

Hamilton Affordable Housing Trust

Minutes

April 15, 2015

Welcome – Chairman David Carey opened the meeting of the Hamilton Affordable Housing Trust (Trust). Members Marc Johnson, Fred Mills and Peter Britton were present. Also present were Rachel Meketon, Mary Beth Lawton, Heather Ford, Joe Hughes, and Andrew DeFranza.

Minutes from March 18th – The Trust members voted to approve the minutes. Fred Mills shared that, though he had planned a presentation on population changes for the March meeting, The Beverly Times had just produced a very thorough analysis, which predicts that in 2035 the population in Hamilton will be 5,091 people. Marc was skeptical that the population would drop that much in such a short time period. Peter commented that with a push for smart growth and a train station in Hamilton the population could actually increase.

Andrew DeFranza, Executive Director of Harborlight Community Partners – Dave introduced Andrew to the group. He framed the discussion as an opportunity for the Trust, which like Harborlight seeks to create more and better affordable housing in Hamilton, to hear any ideas that Andrew has and to brainstorm more ideas. Andrew asked if the group would like to discuss the micro or macro approach by Harborlight. Marc replied, micro.

Andrew described the less interesting of two potential projects for Hamilton. There is a historic building from Danvers, a former funeral home, that could be converted into six affordable units, if there was a plot of land to put it on. At a minimum, it would need a half-acre lot. There was some discussion about the feasibility of the project. Andrew shared that, though it isn't as cost effective to do such a small project in just those terms, it is politically expedient to do a project that is also historic preservation. Andrew also explained that finding a good location for the building would be much more challenging than physically moving the building to whatever location they ultimately choose.

The more interesting of the two projects is the potential purchase of Jim Farnham's lot next to the Hamilton-Wenham high school. Andrew shared a sketch of how the parcel could accommodate five farmhouse style buildings plus the original house and barn for a total of 23-27 apartments (with approximately four apartments in each building). Marc shared several potential challenges to the project, regarding the deed, zoning, and permitting processes. Marc recalled that the deed may have included a range of easements and prohibited further subdivisions. There is also the requirement for dead-end streets to be of certain lengths and qualities. Peter advised that Harborlight review the deed very carefully with legal counsel. Andrew agreed and said that he would do that with particular attention to any possible constraints on the use of a friendly 40B comprehensive permit.

The group discussed the potential for the project to meet the needs of public employees, such as school teachers, who generally cannot afford to live in Hamilton. Andrew explained that Harborlight could apply to the state for a certain percentage of the apartments to be rented with a local preference. The group also discussed possible opposition by abutters, with Marc estimating that there would be approximately twelve people who would be directly affected by the new development. Andrew agreed with Marc's assessment.

Dave described the Trust's previous meeting with Kate McGuire of the Hamilton Housing Authority, and asked Andrew if he knew about partnerships between private nonprofit developers and public housing authorities, and if Harborlight would be interested in a project like that. Joe and Mary Beth described the possible need for redevelopment of some properties. Andrew did know of processes to create those partnerships. It would require federal and state support. Fred asked if Harborlight could be chosen as a partner or if there would need to be a public bidding process. Andrew didn't know the answer, but thought that it was possible that a public Request for Proposals would be required. Dave asked whether or not the housing authority would retain control of the properties in that type of transaction. Andrew said that likely Harborlight would take over management, but the authority would retain oversight. Mary Beth suggested that we do research to understand the process and the potential pros and cons and continue to discuss this with Andrew and the housing authority. The others agreed.

Community Preservation Plan – Rachel distributed the letter from the Community Preservation Committee to all Town boards and committees, which requests that they review the Community Preservation Plan and share both their comments on the plan and their recommendations for future projects that could be funded by the CPA. She also shared the section of the Plan that describes the town's community housing priorities. Dave asked if it was based on the 2013 Housing Production Plan. Rachel replied that the goals were from that plan, but the criteria were from the Master Plan.

Update on Community Teamwork's Home Modification Loan Program – Mary Beth described the meeting between her, Rachel and Alan Trebat of Community Teamwork. She said that the program seemed very appropriate for Hamilton's seniors. It would give seniors the cash to make necessary adjustments to their homes so that they can continue to age in place, which suits the original program framework that she and others had discussed. Mary Beth believes that many seniors in Hamilton could qualify for the 0% loans that do not need to be repaid until the home is sold. The ceiling for those loans is approximately \$78,000 for a two-person household. She said that people earning above that, who would only qualify for a 3% loan to be paid off over several years, would probably be better served by a local bank. She said that Alan would attend an open house at the senior center on Wednesday, June 24th at 10:30AM. She is planning to advertise the event widely and include information about the program so that seniors can come prepared to converse with Alan. She encouraged Trust members to attend the open house, and many expressed interest.

Next Meeting – Dave gave everyone an opportunity to share their final thoughts. Peter said that he would like to relook at potential zoning changes. Mary Beth is interested in cluster

housing. Heather asked about housing at the senior center. Rachel requested that the next meeting be earlier than scheduled so that the group can prepare to present at the Community Preservation Committee's public hearing. Others agreed and the date was set for Wednesday, May 6th.

Carey adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted by Rachel Meketon, Community Projects Coordinator

ATTEST: _____

David Carey, Chairman