

HAMILTON DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

MINUTES OF MEETING

June 27, 2018

Members Present: President Brian Stein, Bill Gisness, Rick Mitchell, Anthony Nickas, and Tom Goodwin

Coordinator: Dorr Fox

President Brian Stein called the Hamilton Development Corporation (HDC) meeting to order at 7:32 a.m. with a quorum present.

Tony Passaretti, 85 Linden St., attended the meeting.

Warrant for Bills

Mr. Stein presented a warrant for \$9,645.59, of which \$8,500 was for the presentation by Carol Johnson Associates. Other items included payment for the time of Dorr Fox and Mary Alice Cookson, and a small National Grid gas bill.

Tom Goodwin made a motion to approve payment of Warrant HDC-1824 in the amount of \$9,645.59. Bill Gisness seconded the motion. The HDC voted unanimously (5-0) to approve payment of the warrant.

Approve Minutes of June 13

Mr. Stein made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of June 13. Mr. Goodwin seconded the motion. The HDC voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the minutes as written.

Discussion with Andrew DeFranza, Harborlight Community Partners

As it stands, Mr. DeFranza said he thought the Hamilton Affordable Housing Trust (HAHT) might affirm the full \$600K to Willow Street at its last meeting. They didn't. He thought they may do it tonight, but doesn't know.

There are a few technical features they may have to change. There is a timing issue. The first amount of money they received three Aprils ago was restricted and there was a clock on it that they had to use the money within a certain period of time. It's likely they will vote for that funding, but again he's not sure.

Although the project price is \$800K, the HAHT only has \$600K. They'd have to go back to the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) for the extra \$200K. But Mr. DeFranza said he understands the CPC has mixed feelings so might not agree to granting the money. He added there's been a lot of activity surrounding people liking the original plan for 20 senior housing units. The HAHT is hearing some of that feedback. That raises a whole lot of other issues about a sister project to make that work.

Mr. Gisness asked who they were hearing that from. Mr. DeFranza replied he didn't think they were abutters; he thinks they are affordable housing advocates in Town, especially advocates for senior housing.

Mr. Fox said he received about a dozen letters Friday advocating that the Trust not spend so much money on the Willow Street project for only 7 units. Also there was support for doing 100 units at Longmeadow.

Rick Mitchell asked Mr. DeFranza if he had given up on Longmeadow. He replied Harborlight is assuming the Trust is not going to vote for anything there. Harborlight commissioned a market study (outside the community agreement) for 200 units at 80% market rate and 20% affordable. The numbers looked good. They contacted some for-profit developers to partner with or perhaps they will just let another developer do it. They are evaluating that site at that scale for that purpose, which is public knowledge, he said.

Mr. Goodwin asked if Mr. DeFranza could "sister" that project with Willow Street. Mr. DeFranza said no, if they go to 200 units at Longmeadow, there's no "sistering." He said the "A Game" was 20 units. They pivoted it to 7 units.

Mr. Passaretti asked: Aren't you still going to get sued? Mr. DeFranza replied it would be easier to stomach that experience with the 200 units. That would give them 40 units at 50% of median income.

Mr. Goodwin asked why not pose it as "either 40 units or 200 units"? Mr. DeFranza said they can't do the 40 unless the Town has use for the rear parcel. Mr. Fox said to acquire the property would take \$3M, but they could sell the houses there so it would only be \$1.5M.

Mr. Passaretti asked what would happen if the project became dead because they weren't able to get the additional \$200K needed from the CPC. He was told the \$600K would revert back. Mr. Fox clarified \$400K would revert back to the HAHT and \$200K would go back to the CPC.

Mr. Mitchell said the abutters to Longmeadow are not going to be happy with a project four to five times the size of what they thought they'd get. Mr. DeFranza said Harborlight didn't

really like doing 200 market rate, but would do it to get 40 affordable units. The rentals wouldn't be senior housing. There would be no age restriction. It would be 100 one-bedroom units, 70 two-bedrooms and 30 three-bedrooms. Plus there would be no local preference. Mr. Stein noted the original 108 units proposed a long time ago is starting to look pretty good.

Mr. Mitchell asked Mr. DeFranza what Harborlight would need to get to a yes on Longmeadow. He said they'd need a hard confirmation nobody was going to sue over the 40 units. The lawsuit from the front will be mostly procedural—that's painful, he said; but the lawsuit from the rear could involve access—that is substantive. Regarding whether they could get other access, Mr. DeFranza said perhaps they could.

Mr. Mitchell asked if it were Mr. DeFranza's intention to bring up the 200-unit idea. He said they already have brought it up in writing to the HAHT, Town staff, Board of Selectmen, etc., and have laid it out in some detail. Mr. Goodwin asked for a copy, but then when Mr. Fox said he had already sent it to them, he remembered seeing it. The HAHT meeting is this evening at 7.

Mr. Fox said he has a draft of the 7-unit agreement. They would have to issue a check next week as part of Saturday's warrant. They will need a revised agreement. He has sent a draft to the Trust. He assumes there will be some negotiation on it. He said he thought it might be good for the HDC to make a comment on whether they thought the 7 units should be approved. He said the CPC took a straw poll and wasn't supportive of granting the additional \$200K.

Mr. Mitchell said the interest of the HDC would be served if the HAHT approved the deal in that they would make money for the Town. They could approve it at \$600K, as Mr. DeFranza said he would take the risk for the extra \$200K. If they received the \$600K, the HDC would be out of the sale. He asked the others what they thought.

Mr. Goodwin said that was tough since he looks at the \$800K for 7 units and thinks they could have done better.

They discussed that Harborlight would then own the parcel, but if something fell through it would go to the HAHT. Mr. Mitchell said since the HAHT can't own property, as he understand it, the Town would own it.

They decided to take a straw poll. All but Mr. Stein (who recused himself) said they would vote yes. Then they discussed that clarifying their position in an official vote would benefit everybody. They came up with several versions of motions they could make.

Decision:

Mr. Gisness made a motion that the HDC approve the sale of the property at Willow Street to Harborlight Community Partners. Mr. Goodwin seconded the motion. The HDC voted (4-0) with 1 abstention.

Mr. Fox asked what happens to the \$2,500 check they had received as part of the RFP process, which was the 10% deposit. He was told to deposit it.

Mr. DeFranza left the meeting.

Downtown Improvements

The HDC went over some comments received at the public meeting at the library. They noted signage and banners ranked lower than some of the other items, but Mr. Gisness pointed out they still ranked as having more than 50 percent positive scores.

Mr. Goodwin noted the more affordable improvement items seemed to rank higher than some of the more expensive ones, such as burying the utilities.

A big theme was not to reduce the number of parking spaces. Mr. Nickas said if they remove the islands proposed, the amount of parking would remain close to what it is now. They discussed a need to have further discussion about parking on Willow Street. Mr. Goodwin commented there was space on Willow for angled parking. That's if it were made into a one-way street, the others added.

Mr. Nickas said he thought educating downtown businesses' employees about the importance of parking farther out and leaving the closer spaces for customers was important.

Mr. Mitchell mentioned some wanted to see sidewalks added in areas other than those they proposed.

Mr. Nickas wanted to know if they could now expand the work the landscape architects did to include an analysis of the parking. Mr. Mitchell said that would be the next step.

They discussed some comments received about the need to fix up the rest of Bay Road extending up to Patton Park. The State would become involved with that, which would drag it out timewise.

For now, they want to put together the parking analysis and also get the financials on cost (of the proposed improvements).

Tom Goodwin reminded them the rule is if they spend more than \$10K, they need to get three bids. Mr. Mitchell said he thought the matter needed more discussion than they had time for now and they decided to table it to the next meeting.

Mr. Stein asked Mr. Gisness to talk to Carol Johnson Associates about cleaning up the plans they had presented in light of input received. Mr. Gisness said he didn't think anyone would want to come in and do a parking study knowing Carol Johnson Associates already worked on the project.

New/Old Business

Mr. Fox said he was trying to figure out questions concerning the HDC's tax status as a non-profit. He needs documentation because issues have come up regarding whether taxes need to be paid to National Grid. The members discussed that they knew the HDC went through the process to be tax-exempt. There are 7 types of nonprofits, including a 501C4—municipal nonprofit. They thought the previous finance director would have that information in her files. Mr. Nickas said he has saved all his emails and may have the info.

Adjournment

Mr. Stein made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:40 a.m. Mr. Goodwin seconded the motion. The HDC voted unanimously (5-0) to adjourn.

Prepared by:

Mary Alice Cookson
Minutes Secretary

Attest

Date