

DRAFT MINUTES  
**Hamilton Affordable Housing Trust**  
November 9, 2016

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

Town staff present: Dorr Fox, Community Projects Coordinator and Mary Beth Lawton, Director of the Council on Aging.

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Peter Britton called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. Mr. Britton made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 6, 2016 meeting. Bill Wilson seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. The members decided to wait until a subsequent meeting to approve the minutes of the October 20, 2016 meetings, pending possible modifications.

**Update: HAHT Consultant Report on COA/ Winthrop School/ Public Safety Building Site**

Mike Hardigan, of Hargidon Architecture and Design, explained that they were developing a report which focused on determining whether the Council on Aging/ Winthrop School/ Public Safety Building was suitable for affordable housing. He stated that it is a good site for housing due to its location within the Town's center and its proximity to the commuter rail station.

Peter Conant stated that he had looked at issues pertaining to storm water management and septic discharge on the site. He noted that the wooded area behind the Public Safety Building is a storm water recharge area. He noted that there had been a pond within this portion of the site, however it currently contains second growth trees. He had met with a neighbor of the site who noted that his basement floods regularly. Mr. Conant is suggesting that it would be inappropriate to take down the mature trees. He believes that if housing is to be constructed on the site that it would be better to locate it in the existing ball fields behind the school.

Mr. Conant discussed parking and access issues. He has looked into extending Locust Street and Horseshoe Lane. This would require crossing the gas line, which can be done.

Mr. Conant stated that they have been performing soil tests on the site. They have dug four holes and determined that the soil is coarse sand outwash from the glaciers. It is known as gravely sand and is an excellent material. However, the groundwater is four to four and half feet deep. Therefore, he would not construct residential units with basements. He would construct buildings with slab on grade.

He stated that they looked into constructing senior housing at the Council on Aging Building portion of the site. He stated that the advantages are that it is located near

the senior center and the school. However, with a cost of \$3000 per month the rental costs would be too high for senior housing. If housing is located there, there will be more parking and less green space.

Mr. Hardigan stated that the school is beautiful, however the land around it is not well designed. If there is more paved areas, it will exacerbate storm water issues.

Mr. Conant stated that he believes that it is best not to have access off of Bay Road. He would rather see access off of the adjacent residential streets to the rear of the site. He suggests locating town homes on the existing ball fields. He has put together a scenario where twenty-four units are constructed on this portion of the site. He would create a landscape screen between the housing and the ball fields. The affordable units in this scenario would cost in the range of the high \$100,000's to the low \$200,000s. The market rate housing would cost above \$300,000. He believes that this is a great site for housing. He believes that the soil works and the access works for this portion of the site to be developed.

Mr. Hardigan stated that if housing is located to the rear of the site, adjacent to the existing residences, it will fit into the residential neighborhood. However, this would not be the case if it was located near Bay Road. Therefore, it is preferable not to locate the housing on the municipal portion of the site.

### **Review of Basket of Potential Affordable Housing Sites**

Mr. Britton reviewed the sites that the Affordable Housing Trust was considering for affordable housing. He noted that the Longmeadow property was under agreement by Harborlight, a Community Development Corporation. Mary Lou Grosebeck inquired why there was no concept plan for this site. Mr. Britton explained that the Council on Aging/ Winthrop School/ Public Safety Building site is owned by the Town, and therefore the town hired a consultant to determine whether it is appropriate for affordable housing. The other sites to be discussed are privately held, and the Town has not hired a consultant to evaluate them.

Mr. Britton showed a concept plan for the Council on Aging/ Winthrop School/ Public Safety Building site. Marc Johnson objected, noting that the plan was not consistent with the plan that the consultant had presented. He noted that the Trust had not endorsed the plans Mr. Britton is starting to show and the Trust has not yet decided that the site as a location for affordable housing and that decision should be made after the Trust has had a chance to review and discuss the consultant's report..

Mr. Britton presented an aerial photograph of the Gordon Conwell site at Bridge Street and Miles River Road. Terry Dow, a resident of Bridge Street, stated that the site sloped and there are storm water issues. She believes that it is not appropriate for paving due to this issue. She noted that there was an increase in water runoff after the library was built. She believes that this site is not appropriate for more development.

Mr. Britton showed a plan of the 13 Essex Street site. He explained that currently there is a single family dwelling on the site containing 11,000 square feet of floor space. The owners are interested in selling the property and would consider selling it for the purpose of creating affordable housing. He noted that his conceptual plan had two wings of senior housing that was attached to the existing dwelling. Each wing would consist of twenty units. This building would be surrounded by duplexes. Richard Boroff inquired how it was determined that each wing would consist of twenty units. Mr. Britton explained that this was determined by his architect.

Mr. Wilson explained that the Trust is just looking at whether the sites are appropriate for the development of affordable housing. They are not looking at specific plans. They have developed a process to determine whether sites are appropriate. It is too soon to look at specific plans.

Mr. Britton stated that the Trust would like to figure out which sites should move forward in their process. They would like to hear from the audience regarding the Gordon Conwell site and the 13 Essex Street site.

Jenny Gottfriedson, a resident of Woodbury Street, inquired about the location of the wetlands on the 13 Essex Street site. Mr. Britton stated that they are located in the rear portion of the site that is designated as conservation land. Jay Thompson, a resident of Essex Street, stated that the vehicular access shown on the 13 Essex Street plan would not work.

Ray Gosselin, a resident of Essex Street, inquired about the proposed use of the existing dwelling. Mr. Johnson stated that the Trust does not know at this time. The question they are considering is whether affordable housing would work on the site. They are not looking at specific plans.

Robert and Lucinda Hines, residents of 15 Essex Street, stated their concerns for locating affordable housing at the 13 Essex Street site. Ms. Hines stated that the driveway for 13 Essex Street is very close to their house. She noted that the 13 Essex Street site has 100 feet of frontage. She believes that a large project on the site will negatively affect them. She is concerned that the owner of the property is the sole decision maker regarding an application to construct affordable housing on the property. Mr. Wilson explained that any property owner has the ability to offer their site for affordable housing. He noted that there is always concern from the abutters.

Ms. Hines stated that there are high speeds on Essex Street and that there is dangerous driveway access for the site. She believes that the driveway shown on Mr. Britton's plan for 13 Essex Street is actually on her property. Mr. Hines confirmed cars go at high speeds along Essex Street. Ms. Hines stated that she has already called a realtor about selling their land.

Sandy McGraph, a resident of Essex Street, stated that the current owner of 13 Essex Street has an easement over her property. She believes that a project on this site

could turn their quiet bucolic neighborhood into a very busy neighborhood. It would have a negative impact on their neighborhood.

Anne Phippen, a resident of Larch Row, stated that she objects to an affordable housing development in the neighborhood. She noted that there is a lot of open space in the neighborhood. A project on this site would alter this area of Hamilton and Wenham.

Ray Gosselin stated that Essex Street is not a pedestrian friendly neighborhood. Development on this site would increase the number of vehicles in the neighborhood. The Senior Center site is the only site under consideration where a car would not be needed.

Jay Thompson stated that he never would have purchased his property if he knew that an affordable housing project could be constructed in the neighborhood. He believes that it would be a radical change to the neighborhood.

Ms. Hines inquired how the Trust would feel if an affordable housing project was proposed in their neighborhood. Mr. Britton stated that their charge is to find sites in the town that are suitable for affordable housing.

Peter Whitman inquired who would make the final decisions. Mr. Britton stated that the Trust will send a list of suitable sites to the Selectmen. Mr. Whitman inquired if the Zoning Board of Appeals has input into the sites on the list. Mr. Johnson explained that if the Selectmen selects a site for advancement, the site would go to the Zoning Board of Appeals for review of a comprehensive permit. He noted that a comprehensive permit overrides zoning, but not the state regulations administered by the Conservation Commission and the Board of Health.

Mr. Gosselin inquired whether any site meets the state requirement for affordable housing by itself. Mr. Tanzer stated that the town is deficient by two hundred units of affordable housing. Mr. Britton stated that the Trust is trying to be proactive because the Town is vulnerable to comprehensive permits. Mr. Boroff stated that the Town put together a Housing Production Plan which stated that they would produce fourteen units each year. The Town has not completed this development. He also noted that the state does not consider neighbor's viewpoints.

Mr. Johnson stated that the Trust is trying to get ahead of the comprehensive permit threat by planning for affordable housing and thereby influencing affordable housing developments. A woman in the audience inquired why the Patton Estate was not considered for affordable housing. Mr. Johnson stated that there was a gift agreement that controlled what could be done on the site and that two units of affordable housing on Asbury Street with Habitat of Humanity were funded from the Patton Estate development.

Mary Beth Lawton stated that there needs to be a distinction that the Council on Aging site is not appropriate for housing. She stated that the other portion of the site may be appropriate, but the Senior Center should be taken off the table. Mr.

Johnson stated that housing at the senior center is not being considered at this time. The consultant is still working on their report. Ms. Lawton stated that the seniors in town do not want the building torn down. Mr. Wilson inquired whether the seniors would like housing in the vicinity of the senior center. Ms. Lawton stated that they believe that the affordable housing should be located at Longmeadow Way.

Brad Haley, a resident of Bridge Street, stated that he would like more information on the Gordon Conwell property. He inquired whether the property was for sale. He would like to see an analysis of the Gordon Conwell site. Mr. Britton noted that the seminary is engaging an appraiser to look into the site. They have stated that they do not want to locate the housing on the top of the hill near the campus.

Joe Robertson, a resident of Bridge Street, stated that he believes that there is nothing that indicates that these properties are viable sites for affordable housing. Mr. Johnson reviewed the issues and findings pertaining to the sites. Mr. Robertson inquired if the number of units had been determined.

Mr. Wilson noted that the Trust needs to determine the next steps. Mr. Britton stated that the Trust should send the list to the selectmen. Mr. Johnson stated that when the Town officials spoke with the state officials they were told that they will obtain a safe harbor only once actual permits are issued. The Town is not being given credit for the Community Host Agreement.

Mary Pinsetti stated that the proposed road that is shown on the 13 Essex Street plan also goes through her property. Ms. Hines stated that she believes that there is a conflict of interest that Mr. Britton sits on the committee and has also commissioned the plans. A woman in the audience stated that her property backs up to the field at 13 Essex Street. She is fearful that the wetlands on this portion of the property will spread if an affordable housing project is built on the site.

Mr. Britton made a motion to remove the Senior Center/ Winthrop School/ Public Safety Building site from the list of sites, and to endorse the Longmeadow Way site, the 13 Essex Street site and the Gordon-Conwell site as potential sites for affordable housing. The Trust will send a report to the Selectmen and present it to them at their meeting on November 21, 2016. Mr. Johnson seconded the motion, and after a brief discussion, the members of the Trust voted unanimously in favor.

It was determined that the next meeting would be on November 17, 2016 at 6 p.m. Mr. Britton made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:10 p.m. Mr. Wilson seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.