

HAMILTON DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

MINUTES OF PUBLIC MEETING

December 12, 2018

Members Present: President Brian Stein, Bill Gisness, Rick Mitchell, and Tom Goodwin
Coordinator: Dorr Fox
Others Present: Town Manager Joe Domelowicz; Selectman Jeffrey Hubbard,
Community Preservation Committee Member Mimi Fanning

The Hamilton Development Corporation (HDC) public meeting was held at the Hamilton-Wenham Library at 6 p.m. for the purpose of presenting what has transpired since the last meeting and reviewing site planning concepts presented to the public by Carl Frushour of Carol Johnson Associates [landscape architects] and how to pay for them. This second meeting was primarily to update the community on cost estimates and potential funding sources and to seek community input. An estimated 21 people attended the meeting, including HDC members, residents, and downtown business owners; 16 filled out the sign-in sheet.

HDC President Brian Stein gave an intro about the purpose of the meeting and turned the floor over to Mr. Frushour, who presented slides of the chosen scheme (parallel parking). He described the proposed downtown improvements and their impact on improving safe pedestrian flow and accessibility. The scheme he presented showed the existing powerlines as they are, but he mentioned cost estimates were also given in the report/presentation for burying the utility wires. After discussing some of the cost estimates, he noted three potential funding sources, grants that were recommend by State Representative Brad Hill. These included MassWorks Infrastructure Program grants, a Community Development Block Grant, and the Massachusetts Complete Streets Program.

Public Comment

Paul Thober, owner of the Weathervane Tavern, wanted to know how the meals tax money is being used for downtown improvements. Mr. Stein said since 2012 the Town has voted that it goes to the HDC. It was used to purchase Mac's property and has been used for various things, such as the downtown benches, trash receptacles and the hiring of Carol Johnson Associates. The rest of the money is in the HDC account and can be put into this project. The HDC also has the potential to bond. The meals tax gives the HDC approximately \$65K per year. Mr. Thober said he was all for the meals tax going to downtown improvements if it will attract the people into the area. He didn't think purchasing Mac's

property was a downtown improvement. Mr. Stein said that was done to control what happened on that property. The Town had been trying to buy it for a long time. Mr. Thober mentioned there had been talk of putting a universal septic system in that area. Mr. Mitchell asked Mr. Thober's opinion of what is being proposed. He said he thought it was awesome. Mr. Mitchell commented the HDC was a five-member board of volunteers and things with Town government tend to move slowly.

* Parking— Mr. Thober said enforcing parking downtown is a big issue so commuters don't park there all day. He noted there isn't good signage in the municipal parking lot, which looks like it is Accord's parking lot. Tom Goodwin asked if Mr. Thober thought store employees would be willing to park farther away from the shops to enable customers to park closer. He said he has a parking lot for his employees and his staff is getting out late at night so he wouldn't want that so much unless it was really well lit.

Jack Davis, 57 Lois Street, was interested in whether the HDC would promote a place that serves something like a town center where people can gather and socialize. Mr. Frushour noted a few pockets where that could happen. He also talked about having some community events to promote that. In some cases, parking spaces can be taken away temporarily to provide open space where tables can be put out.

*Utilities underground—Mr. Thober suggested adding some secondary lighting in addition to the lighting that is at height level.

Robin Davis, 57 Lois St., thanked the HDC for their efforts. She noted Houndstooth is a new consignment store in Town that she'd like to see succeed to promote a retail shopping experience. She wanted to see if the improvements would take that next block where Houndstooth is into account. She said handicapped parking is a concern there. Also, there is some elderly housing just blocks away and those people might like to walk into Town, but the lighting isn't good and sidewalks are not safe. The uneven pavement and bricks in front of Timeless Interiors needs addressing, she said. Mr. Thober noted lighting is critical and he noted the Weathervane added lighting, which he pays for, in front of their restaurant.

Julia Maycock, 62 Willow Street, countered this. She thinks there is more than enough lighting, especially at 10 p.m. at night. She was more concerned about the sidewalks. The HDC discussed changing the angle of the lighting, making it point down more than out. She asked about the cost of hiring a grant writer. She said she was more concerned about the shops along Bay Road since the businesses on Railroad Ave. already have a lot of light. She asked how everything was going to be paid for. Mr. Mitchell said that's why the discussion was being held so they could build a consensus around what people would like to see and then figure out the cost and explore external funding options.

*Safety—One man mentioned the idea of changing and slowing down the speed limit for downtown. People have been killed on 1A, he said, and safety is a very big concern. Town Manager Joe Domelowicz noted the Town could perhaps pass an amendment that allows a different speed limit in posted areas. He will look into it and it would probably need Town Meeting approval. A new technology that lights up a crosswalk when someone is crossing was mentioned. These types of things and appropriate signage can be explored. Ms. Davis said she crossed at Cumberland Farms and cars don't stop when someone is in the crosswalk. She suggested a sign noting it is State law that they must stop. Ms. Maycock agreed. She said placing a policeman in the trouble spots for a while might help.

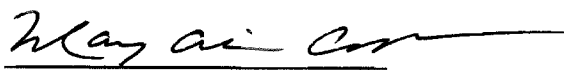
Mr. Gisness said the Town has sources of money it needs to research and needs to get the grants written and make sure the Town isn't going after the same funding. The HDC noted it was looking at like three to five years out for the process. Someone suggested getting more merchants on the HDC board.

It was mentioned that the project can be done incrementally in phases, perhaps tackling just the sidewalks first, for example. However, Mr. Stein said when the sidewalks are ripped up, they would need to lay the conduits and plan for the trees, etc., so a lot does have to be done at one time. All agreed that making some sort of progress would be good. Burying utilities can be paid for by adding money to one's electric bill, Mr. Mitchell added. It was noted that things have been looking nicer downtown with the flower baskets added. Mr. Goodwin discussed what's been done in Beverly and that the work was paid for through grant money.

Mr. Domelowicz said to be eligible for Complete Streets grants, the Town needs to become a Complete Streets community. Once accepted, the Town can start to apply for grants up to \$400K per round. He said he met with Secretary of Housing and Economic Development Jay Ash to talk about MassWorks in relation to downtown and other projects. The State looks at the MassWorks program as a way to incentivize housing, so adding more housing downtown could help facilitate getting a grant. One thing in the Town's favor is that it has never received a MassWorks grant. Some of the money is put aside to go to Towns of 7,000 people or less and there's talk of increasing that to 10,000 people or less. He does think they need to sit down and identify priorities for the Town. Someone brought up that sometimes those who provide grants have stipulations about what they want to be built and wanted to avoid that from happening.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:15 and attendees gathered to talk and mingle for about 20 minutes before leaving the library. Suggestion cards were distributed but no responses were received that evening.

Prepared by:



Mary Alice Cookson,
Minutes Secretary



Attest

12-19-18

Date