

# Hamilton Development Corporation

## Meeting Minutes January 9, 2013

### Welcome

Brian Stein opened the meeting of the HDC at 7:10 PM. Members, Rick Mitchell, David Carey and Bill Giseness were present. Also present were Kristine Cheetham, Planning Coordinator, Michael Lombardo, Town Manager, and Jeff Hubbard, Selectman. Ken Whittaker, Barbara Lawrence and Bob Bannon were citizen attendees.

### Introductions

- Salem News Op Ed Piece – The opinion piece was an introduction to the topic of downtown planning, goal setting and the potential for results-oriented implementation. *“Salem came up with a plan – and stuck with it...When businesses large and small see a municipality with a vision and a commitment to making more than a minimum effort, they’re more likely to take a risk themselves.” Salem News: Dec. 5, 2012*
- B. Stein facilitated introductions and invited all of the participants to share their interest(s) in the meeting.

### Open Discussion: Vision for Downtown

M. Lombardo – In his opinion, a real strength of the language creating the HDC was that it enabled the group to invest and manage infrastructure. The infrastructure such as larger sewerage systems and municipal-owned parking lots are things that small businesses cannot necessarily afford. However, in order to move in this direction, he would like to learn more from the members of the HDC and community about their interest level for a future of Hamilton that may look slightly different than the present-day Hamilton. Will the efforts of the HDC be centered on making small scale improvements to the daily operations of the existing downtown? Or will the efforts of the HDC take on a larger, different type of endeavor that changes the downtown in some way?

B. Giseness - He asked the group if they had thought about why development has been curtailed in the community. He wondered, “What are the development roadblocks for the downtown?” Are they our zoning bylaws, lack of allowed density, lack of parking spaces, requirements too stringent for new uses, sewerage capacities, or other dynamics?

J. Hubbard – He expressed his commitment to improving the quality of life for residents and businesses. He offered a few thoughts on the downtown:

1. He stated that investing in something small like installing new trees, or similar amenities, can and has made a world of difference for some businesses.
2. He hoped that the HDC would reach out to the handful of large property owners to better understand their future plans.
3. He was concerned that the local government zoning language, permits, fees and review procedures may be development roadblocks.
4. He felt that success for any revitalization efforts downtown depended upon a vision, a commitment from leaders and the presence of staff support to follow through.
5. Can the Meals Tax money be used for small scale improvements? Are there other partners who could share in the work?
  1. Website
  2. Signs
  3. Amenities

B. Lawrence – She stated that she lives in the “Village” and wants to ensure that there is a future vitality for the village concept. She hopes to see a mix of residential uses and commercial uses in order to produce an interactive downtown community. Her vision of the downtown also included a different use of the industrial property near Patton Park (Asbury St. & Willow St).

D. Carey - He echoed many of the earlier comments. He felt that it was important to beautify the downtown with small scale improvements. He also felt that the long-term picture should be focused on increasing revenues. The downtown needs a vision for the future on paper that can help to focus efforts of the HDC and other groups. He would also like to see the HDC get up and running administratively.

The HDC members generally agreed that there is a need to establish a vision for the future. They also felt that the process should continue to include stakeholders but at some point produce a vision type document for the community to “react” to. The document can establish a variety of options, with visual developments, pricing, tax revenue estimates, etc.

R. Mitchell added that the current discussion began with the Planning Board, expanded to include the Selectmen and now should continue to expand to include as many members of the community as possible. M. Lombardo made a commitment to host a meeting with members of all land use boards. The purpose of the meeting will be to disseminate information about the Housing Production Plan, to get the land use boards talking together, and to begin to establish the areas in which each group can play a future role in the revitalization of the downtown.

**Action Items** – The following items should be addressed prior to the next meeting by the person(s) listed in parentheses:

- **Downtown Vision & Plan**
  - Consultant (B. Gisness, R. Mitchell, K. Cheetham) – Members will research language and consultant options to begin the process of drafting a “vision” piece for the downtown. The members need to draft the overall goal(s) of the RFP as well as a listing of possible consultants.
  - All Land Use Board Meeting (K. Cheetham, M. Lombardo) – Staff at town hall will establish an all land use board meeting to disseminate the information in the updated housing production plan. This meeting will continue the dialogue regarding housing and economic development plans for Hamilton.
- **Communication / Outreach**
  - Property Owners (B. Stein, J. Hubbard) – The HDC will establish a meeting with the property owners of a few large parcels of land in the downtown.
  - Merchants Group (B. Gisness, D. Carey) – At least one member of the HDC will attend the next meeting of the Hamilton Wenham Village Merchants group.
  - Economic Development Committee (B. Gisness) – B. Gisness will reach out to former members of the Hamilton EDC to determine what goals, recommendations, or requests they may have for the HDC.
  - Wenham (B. Stein, M. Lombardo) – The Chair and Town Manager will reach out to the leadership in Wenham to substantiate the relationship and participation from the town and businesses.

### Operational Issues

1. **Staff and Town Role** – M. Lombardo discussed his view of the role of the town and the HDC. Because the language of the HDC does not include the town manager or staff as participants, the HDC should run independently of the town. However, until the plans and the administrative procedures are established, the town will work with and support the HDC. For the time being, the town planning coordinator will provide this support.
2. **Budget** – The members of the HDC are certain that there are funds available from both the meals tax revenues and a pre-existing Economic Development Fund appropriation. The members asked K. Cheetham to confirm the amounts of the funds and whether or not those funds had restrictions placed on them.
3. **Membership** – The Board did not discuss the process for securing a fifth member at the meeting.

**Action Items** - The following action items were agreed to be completed prior to the next meeting:

- Budget (K. Cheetham) – The amount(s) of financial accounts will be researched as well as restrictions for expenditures
- Administration & Membership (B. Stein) – Chair will work with planner to review administrative issues for Corporation as well as process for adding a 5<sup>th</sup> member.

NEXT STEPS

ACTION ITEMS - Review Minutes and Follow Up as Assigned

ALL LAND USE BOARD MEETING – Wed. January 30, 2013 6:30 – 8:00 PM at New Library.

NEXT HDC Meeting: Wed. Feb 20, 2013 7-8 PM (Location to be determined)