

LONGMEADOW STUDY GROUP

MINUTES OF MEETING

October 2, 2017

Members Present: Joe Amico, John Cusolito, and Bill Wilson (co-chairman).

This meeting was called to order at 6:40 pm at the Hamilton Town Hall.

Bill Wilson said the Affordable Housing Trust (AHT), School Committee, and Selectmen had all met and discussed the Longmeadow topic. The AHT met and agreed to commit a total of \$600,000 for two projects including, \$300,000 for 20 senior housing units on Willow St. and \$300,000 for an undetermined site. The HDC and abutters of Willow St. had come together in agreement regarding the senior housing proposal. Andrew DeFranza had replied to the Request for Proposal (RFP) coupling Willow St. with Longmeadow because Willow St. did not support itself. The closest proposal was the family units proposed at Longmeadow with flexibility dependent upon the Town's contribution of funds. The AHT agreed to Willow St. by name and a second project, without naming Longmeadow due to the Citizen's Petition by each of the two Towns and the School District. Legislature required that the topic be considered.

Rick Mitchell had informed the Board of Selectmen regarding the lack of decision by the November Town meeting. If the Town did not make a decision, the Hamilton Development Corporation (HDC) would reject the RFP that was answered by Harborlight because Andrew DeFranza was unable to proceed without the second property. If Mr. DeFranza released his site control, it would go back to the landowners. The property owners had submitted a letter stating a private developer would develop a more dense (150 to 200 unit) development.

According to Rick Mitchell, both Towns indicated that they did not have an interest in the property and the Recreation Committee had a plan for fields that were being permitted. Mr. Mitchell said the School might want to use the land for a new school building. Reportedly, Dr. Harvey wanted to explore an elementary school compound. It was agreed that the property would not be available again but it was discussed that the School might not need all 15 buildable acres. Andrew DeFranza wanted to develop a partnership with the School, allowing him to develop four or five acres and allowing the School to study the remainder of the property that he would maintain control over. The School would not be able to study the land if Harborlight did not maintain control of the site as control would return to the landowner.

While an elementary school might be considered for the site, it was determined that it would take 12 to 18 months for MSBA to determine if they would fund the new project and ten years for construction. Rick Mitchell reiterated that he wanted the School and Harborlight to form a partnership allowing affordable housing development on a portion of the land and the School time to study their need for the remainder of the land.

Jack Lawrence suggested that the committee should be concentrating on the school issue rather than affordable housing at the Longmeadow site. According to Mr. Lawrence, the AHT had discussed two other sites for linkage including the COA and library field, which would both feature smart growth principles. Mr. Lawrence did not think the Town had the collective will to consider other sites. Mr. Lawrence noted that the landowner of the back two parcels had been clear that if affordable housing was built on the front site, he would build 140 units on his two parcels. Mr. Lawrence hoped the Committee would look for the best interest of the School and the Hamilton Wenham community and not be bogged down with the housing issue. Mr. Lawrence said adding 40 or 60 units would only be a drop in the bucket of the required quota and hoped the Committee would not be rushed into judgement for Fall Town Meeting.

Bob Curry (Bay Road) recalled that Kurt Miller owned the road that accessed 1A and that Mr. Miller's lawyers had indicated that if anything was constructed on the front parcel, Mr. Miller would build 140 units out back. The construction of a 30 to 40 unit project in the front would beget a much larger development behind it. Mr. Curry wondered if the site control was nailed down to give latitude to build 30 to 40 units.

Andrew DeFranza said he had site control over the back two pieces and discussed taking control of the front. According to Mr. DeFranza, he had a verbal agreement that if any projects were completed out front, Mr. Miller would give rights to the driveway if Harborlight did the improvements to the roadway, which they would. Site control would end in April 2019. Mr. DeFranza thought that the School could take Harborlight's place as long as they were agreeable to the timeframe because Mr. Miller wanted multiple years to remain on the property. Bill Wilson added that eminent domain would not work as the price would be about \$3M.

The decision to have a time limit was based on the RFP issued by the HDC who would not approve the RFP if the Town did not approve the linkage. Rick Mitchell said the charter of the Longmeadow Study Committee was to determine if the School or Town needed the land. The Committee did not need to get into the affordable housing detail. The two Towns said they had no interest and no new playing fields were needed, according to Mr. Mitchell. The School Committee needed to make a decision, which the HDC supported.

In response to a Longmeadow abutter asking about the HDC developing the Willow St. parcel, Rick Mitchell responded that the HDC would develop the land for market rate housing rather than affordable units.

Andrew DeFranza noted that Kurt Miller wanted to stay on the property for seven years. The sale would not be accelerated due to the development of the Farnham parcel.

David Wanger said the FinCom had e-mailed questions to the Longmeadow Study Committee including a capital forecast for the Town, current indebtedness, capital forecast for the School and the School liability for OPEB. Mr. Wanger asked if the Committee had considered questions of funding. Bill Wilson responded that funding was hard to quantify until the project moved from abstract to concrete. Mr. Wilson recalled that both the School and Town capital plans did not

include the acquisition of the parcel. Mr. Wilson added that the schools were older, but the Town already contributed 85 acres of land to school use. Mr. Wanger noted the land acquisition would be a two town purchase.

Jack Lawrence referred to the decline of school population and the reversal of responsibility between Hamilton and Wenham, noting that the forecasts were not accurate. Mr. Lawrence discussed the costs to operate obsolete buildings and how attractive bonding rates were currently. Mr. Lawrence made suggestions about expanding the Buker School and relocating the Superintendent's offices.

David Wanger said the school building potential was contingent on State aid, which would not be known for an extended period of time. Rick Mitchell responded that it was simple in that the School needed to make a statement that they wanted the opportunity to do due diligence for school infrastructure at Longmeadow. The School needed to determine if they wanted ten acres reserved for a period of time in partnership with Harborlight to determine if it was financially viable. If the School did not make the statement, Harborlight would lose control and no due diligence would be completed. Harborlight's control would expire before knowing if State aid was available.

It was debated if the turf field would handle all the field needs in town. The Recreation Committee wanted a turf field and track that would not be completed for a long time as fund raising was set for \$5M. The Gale Report indicated the need for a turf field and track as well as an increase in the number of fields after that. The participation in town sports had increased exponentially with soccer and flag football. The need for additional playing fields had not decreased and a big complaint in the Gale Report was the maintenance of grass fields. It was agreed that the turf fields at the high school would not answer the need for a rapidly growing sports population in town.

Adjournment

Motion made to adjourn at 8:13

Seconded.

Vote: Unanimous in favor.

Prepared by:

Marcie Ricker

Attest Date