

MINUTES
Hamilton Affordable Housing Trust
January 19, 2017 - 7:00 p.m.
Hamilton Town Hall Memorial Room

Members present: Peter Britton, chair, Russ Tanzer, Mark Johnson, Russ Stevens and Bill Wilson.

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

Peter Britton opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. Marc Johnson moved to approve the minutes of the January 5, 2017 meeting. Russ Tanzer seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Mr. Britton stated that the Affordable Housing Trust has neither discussed nor endorsed the conceptual plan in the consultant's report for the Winthrop School/Senior Center/ Public Safety Building site. All of the members concurred.

FUNDING REQUEST TO THE COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

Mr. Britton explained that the funding request to the Community Preservation Committee would fund an appropriate site for affordable housing and would allow the Trust to be nimble in their efforts. It would also allow for projects to have local preference. He explained that the last meeting to consider grants by the Community Preservation Committee is February 9th. Therefore the Trust must make a decision tonight whether to request funds. He is recommending that the Trust request \$600,000 for fiscal year 2018.

Dorr Fox explained the Community Preservation Committee budget and other grant applications for fiscal year 2018. Bill Wilson stated that he is concerned that \$600,000 is a lot of money and he wants to know what the community will get for these funds. Mr. Britton stated that he hopes that the grant could help fund three projects. Mr. Wilson suggested that this should be added to the application. Mr. Britton stated that the grant should explain that town funds would allow for local preference. Mr. Wilson noted that the Trust already has \$230,000 in its budget for a project. Mr. Johnson stated that he is concerned that Town Meeting may be resistant to a request for \$600,000. There was a discussion about the Habitat for Humanity project, noting that their projects are too expensive for the Town. Mr. Wilson suggested that they reduce the request to \$400,000. The Trust members were more comfortable with a request for \$400,000. Mr. Johnson made a motion to request \$400,000 from the Community Preservation Committee for affordable housing. Mr. Wilson seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

7 KINSMAN LANE SITE - CONTINUED

Mr. Britton noted that at their last meeting the issue of access to the site came up as an issue. Andrew DeFranza, Harborlight Community Partners, stated that they had looked into the site from a preliminary perspective. They determined that access would need to be obtained through Kinsman Lane, which is a narrow roadway. Paddock Lane is a private road and they would not be able to obtain access through this route. He noted that the majority of the site is covered by a conservation restriction and only six or seven acres are available for development. He noted that the site is located adjacent to the cemetery and the DPW yard. There may be an opportunity for non-housing development on the site that would benefit the Town. This may leave five acres for housing. There is an issue whether the development potential of the five acres would justify the price of the site.

Mr. Johnson inquired whether they have looked at the deed to Kinsman Lane and whether there was any language that would prohibit them from using it for access. Mr. DeFranza stated that it is their understanding that they can use Kinsman Lane and not Paddock Lane. He stated that the major issue is the development potential in relation to price. Mr. Johnson noted that there would be a value to the land that could be used for the cemetery and DPW yard expansions that could offset the cost.

Mr. Britton stated that he does not see any major issues that would prevent the site's use as affordable housing. Mr. Wilson inquired whether there were any other issues that had been brought up by Town boards or departments. Mr. Fox stated that there were several environmental issues and a development proposal may need approval from the Conservation Commission. The Board of Health had noted that a portion of the site is in a wellhead protection district. The well is not used, however it has not been abandoned. Mr. Johnson stated that there is a state process to close the well.

Peter Clark stated that the well is well documented and the indication is that there may not be the ability to use it any longer. He questioned whether Harborlight had an option to purchase the site. Mr. DeFranza stated that the property is for sale and they have the ability to obtain an option to purchase it. They are determining whether they wish to purchase the site. Mr. Wilson inquired about the amount of money that Harborlight would need from the Town in order to make the deal work. Mr. DeFranza stated that they would need a large amount of money, considering how many units would be politically acceptable to build on the site. Mr. Johnson stated that they need to find out the value of the land for the cemetery expansion and the value of the land for the DPW expansion. He believes that the expansion issues need to be determined by the Board of Selectmen. He believes that the site should proceed to the selectmen. Mr. Tanzer believes that the expansion of the cemetery and DPW yard is a good idea and that it may lower the price of the land. Mr. Johnson stated that the Town Manager needs to determine whether the expansions are needed.

Steve Homer addressed the access issue. He stated that Kinsman Lane and Bay Road is a bottleneck area that is overloaded. Kinsman Lane is a narrow road. He noted that there is a lot of traffic, which will increase with the new bank. It will be difficult to add a new use. He also noted that it should be determined where the buildable area is on the site. Mr. Johnson showed him a plan of the conservation restriction.

Brendan McWilliams noted that there were many issues pertaining to the 560 Bay Road site and that the Trust decided not to move the site forward to the Board of Selectmen. He questioned why the Trust seemed to want to move the 7 Kinsman Lane site forward when there appeared to be many issues pertaining to the site. Mr. Wilson stated that the Kinsman Lane site was the better of the two sites. He stated that there are many issues that need to be resolved in the next stage of review. Mr. Johnson stated that 560 Bay Road had many issues including the visibility within the historic district, the traffic impacts and the storm water issues. The Kinsman Lane parcel has similar impacts, however, they are not at the same scope and scale as the 560 Bay Road site.

Mr. Johnson made a motion to move the 7 Kinsman Lane site forward to the next step. Mr. Tanzer seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. It was determined that Russ Stevens will discuss with the DPW Director the needs for the cemetery and DPW yard expansion. He will also ask the assessor to give them a value for the land.

Peter Clark requested that information pertaining to Kinsman Lane be put on the website. Mr. Wilson also requested that a flow chart regarding the sites that have been discussed by the Trust be placed on the website. Mr. Fox stated that he will put documents together for the Trust to review.

WINTHROP SCHOOL/COUNCIL ON AGING/PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING SITE - CONTINUED

Mr. Britton stated that they should continue their discussion of the consultant's report. Mr. Johnson stated that some of the information from the consultant's report was useful, such as storm water flows and the septic location. The discussion of the history of Hamilton was not useful. Their proposal that housing could be located behind Winthrop School raised issues, including what should happen to the school. However, this is not an issue for the Trust to figure out. The School Committee is currently putting together a master plan that is addressing key issues that need to be determined prior to the Trust making a decision on the site.

Mr. Britton suggested that the Trust could review concept plans. Mr. Johnson stated that the Trust was looking for sites that could be developed quickly. He noted that Patrick Reffett had put together a list of things that needed to be done prior to development. He believes that the site could not be developed quickly. He also noted that anything that was done on the site would need Town Meeting approval. He noted that there was a large petition opposing the development of the site, which indicates that it may be difficult to get through Town Meeting.

Mr. Britton inquired about the public will to solve problems. Mr. Wilson stated that he does not think that this is a matter of public will. He believes that the school committee should be consulted and noted that they are putting together a master plan. He noted that the development of the site would take time and be costly. Mr. Johnson stated that the complexities of the site would require its development to be more costly.

Mr. Britton noted that there was a civil engineer in the audience that was an expert on storm water issues. Dave Thompson stated that his background is in soils, hydrology and groundwater flow. He noted that the storm water goes into an infiltration basin in the rear of the site. This system is like a swimming pool without a bottom, but has a roof. This water drains through the ground to the Miles River. This water may be causing some of the water issues in the homes in the neighborhood. He noted that there are drainage issues. He noted that the storm water and infiltration system has mounded the water table. He recommended that the water be put into a twenty-four inch pipe that would take it directly to a stream and then the river in a matter of minutes. He believes that this will resolve the drainage and mounded water table issues.

Stephen Decatur stated that he believes that this plan would not resolve the issues. Richard Boroff inquired about the cost and noted that the pipe would go through several properties. He also noted that the development would increase the amount of the impervious surface of the site. Mr. Thompson defended his proposal and stated that it would eliminate the mounding of the ground water table. Neighborhood residents in the audience objected to the proposal. Mr. Johnson noted that this may be a good issue for the neighborhood to discuss and resolve, outside of the affordable housing proposal. Mr. Reffett noted that this is a DPW issue.

Ken Dixon read from the Town's Open Space Plan. He noted that the plan lists ten sites in the Town that are protected by a conservation restriction. One of these sites is the Winthrop School. Mr. Johnson inquired whether the consultants found out anything about this. Mr. Reffett stated that there was a rumor about this, however, they found nothing. They did not find a conservation restriction on file. Mr. Clark believes that the site is just on the list because it is a town owned parcel that already has a use. Mr. Johnson noted that this issue needs to be resolved.

Andrea Massos stated Mr. Britton has incensed the neighborhood residents by engaging the engineer to make a presentation, have perc tests done on the site and telling people that he would like to live there. Mr. Britton stated that he lives in a big house on a farm and has no intention of moving there. The engineer came to the meeting on his own to make the presentation and the perc tests were done through the consultant's study. Ms. Massos stated that people are upset by Mr. Britton's actions talking with people as a private citizen and then sitting on the board as its chair. She believes that he should recuse himself. Mr. Johnson does not believe that Mr. Britton has a conflict of interest. Ms. Massos stated that people are upset that Mr. Britton has had plans drawn up.

Jeff Melick stated that a project on this site would need to be approved by Town Meeting by a two thirds vote. He does not believe that this project would be approved by Town Meeting. He believes that there is a lot of traffic congestion in this area. The project would require the installation of a traffic light at Bay Road and Asbury Street. The residents of the Town do not want to see the increased congestion, nor do they wish to have a traffic light. He does not think people are going to vote to turn a playground into housing. The nature trail is precious to the neighborhood. If it is lost, they will never get it back. People will not vote to lose it at Town Meeting. He believes that the storm water solution is not as easy as it sounds. He does not think people will want to see large buildings in the center of Town. He noted that Town Meeting did not vote for the Central Avenue affordable housing project. He believes that affordable housing on the Winthrop School site would also be voted down.

Jan Tuscano suggested that the affordable housing be located at Mr. Britton's farm. Mr. Wilson stated that he is hearing that the people of the neighborhood do not like any of the proposed scenarios for a development on the site. Mr. Britton noted that there seems to be an adverse reaction to the consultant's report. He questions whether a portion of it should not be accepted or whether the entire site should be removed from consideration as a location for affordable housing. Mr. Johnson stated that the list provided by Mr. Reffett is extensive. He does not think they can ask the school committee to come back with an answer within a five month period.

Mary Beth Lawton stated that the site is not appropriate for affordable housing as stated by the young families and the senior citizens in the neighborhood. There is no amount of discussion that will change the circumstances.

A man in the audience inquired about the lease for the school. Mr. Wilson stated that there are ten years left on the lease. It was noted that a project could not happen on the site quickly. Mr. Wilson requested that Mr. DeFranza give the Trust a reaction to the sites that have been proposed and suggested that there should be a joint meeting between the Trust and the Board of Selectmen to discuss the sites. Mr. DeFranza stated that Harborlight is looking at all of the sites. They would be happy to come back to the Trust and the Board of Selectmen to discuss the sites.

Mr. Johnson stated that he does not believe that the issues on the site will go away. The site does not seem as attractive as it seemed previously. They went through an extensive process to evaluate the site. He does not think that the site should proceed forward to the next step.

Mr. Tanzer stated that the site is the only smart growth site that the Town owns. Mr. Johnson stated that the smart growth concept does not fit very well for Hamilton. He believes that smart growth often means to locate a project downtown and accessible to public transit. However, it may be inappropriate in this case.

Cindy Harrison stated that she believes in affordable housing, just not in her back yard. She noted that 87% of the cities and towns in Massachusetts have not met the

10% affordable housing mandate. She noted that 60% of the cities and towns are below 5% affordable housing and 57 towns have no affordable housing. Many towns are in the same position as Hamilton. The Trust should not be pushing affordable housing on historic neighborhoods.

Mr. Wilson stated that he believes that the Town needs to find locations for affordable housing, including implementing the approved production plan which calls for fourteen units per year. However, he does not believe that this site should go forward. Mr. Britton suggested that they handle it the way 560 Bay Road was handled. Mr. Wilson stated that at the current time, the site is being used for a good purpose, however, they should keep an eye on it for the future. Mr. Johnson suggested that before the Board of Selectmen and the School Committee should keep them aware of their needs when the lease comes up for renewal. Mr. Britton stated that the lease is defective. The Town of Hamilton should get together to discuss the lease. Perhaps at that time future needs could be discussed. They concurred that the lease agreement should be reviewed.

Russ Stevens stated that he is concerned about locating many pedestrians and cars together from a safety perspective. He is not in favor of putting a road with a lot of cars close to a school. The intersection is the worst in town. He is concerned about adding more traffic to the area. Downtown Hamilton is already too congested. The schools are very highly rated. Parents like having playgrounds associated with the schools. He does not think that the site should move to step 3. For the bigger picture, the schools need to make a plan for the future. For right now, the site is not an appropriate site for affordable housing.

Mr. Reffett made a comment in defense of the consultant's work. The report stated that the site is very complex and would be very expensive to develop. However, at the request of the Town, they put together a plan for where housing could go. The report had a lot of good elements to it.

Mr. Johnson made a motion that the Trust does not forward the site beyond Step 2 of the process. They should look to the school committee regarding the future of the site. Mr. Britton seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

NEW BUSINESS

Bob Curry stated that every site has abutters who object to affordable housing in their neighborhood. Every site has issues. There are national contractors who are looking for sites to build large affordable housing projects. With affordable housing only at three percent, Hamilton is vulnerable. The Town needs to figure out how to create affordable housing. The Town should be looking for smaller clusters of units. He explained that there is a land owner at Longmeadow that wants to build 150 units. This project will override zoning and the state will allow the project to be constructed.

Mr. Wilson noted that that if the Town does not take action, outside developers will take action. It is important to complete their process. Ms. Lawton requested that

the Trust rescind their letter regarding Longmeadow and reverse their position regarding the limitation of the number of units on the site. She believes that the Town will be in trouble if Harborlight leaves the site. Mr. Wilson stated that he still believes that 108 units are too many for the Longmeadow site. He is interested in what Mr. DeFranza has to say.

Mr. Clark stated that there is concern regarding storm water drainage to the Miles River. He suggests that the Town should purchase the Longmeadow site to create more grass fields for the high school that could be rotated, instead of having the proposed turf fields. This would be better for the environment.

Scott Maddern explained that while the process is difficult, it is necessary to go through. The Town is changing. Twenty-five percent of Town residents are seniors, and this population is growing. There is a need for affordable senior housing. It is important to have this process so that the Town can maintain control over the production of affordable housing. Other towns are looking at Hamilton to see how this process and the host community agreement are working. The threats at Longmeadow are real. The process needs to move forward.

Greg McKenna stated that the Trust needs to post more information on the website. The status of all the sites should be on the website.

There was a short discussion on an appropriation for staff for fiscal year 2017 and 2018. It was determined to put this on the agenda for the next meeting as a specific agenda item.

Mr. Britton requested that they discuss an engineering study for the Gordon-Conwell site on the next agenda. This study should not exceed \$10,000.

Mr. Johnson suggested having a process where they only consider new sites two or three times a year. It was decided that this should also go on the next agenda.

Mr. Wilson suggested creating a working group with neighbors from each site to do work between meetings. It was decided to put this topic on the next agenda.

It was determined that the next meeting would be held at the Hamilton-Wenham Library on February 2nd at 6:00 p.m. Mr. Britton moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:50 p.m. Mr. Wilson seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

