Town doesn't have such a bylaw. He inquired about it of many in Town and all they found was that in 1973 it said in a Master Plan committee report that they hoped one might be done, but it never was. Darcy Dale noted there's a State Scenic Bylaw that was written in the 1980s, but Mr. Boroff said that was a State law not Town bylaw. Mr. Domelowicz confirmed with Mr. Boroff that references to the Scenic Road bylaw should be removed.

Mr. Farrell talked about the difficulty meeting the 10% ratio for affordable housing and asked whether there were a matrix for getting to that. Mr. Reffett said there wasn't a matrix and the Town would rarely meet the 10% with projects of just three or six units. Mr. Domelowicz said he can share a copy of the comments Mr. Reffett had made to the consultant if anyone would like to see it. Mr. Farrell said the BOS had them.

Ms. Kennedy commented she thought it's good that the language in the plan talks about the 10% as a goal rather than a requirement. Many towns haven't met the goal, she said, and adding 14 affordable units per year is unrealistic. She said it's too bad they can't find a goal that's realistic.

Mr. Farrell asked if they could send a draft document to the State or if it had to be the final document. Mr. Reffett responded that the State wanted a final document approved by both boards [the BOS and Planning Board]. The two boards decided they will gather comments over the next couple of weeks and will not need to hold another joint meeting.

Chair Russ Tanzer said it was important to keep in mind they still need to move forward with producing affordable housing, especially for seniors, although the DHDC's focus is on family housing. They also need workforce housing. They need a blend.

Mr. Hubbard thanked the two boards.

### **Adjournment**

Mr. Boroff made a motion to adjourn the meeting for the Planning Board at 6:59 p.m. Mr. Mitchell seconded the motion. The Planning Board voted unanimously (6-0) to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Olson made a motion to adjourn the meeting for the BOS. Ms. Kennedy seconded the motion. The BOS voted unanimously (5-0) to adjourn.

Prepared by:

Mary Alice Cookson      1-27-2020  
Mary Alice Cookson      Date  
Minutes Secretary

Attest:

Darcy Dale      01-27-2020  
Darcy Dale      Date  
Board of Selectmen Clerk