

DRAFT MINUTES  
Hamilton Affordable Housing Trust  
August 17, 2016

Members present: Marc Johnson, Michael Lombardo, Peter Britton and Russ Tanzer.

Town staff present: Patrick Reffett, Director Planning and Inspections, Mary Beth Lawton, Director, Council on Aging and Dorr Fox, Community Projects Coordinator.

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Peter Britton called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

REMARKS BY CHAIRMAN

Mr. Britton showed aerial photographs of the Hamilton area and stated that he would like to focus on the big picture of providing affordable housing in Hamilton. He read a letter from the Hamilton Council on Aging which supported affordable housing on the Longmeadow site and objected to the demolition of the senior center to provide affordable housing. He noted that there are concept drawings that have been circulated. He explained that he had commissioned these plans to be created to assist him as a visual person. The Affordable Housing Trust is not responsible for these plans and they will not be discussed at the meeting.

MINUTES

Marc Johnson moved to approve the minutes of the August 3, 2016 meeting. Russ Tanzer seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Mr. Britton moved to revise the minutes of the July 21, 2016 minutes to clarify that no subcommittee had been created as an advisory committee to the Trust. Mr. Tanzer seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

DISCUSSION OF PROCESS

Mr. Johnson noted that the Affordable Housing Trust has a new membership and that they should establish goals and objectives. He is wondering what they are working towards - a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen, or perhaps the Community Preservation Committee. He hopes that everyone buys into the goals and objectives of the Housing Production Plan. He noted that they will be reviewing sites later in the meeting. Two meetings ago it was determined that town staff would review the sites that the Trust had selected and that eventually a consultant would also look at issues related to these sites. After that, a process had not been established. He believes that the Trust needs a process to guide their actions.

Mr. Britton stated that he does not believe that creating fifteen units of affordable housing a year is aggressive enough. He believes that they will be reviewing town owned parcels that can accommodate more units and that can have an impact on the housing needs of the community. He believes that they have some good sites for affordable housing and he would like to see a fast track process.

Mr. Johnson stated that he is in favor of a fast track process only if all the facts are known, but that would not be the case for any of the potential sites currently being discussed by the Trust. He noted that the indication that a project would be proposed for the Longmeadow site was a catalyst for looking at other sites for affordable housing in town. He does not want a process that focuses on just any site, as long as it is not the Longmeadow site. He believes that they need to create a transparent process. He believes that they need to figure out issues, such as should the affordable housing all be downtown. He believes that fast tracking could shift the focus of creating affordable housing from one neighborhood to another. This would not be a good result of fast tracking.

Mr. Britton stated that he preferred not to create a process abstractly. He believes that by looking at the properties that they have identified, they might be able to determine the appropriate process.

Mr. Lombardo stated that a number of sites had been identified. He believes that they should figure out the development potential for these sites as well as what should go on the sites. There are many issues that they should look at. For example, the public safety building/senior center site has access issues. By evaluating these sites, they could develop a process. He believes that the end result should be a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen. This is a requirement if they decide that the appropriate route is to purchase land.

Mr. Tanzer stated that the Trust should look at all of the town-owned parcels. There will be several issues, including wetlands and access. Some of the sites will work for affordable housing, while others will not. They should determine what makes sense for certain sites, such as senior housing or family housing. When they have narrowed down the number of sites, they should notify the neighbors to get them into the conversation.

Bill Massos inquired why there was such a drive to create fifteen units per year. Mr. Johnson stated that Chapter 40B MGL states that a minimum of ten percent of the housing units in every town should be affordable. If the town does not meet that goal, they are vulnerable to affordable housing developments. The Trust developed a Housing Production Plan to create affordable housing without intending it to provide protection from Chapter 40B MGL. The housing is for the children of residents, seniors, neighbors and town employees. Mr. Britton noted that if a developer proposes a project under Chapter 40B MGL, they can avoid most of the Town's regulations. While they need to meet the regulations of the Conservation Commission, they can bypass other town regulations and only appear before the Zoning Board of Appeals. He noted that these projects can have seventy percent local preference for residents.

Mr. Johnson noted that three percent of the town's housing stock is affordable and there needs to be two hundred additional units to reach ten percent. The Trust continued to discuss Chapter 40B MGL with members of the audience explaining

that the statute, as well as trying to be proactive in creating affordable units, is the motivation to create affordable housing in the Town.

Mr. Johnson continued to advocate for a process, noting that they should look at issues such as parcel size, zoning, vehicular access and traffic impacts. Mr. Britton believes that they should look at some of the properties and use this exercise to create a process.

Rebecca Vale inquired about how the properties listed on the agenda were selected. Mr. Johnson explained that two meetings ago, the Trust reviewed a list of all town owned parcels. They were also aware of privately held properties that might be available for affordable housing. They narrowed this list to a few parcels and decided to notice the neighbors of these parcels for this meeting. The Trust is trying to be transparent in their process. Mr. Lombardo stated that in the past they have been criticized for not letting residents know what they are doing. Therefore, they are trying to invite residents to be part of the process.

Ms. Vale inquired why they are not just looking to create senior housing. Mr. Johnson stated that senior housing is not always affordable housing. He explained that the state's priority is affordable family housing. Due to Hamilton's demographics, the town needs both affordable senior housing and affordable family housing.

Rosemary Kennedy stated that she wanted to add to the discussion about affordable housing. She noted that income levels for affordable housing can vary and that people that qualify for affordable housing can have incomes as high as many people in the room. Only thirteen percent of the towns in Massachusetts have met the ten percent goal, even though Chapter 40B MGL has been a statute since 1969. She noted that fair housing means that affordable housing in a 40B development is available to all residents of the state, even if there is seventy percent local preference. Each project has a lottery to determine who will become a resident of the project. She believes that the town should look at the affordable housing developments realistically and recognize that it is unlikely that there will be seventy percent local preference. Mr. Johnson stated that lotteries for 40B projects are project specific and negotiated locally.

Mr. Johnson stated that he would like to create a process for the Trust in draft form for the other members to review. Mr. Britten concurred that this would be a good idea.

Inger Mitchell stated that while she is in favor of creating a process, she is concerned about education as an issue and how affordable housing is affecting the school system. Mr. Britton stated that towns can develop affordable housing through Chapter 40R MGL and 40S MGL. Chapter 40R MGL allows for seventy percent local preference and Chapter 40S MGL provides state compensation for a town's school system. Mr. Johnson stated that the compensation granted under Chapters 40R MGL and Chapter 40S MGL are token at best and not a reason to develop a project. He

noted that it is intended to create an incentive for underutilized mills, which Hamilton does not have. Mr. Lombardo stated that there should not be the concern for a fast track. It would most likely be tied to town meeting, of which there are two a year.

Andrea Massos stated that she is also concerned about education issues. She believes that family housing will generate children which will create a cost burden to the town. She believes that this will create tax overrides in the town. She is more in support for affordable senior housing. Mr. Tanzor stated that people need to realize that there will be both affordable family housing and affordable senior housing. Mr. Johnson added that affordable housing is not something to fear economically.

The Trust and members of the audience discussed the schedule of upcoming meetings.

#### REVIEW OF TOWN OWNED SITES FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

##### Lot 85, Assessor's Map 47 off Central Avenue and Baker Avenue

Dorr Fox explained that this lot which is approximately one acre had previously been owned by the Boston and Maine Railroad. There had been questions regarding whether the town actually has title to the property. He had spoken with the Boston and Maine Railroad real estate office earlier in the day and they concurred that the Town of Hamilton owns the parcel. Mr. Johnson stated that previously the Town looked at selling this parcel. He believes that it is suitable for one to three units. He believes that the primary access would be through Central Avenue. It has not been identified by the town for any other use, such as a park. It would be a good site to consider for Habitat for Humanity.

Mr. Britton inquired how much staff time would be required if the parcel was developed by the Town. Patrick Reffett stated that it would be ten hours a week for a year and a half. Mr. Johnson inquired how much staff time it would take if Habitat for Humanity developed the site. Mr. Reffett stated that it would take approximately eighty hours in total.

Jack Lawrence stated that he was told that Lots 84 and 31 were also owned by the Town. If that is the case, the parcel would have access off of Highland Street. Mr. Johnson and Mr. Lombardo agree that Lot 84 is owned by the Town, but not Lot 31.

Mr. Johnson believes that this would be a good lot for Habitat for Humanity to develop affordable housing. The Town would not need to donate much money, because the Town is donating the land. Mr. Lombardo stated that the Town would not be able to manage the project due to limited staff. It would need to partner with Habitat for Humanity.

### Lot 24, Assessor's Map 47 off Lincoln Avenue

Mr. Johnson noted that this is a site with approximately three quarters of an acre. Approximately half of the site is wetlands. Perhaps one or two units could be built on it. It might be a site for Habitat for Humanity.

### Landfill site

Mr. Lombardo stated that the Town has issued an RFP for solar panels for this site. Along with the landfill issues, one should avoid housing on this site.

### Senior Center/Public Safety Building/Winthrop School site

An aerial photograph of the site was projected on the screen. Mr. Johnson oriented the audience to the site, showing them where the various buildings were located in the photograph. Mr. Lombardo stated that the access issues for this site will be challenging. There are issues related to access, the septic system, the school and public safety. This will have an impact on the development potential of the site. The Trust needs to evaluate the site. The Trust members discussed access issues with members of the audience.

Tess Leary inquired whether the Affordable Housing Trust meets with the Planning Board. Mr. Lombardo stated that once a project is proposed, the Planning Board will review it. At this point the Trust needs to figure out the development potential of the site. Ms. Leary noted that the grove of trees behind the Public Safety Building are the only trees left after there was clear cutting for the construction of the building. She believes that any project on the site needs to be coordinated with the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals. Mr. Britton explained that all the boards and committees work as a team and that there are legitimate concerns that need to be addressed. He noted that a project permitted through Chapter 40R MGL may be the appropriate route to proceed. Mr. Johnson stated that there are three opportunities to coordinate with the Planning Board. Firstly, Mr. Reffett, Director of Planning and Inspections, attends both the Affordable Housing Trust meetings and the Planning Board meetings. Second, the Planning Board has a policy in regard to Chapter 40B MGL. Recently, there was a joint meeting between the Planning Board and the Affordable Housing Trust in relation to the Longmeadow project. Third, he noted that if there is a process, it could include coordination between all of the boards to gain input on the topic of affordable housing.

Mr. Lombardo noted that Mr. Reffett is already talking to consultants regarding examining various sites for affordable housing. Mr. Reffett explained that they will know more within two weeks.

Ms. Massos stated that people move to Hamilton because of its country feel, not because of density. She wanted to know why the Trust was looking at the Senior Center/Winthrop School site when the school is raising money for a playground and a lot of money is being invested into the building. Mr. Britton explained that at this time, the Trust is being charged with looking at town-owned land. Mr. Lombardo stated that they are not looking to change the school. There has been a four million dollar investment in the school. Any determination of what will happen with the schools is a long term discussion. The Trust is not taking on that discussion.

Sean Dwyer inquired whether all three parcels (Council On Aging Building, Winthrop School, Public Safety Building) needed to be considered together for a possible project. He questioned whether the Trust could focus on one site. Mr. Lombardo stated that he thought that any proposed project could be located on a combination of the parcels. Mr. Johnson stated that access to the site would require that all of the parcels be considered together.

## REVIEW OF PRIVATELY OWNED SITES FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

### Cutler Site off of Maple Street, Cunningham Street and Woodland Meade

Mr. Johnson oriented the Trust members and the audience to the site. He noted that the property is currently for sale. Mr. Britton stated that there are people who are interested in developing the site for expensive homes on large lots. However, it is his understanding that the Cutler family is interested in having the land developed in the best interest of the Town, which could mean affordable housing. Mr. Tanzer stated that the site is forty four acres. A portion of the site is wetlands, however there are also substantial uplands on the site. Mr. Johnson noted that the biggest issue for the site would be traffic impacts to Maple Street and Porter Lane.

Mr. Johnson stated that he understands that the property owners would like to see cottage style housing on the site, which means smaller units, but not necessarily affordable. He stated that the Trust should consider whether a consultant should look into the issues of the site for an affordable housing project or a blend of affordable and market rate housing. Mr. Lombardo questioned whether the Town would be nimble enough to secure the site. Mr. Britton stated that he believes that the site is a wonderful opportunity and that the Trust should look into the issues and possibilities of a development there. Ms. Kennedy stated that she spoke to a developer who is creating a cottage style affordable housing development in Harvard.

## SCOPE OF SERVICES

Mr. Britton stated that he believes that the Scope of Services should focus on two sites, including the Cutler property. He believes that they should not lose the opportunity to look at the site. Mr. Johnson stated that he believes that the Scope of Services should look at the issues of a site, and not try to develop preliminary plans. Mr. Britton stated that the Trust should start looking into potential partners to develop sites as affordable housing. Mr. Johnson stated that the Trust members

should send a list of issues to Mr. Fox regarding the parcels, so he can compile a list for review at the next meeting.

Mr. Johnson stated that he wanted the Trust to confirm that the site off Longmeadow Way is still under consideration as a potential site for affordable housing. Mr. Lombardo and Mr. Britten noted that it is not up to the Trust to determine whether this site is still under consideration.

#### HAHT PROCESS GOING FORWARD

Mr. Johnson stated that he would put together a draft process and the members could discuss it at the next meeting.

#### BUDGET ISSUES

Mr. Britton noted that the deadline for CPC applications for Special Town Meeting is coming up in September. It was determined that no additional funding was needed at the time.

#### COMMUNICATION WITH THE PRESS

The members decided that all communications with the press should be through the chair, and should reflect the opinion of the collective Trust, not just the chair.

The members decided that the next meeting would take place on Thursday, September 1, 2016 at 6:30 pm, preferably at the Senior Center.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:56 pm.