

Hamilton Affordable Housing Trust

December 10, 2018 – 6 p.m.

Town Hall

HAHT Members present: Chair Russ Tanzer, Marc Johnson, Joe Domelowicz, William Massos, and William Olson

Town staff present: Dorr Fox, Hamilton Community Projects Coordinator; Patrick Reffett, Director of Planning and Inspections

Russ Tanzer opened the meeting of the Hamilton Affordable Housing Trust (HAHT) at 6:02 p.m. with a full quorum.

MINUTES—OCT. 9, 2018

Marc Johnson made a motion to approve the minutes of the Oct. 9 meeting. Joe Domelowicz seconded the motion. The HAHT voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the minutes.

HOUSING PRODUCTION PLAN

Mr. Tanzer said the Town’s Housing Production Plan has expired. Director of Planning and Inspections Patrick Reffett explained it expired in April and is required by the State to be renewed every five years. As he was evaluating the scope after already having contracted with JM Goldson, (which includes Judy Barrett who took part in the writing of the Master Plan back in 2004), he learned a lot of the Master Plan components (data that would be compiled) actually parroted requirements that are part of the Housing Production Plan. Typically, the Production Plan can cost anywhere from \$25K-\$40K. He received a quote from Jennifer Goldson of \$16.5K. Using the same data from the same consultant for both plans will make the process go quicker and save money. He requested \$16.5K from the HAHT.

Mr. Tanzer asked how the Production Plan was paid for in years past. Mr. Reffett replied typically it was a stand-alone plan. Mr. Johnson said the last two were stand-alone plans with the last partially funded by the CPC and pushed by the Planning Board.

Decision:

Mr. Domelowicz made a motion to approve Mr. Reffett’s request to turn the housing section of the Master Plan into the Housing Production Plan as well.

Further Discussion:

The Planning Board received a \$30K grant from the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) for the housing element of the Master Plan. The amount being requested for the Housing Production Plan would be in addition to that. Mr. Reffett explained the Master Plan is a robust public outreach that gains info. from focus groups and public forums. It does have a focus on 40B and also looks at what the Planning Board refers to as “attainable”

housing. There is a wide demographic in Town at the poverty level, he said, and the plan looks at what the Town's housing stock can do to assist the existing population. Mr. Tanzer asked if the Town were obligated by The Commonwealth to do this. Mr. Reffett said it was an obligation about every 10 years. He said the State likes to have communities look at what the possibilities are and what they have pursued. Mr. Tanzer asked if it would be wise to involve the CPC. The response was that would require a Town Meeting vote. The HAHT is able to approve it and it does have the money on hand.

William Olson said having a plan was a State recommendation; the Town isn't fined for not having a plan. He said it's a way for the Town to protect itself and weigh projects so when things come before them they can ask: Is this within the plan or not? Mr. Johnson said the penalty for not having a plan in place is not getting grants.

Mr. Reffett noted that recently Ms. Goldson had prepared the Housing Production Plan for Wenham. Mr. Olson asked when a decision needed to be made. Mr. Reffett said by this meeting or the next. The HAHT discussed the timeframe for the Housing Production Plan and if it would affect the timeline for the Master Plan. Mr. Reffett said it shouldn't. The expected completion for the Production Plan would be in the summer.

William Massos commented that the plan needs to be more than an academic exercise and whoever does it needs to talk with the HAHT. He said the previous plan seemed unrealistic. He noted Boston is growing while Essex County is shrinking. Mr. Reffett talked about the process and said the plan gets approved through the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). Mr. Tanzer agreed with Mr. Massos that it shouldn't be an academic exercise. Mr. Massos said the previous production plan asked them to reach a goal of 14 affordable units per year and they haven't been able to even come close to that. Mr. Johnson detailed some history on how they arrived at that number. Mr. Massos said he was struggling with the process and that it forces them to come up with a number. Mr. Reffett said the DHCD expects them to have a target, which isn't always hit.

Mr. Reffett said in pursuing the Housing Production Plan now, the Town would have the good fresh data that will be part of the Master Plan. If they wait, the data won't be as fresh. Mr. Tanzer inquired whether the HAHT might get some reimbursement. Mr. Johnson said it was already CPC money. Mr. Fox noted one can't apply for a grant on work that's already been done.

Mr. Johnson said the Town doesn't know what Andrew DeFranza of Harbolight Community Partners will do and that will change the dynamics. Mr. Reffett said every plan needs to stand on its own and not be based on what-ifs. Mr. Massos said he liked the idea of saving money. His question was whether the plan was worth the \$16.5K.

Jack Lawrence, 105 Rock Maple Ave, expressed concern about the plan being based on old data since the latest U.S. census was in 2010. Mr. Reffett said there are other entities that keep up with demographics and they will use those and get the freshest data they can. Mr. Johnson discussed the Town's census and other data that will be used. Mr. Lawrence questioned the idea that Hamilton has an aging profile.

Bill Shields, 721 Bay Road, said based on the Town Clerk's annual figures, Hamilton hasn't grown and isn't growing significantly. Mr. Johnson agreed saying the data shows it is a shrinking town.

Decision (continued):

Mr. Johnson seconded the motion by Mr. Domelowicz to approve Mr. Reffett's request for \$16.5K to turn the housing section of the Master Plan into the Housing Production Plan as well. The HAHT voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the motion.

FUTURE PROJECTS AND NEXT STEPS

Mr. Tanzer said he researched neighboring towns that have affordable housing trusts and in Danvers, Ipswich, and Topsfield, the Town Manager or Town Administrator does not serve on the trust as a voting member. In some neighboring cities, the mayor does sit on the trust, but in those cases the mayor is also a resident of the city. Mr. Tanzer suggested the idea that Mr. Domelowicz (who's not a resident) not serve on the Trust. Mr. Domelowicz welcomed the idea. He said it would require a Special Act. Mr. Johnson said what he found awkward is that the Town Manager is generally neutral on issues and while serving on the Trust, he becomes an advocate for the Trust.

The HAHT discussed that the five-member Trust might become a larger number so it would be easier to have a quorum for the meetings. Also, they discussed the make-up of the Trust and who might be represented, such as someone from the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Council on Aging, and Housing Authority.

Mr. Shields said if they look at the Special Act or the Bylaw, they would find where it states that the Town Manager is a member and could change it. Changing the bylaw would mean going to Town Meeting in the spring for the change. Changing the Special Act would mean going to Town Meeting to take the first step toward making the change. The Trust charged Mr. Fox with putting something together and sending it to Mr. Domelowicz and then to Town Counsel Donna Brewer.

59 WILLOW STREET: Mr. Tanzer said he thinks he knows that Mr. DeFranza is still interested in purchasing Willow Street. He called on Brian Stein, president of the Hamilton Development Corporation (HDC), which owns 59 Willow Street property, for an update. Mr. Stein said Mr. DeFranza had proposed a 7-9 unit family housing development with a different funding mechanism than what is typical of a 40B at a pretty large ask (\$850K). The HDC is still open to it and is also looking at other options, as well. The neighbors seem to be OK with it. Mr. Domelowicz confirmed with Mr. Fox that Ms. Brewer had said they could amend the existing grant agreement to reflect the change from 20 units to 7-9 units.

Mr. Massos wondered if the Town could take it on and develop 20 units of senior housing with grant money. Mr. Fox said funding options are limited, the deadline for one grant, which was before Thanksgiving, was missed and a needs assessment would likely have to

be done. Mr. Massos asked if the Housing Authority would want to consider it. Mr. Domelowicz said Habitat for Humanity was looking to do another project and the Housing Authority had suggested wanting to acquire more property so either of them working on parallel tracks deserves more in-depth conversation. Mr. Fox noted that right now, the Trust has \$.5M in funds plus what was allotted to Willow Street in addition to the payment in lieu from Canter Brook, which means \$1.2M will be at their disposal. If they don't use the money allotted to Willow Street by June 30, it goes back to the CPC. Mr. Massos asked for a definition of "use." Mr. Fox said Harborlight would have been given the check and there would be a closing on the property. Mr. Massos noted Mr. DeFranza's plans keep changing and there is a large difference in the cost per unit at 7 units vs. 9 units.

Mr. Lawrence brought up the idea discussed at previous meetings of funding assistance for first-time home owners in exchange for putting a deed restriction on properties and then offering a way to buy their way out of it.

As far as the Harborlight project—Mr. Domelowicz said the Town had the opportunity to do a project that's largely supported by the community and is at a lower price per unit than they've done previously. Mr. Johnson said they'd need to see an actual plan. Mr. Stein suggested telling Mr. DeFranza they wanted him to do 9 units for \$850K and ask for a plan. Mr. Tanzer added the Trust should specify the number of units and price per unit (which would be about \$94K). Mr. Tanzer said it isn't just the count that's involved but how it falls into parameters for the project. It was agreed Mr. Fox would contact Mr. DeFranza and ask him to come to the January meeting. (The HDC has an extension that runs through January.) Mr. Olson said there would be a concern about height. They speculated whether the project would be a by right or 40B.

The next meeting date was discussed and set for Jan. 3 at 6 p.m. at Town Hall. Mr. Fox will invite Mr. DeFranza to the meeting. If he can't make it the HAHT would like him to send a written proposal.

Mr. Lawrence wanted to know the impact to the tax base and how it would be sold at Town Meeting. Mr. Domelowicz said it was his understanding that Town Meeting does not want to spend Town money on affordable housing and it wasn't his will to go back there. They assured Mr. Lawrence it would be a positive impact to the tax base. Mr. Domelowicz said they can work with the Housing Consortium on the first-time housing assistance and it wouldn't require a major investment from the Trust.

Mr. Stein left the meeting.

Mr. Tanzer suggested they circle back and look at Town-owned assets, for example, giving more thought to the Patton property. The Patton Homestead is getting things rolling, he said, so maybe some veterans' housing there could help with the viability of that site. He doesn't know if it would be rentals or sale. Mr. Olson asked if veterans housing counts as affordable.

Mr. Tanzer noted the restrictions in Town, which include the wetlands, the high cost of land and the lack of availability of land. Mr. Olson asked if they might get some other 40B developers to come in. Mr. Domelowicz said there is a developer wanting to do a large 40B project at a property on Gardner that backs up to Bay Road. The developer claims he wants to do it as a friendly 40B.

The HAHT discussed that Don Preston of Habitat for Humanity would like to come to the next HAHT meeting to talk about the two houses completed as well as potential future projects. The Trust expressed pleasure with the quality of the work that was done and the nice touches there, such as solar hot water.

59 WILLOW STREET (DISCUSSION OF HARBORLIGHT AFFORDABLE FAMILY HOUSING PROPOSAL)

Already discussed under the Future Project—Next Steps agenda item.

PAYMENT OF BILLS

Decision:

Mr. Olson made a motion to approve payment of a bill from Town Counsel for \$41. Mr. Johnson seconded the motion. The HAHT voted unanimously (5-0) to approve payment.

Mr. Fox noted the CPC authorized its chair to sign the smaller bills so such votes weren't needed. Mr. Domelowicz suggested a motion to designate the HAHT chair to sign bills for amounts up to \$1K.

Decision:

Mr. Johnson made the motion to authorize the HAHT chair to sign bills up to \$1K. Mr. Domelowicz seconded the motion. The HAHT voted unanimously (5-0) to accept the motion.

Mr. Reffett left the meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Domelowicz made a motion to adjourn the meeting at approximately 7:36. Mr. Olson seconded the motion. The Trust voted unanimously (5-0) to adjourn the meeting.