

DRAFT MINUTES
Hamilton Affordable Housing Trust
October 6, 2016

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

Town staff present: Patrick Reffett, Director of Planning and Inspections, Mary Beth Lawton, Director, Council on Aging.

Peter Britton called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Marc Johnson approved the minutes of the September 26, 2016 meeting. Russ Tanzer seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Discussion to Effect Release for Sale of Town-Owned Land at Town Meeting – Lots off Central Avenue and Baker Avenue (known as Lots 84 and 85 on Assessors Map 47)

Mr. Britton noted that this topic will be a warrant article at the upcoming Fall Town Meeting. He asked for public comment on the topic.

Cora Sanders inquired where the access would be for the site, how many units could be located on the site and how it would affect their community. Don Preston, Habitat for Humanity North Shore, noted that they have not had the opportunity to fully evaluate the site, however they are interested in it. He noted that access would be an issue. There is an adjacent lot that fronts onto Highland Street that is listed as owners unknown. It is possible that the Town could take that site and it could be used for access off Highland Street. It would require putting a roadway in, which would be an added expense. Another option would be to extend Central Avenue to obtain access.

Another neighborhood resident inquired why there would need to be a through street. Mr. Preston explained that there would not be a need for a through street. He explained that the site could contain two units with a total of six bedrooms. He explained that they build affordable housing for people who make between 40 and 60 percent of the area median income, which translates into an income of \$30,000 to \$60,000 a year. He stated that they would have a neighborhood meeting to discuss the design of the project. He noted that their projects often increase the value of homes in the neighborhoods they are located in.

Jeff Filipov inquired about how this project is different from nearby affordable housing. Mr. Preston stated that the Habitat for Humanity project would be a home ownership project. Mr. Filipov stated that the street is busy and that their kids play on the street. More houses would make it more dangerous. He believes that traffic

is an issue. He believes that their neighborhood has their share of affordable housing. He believes that trash is a big issue. He thinks that affordable housing decreases property values in a neighborhood. He believes that the affordable housing should be located in another neighborhood. Mr. Britton stated that the Trust will review a host community agreement which is designed to address some of these issues.

Another neighbor, Ms. Silvia, stated that there are not sidewalks in the neighborhood and that the children play in the streets. She is opposed to locating any more affordable housing in the neighborhood. Another neighbor concurred with her.

Michael Lombardo clarified that the proposed housing would be affordable workforce housing that would house people such as municipal employees. He noted that this is housing for people who have an income that is less than the median income, which is high in this area. He noted that this is not housing for the homeless or Section 8 housing. It is housing for working people.

Rosemary Kennedy stated that this is not workforce housing, because workforce housing is not for people who make between \$30,000 and \$60,000 a year. Mr. Lombardo corrected her, noting that fire fighters are often hired in at a salary less than \$60,000 a year.

Cora Sanders, a resident of Baker Avenue, wanted to know the size of the lot and wanted to verify that the project would consist of two units with three bedrooms each. She believes that the area is wetlands. She believes that the access should be off of Highland Street.

Amy Howell, a resident of Central Avenue, expressed concern over traffic on the street and the safety of the children who play there. Mr. Britton noted that the purpose of the warrant article is to release the property for sale. Bob Howell, a resident of Central Avenue, inquired whether the residents would have the first option to purchase the property if it is released for sale. Mr. Lombardo stated that it would be an open bid process, and that anyone can bid on the parcel.

Another resident inquired whether the Town has researched the ownership of the railroad land. Mr. Lombardo stated that the town has researched this issue and that there does not appear to be any issues. Another neighbor suggested that Habitat for Humanity locate the affordable housing at another site in the neighborhood on Roosevelt Street, where a house had been vacant for three years. She objected to locating housing on an undeveloped lot, and noted that she previously opposed the demolition of an historic house on Asbury Street for affordable housing. Mr. Britton noted that the Trust was established to create affordable housing in a nimble way and that the Community Preservation Committee also supported the creation of affordable housing.

A neighbor noted that the site is a narrow strip that creates a wooded buffer between houses in the neighborhood.

Community Host Agreement

Patrick Reffett explained that the state requires that ten percent of the residences in a town must be deed restricted as affordable units. When a town does not meet this requirement, it is subject to development proposals under Chapter 40B. Hamilton is approximately two hundred units below the requirement. It is important that the town has the ability to manage growth. In the past, the Town has created Housing Production Plans, which explains how the Town will meet this ten percent requirement. However, there has been minimal development of affordable housing. The Town wishes to create agreements with affordable housing developers, such as Harborlight and Habitat for Humanity. This agreement is designed to reach a safe harbor, where the Town will not be vulnerable to large affordable housing projects under Chapter 40B. Town staff members have been working to put together this agreement. The agreement targets the creation of projects consisting of fourteen or fifteen units. The agreement is a non-exclusive agreement. The agreement advocates for giving local preference for units. The Town wants projects on private land and projects that will pay taxes (versus tax-free). The Town will not make a financial commitment to any project. Projects must be maintained over time and provide access to public amenities, such as conservation land.

Andrew DeFranza stated that Harborlight had some concerns over the agreement. He believes that it would be difficult to produce fourteen units each year. It will be more likely to have years where fewer units are produced, balanced by years where more units are produced. They are also concerned about the language pertaining to local preference. They are concerned that if they sign the agreement, and a project is submitted, the Town will try to hold them to a standard that is not permitted by DHCD. They are concerned that the agreement states that seniors would be given exclusive preference, which is also not allowed by DHCD. They are also concerned about the use of the term appropriate in reference to the Project Eligibility Letter (PEL). However, overall, they are very pleased with the document and believe that it is groundbreaking in the state.

Marc Johnson stated that he has a version of the document that has alternative wording regarding the PEL. Mr. DeFranza stated that he believes that this language could work. Mr. Wilson noted that the language is not actually binding and asked if he talked with Mr. Reffett about his concerns. Mr. Reffett explained that he wanted the Trust to know that they were working with agencies that were likely to sign the agreement and that there were still outstanding issues. It was agreed that the parties are close to agreement on the document and that it is close to being completed.

Jeff Filipov, a resident of Gifford Street, inquired whether any of the Trust members lived near affordable housing. He stated that he believes that there is enough affordable housing in his neighborhood and that he does not want any more.

Rosemary Kennedy noted that the Town could create affordable housing without going through Chapter 40B and that there could be projects with both affordable and market rate housing. She inquired whether they had spoken to developers with a different vision of affordable housing projects. Mr. Britton stated that they have spoken to the affordable housing developers that they are familiar with and that have a good track record. Mr. Johnson stated that it would be difficult to create affordable housing in Hamilton due to the single family home zoning. There would be a need for multifamily zoning or another form of zoning. Richard Boroff noted there are existing projects in town that have provided affordable units or cash for affordable housing that were not approved under Chapter 40B, including the Junction project, the Patton project, and the Canterbury project.

Mr. Wilson inquired how the Planning Board could be inserted into the process, especially since they have a Chapter 40B policy. Jeff Melick, chair of Planning Board, stated that he sat down with the chair of Board of Selectmen and the chair of the Affordable Housing Trust and they decided that the Affordable Housing Trust should take the lead role to determine appropriate sites for affordable housing. The Planning Board is waiting to hear the Trust's conclusions. Mr. Britton noted that they can evaluate the sites, however, it is the developers who will decide which sites to pursue. Mr. Johnson stated that the Trust is creating a list of potential sites for affordable housing, however they are operating on a conceptual level when evaluating the sites. They are hoping that the Planning Board can assist in this conceptual evaluation. Mr. Britton is hoping that by the next meeting they can discuss with the Planning Board whether a site is suitable for affordable housing. Mr. Melick stated that they have not received any information. Mr. Britton named the potential sites, including the Gordon Conwell site, the Cutler site, the Council on Aging/Winthrop School/ Public Safety Building site, 13 Essex Street and the Central Avenue site. Mr. Wilson noted that the Trust is at step three of their process, which is when they discuss the sites with the Planning Board, and receive input from other boards. It was noted that the Longmeadow site is still under consideration. Mr. Britton stated that there have been three red lights on the Longmeadow project. He stated that the Trust would like to figure out how to create green lights for affordable housing projects. Mr. Melick stated that he does not want to duplicate the work of the Affordable Housing Trust. When the Trust is ready, they should come to the Planning Board and talk. Mr. Johnson inquired who determines whether a project is a friendly 40B project. Mr. Melick stated that when the Trust has information on the sites, the Planning Board will meet with the Trust. Mr. Wilson stated that the next step of the Trust's process is to discuss the potential affordable housing sites with the Planning Board.

HAHT Consultants

Mr. Reffett introduced the consultants, Michael Hardiman and Peter Conant of Hargidon Architecture-Design. He explained that they are still gathering facts and are early in their review process, however, they will explain to the Trust where they are so far. Mr. Hardiman stated that they are determining whether it is feasible for

affordable housing to be located at the COA/Public Safety Building site and if so, how it can be accomplished. He explained that they are looking at the history of the site and issues pertaining to the site. They have spoken to abutters to the property and stake holders who work at the site.

Peter Conant stated that he is an architect and developer who has specialized in affordable housing. He noted that there are traffic issues pertaining to access to the site. New access points may be difficult to create. It may be possible to access the site through Locust Street. He was told that the area behind the school was once a swamp. The ground water table is four feet below the surface. This could be a problem in relation to creating a septic system. The number of units that could be located on the site would be limited to what the septic system could handle. Housing on the senior center portion of the site would be limited based upon parking, septic and drainage issues. They will be doing soil tests soon. They do not think the woods should be touched and they do not think that additional access should come through Bay Road. The number of units depends upon septic. It may be possible to dewater the site, or one could conclude that this is not a good site to develop. He believes that a Chapter 40B project on the site could be a mixed income project, with both affordable and market rate housing.

New Business

There was a question regarding the next step for the Central Avenue project. It was noted that there will be a warrant article for the upcoming town meeting to release the lot for sale. Members of the audience advocated for locating affordable housing at the Longmeadow site, and coming up with an acceptable number that would be less than 108 units. There was discussion concerning the agenda items for the next Trust meeting. The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.