

Hamilton Affordable Housing Trust

March 5, 2019

Memorial Room, Hamilton Town Hall

HAHT Members Present: Chair Russ Tanzer, Marc Johnson, Joe Domelowicz, and William Olson
HAHT Members Absent: William Massos
Town Staff Present: Dorr Fox, Hamilton Community Projects Coordinator

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

MINUTES—JAN. 31, 2019

Mr. Tanzer made a motion to approve the Jan. 31 minutes. Mr. Johnson seconded the motion. The HAHT voted unanimously among those present (4-0) to approve the minutes.

GORDON CONWELL ANR PROJECT (BRIDGE STREET AND MILES RIVER ROAD)

Town Manager Joe Domelowicz introduced what he said was a late addition to the agenda, saying developer Peter Conant [of Own A Home MA] had engaged with Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary to purchase the property and had spoken with him and Director of Planning and Inspections Patrick Reffett about it. Now Mr. Conant was making himself available to discuss the project.

Mr. Conant said he signed a Purchase and Sale with Gordon-Conwell last week for the 20 acres that Gordon-Conwell had divided off. He has been an affordable housing developer for the last 40 years using the 40B process. He is semi-retired. He and a colleague did a housing study behind Winthrop School about two years ago and he has since kept an eye on Hamilton ever since. His plan is for 43 single-family homes. The area is in Zone 2 and per Title 5, the 860,000 square foot site allows for 86 bedrooms or 43 two-bedroom units. There are 210 apartments nearby, up on the hill, that serve Gordon's student body, but you can't really see them from below. He said the site plan lays out well and with evergreen screening added, he didn't think people would be able to see the homes from the bottom of the hill.

He had a rough plan to show the HAHT. He said typically a project like this would generate about one or two cars per minute. He said he left a corner of the land as open space, where he could perhaps put a playground. Getting up to the site might be an issue because the access road is close to where the pump station is and it's a very steep part of the hill; it's where the water tower is. Of the 43 homes, 11 would be sold at affordable rates (at present that is about \$215K for a single-family detached home). The other homes would sell for

double that at market rate, but they're still pretty affordable. He said he's starting to do his due diligence with the Town and wants to meet with the neighbors as soon as possible. He thinks because of the low visibility and low traffic impact, he doesn't see it being a big impact but he acknowledged the neighbors may feel differently.

Mr. Olson clarified that all 43 homes would be for sale; they aren't rentals. Mr. Tanzer asked if the 11 or so homes would be deed-restricted in perpetuity. Mr. Conant said yes, and that 7 of them (70%) could be earmarked for local preference.

HAHT members gathered around the table to review the plans. Mr. Conant pointed out the access road, emergency access road, and groups of homes. Mr. Johnson asked why they would be houses rather than apartments or condos, noting that the site's opposite corner (Bridge & Woodbury) is probably the densest in Hamilton. He thought the plan was a lot of footprint. Mr. Conant said he needs to sell them and detached homes are more attractive to buyers. The units don't have lots, per se. They have a walk-out basement, a one car garage with two parking spaces outside, and two bedrooms. There would be a condo association. The market price would be in the high \$400Ks to the low \$500Ks.

Jack Lawrence, 105 Rock Maple Ave., raised the question of water and drainage, and run-off from the hill. Mr. Conant pointed out where Gordon has a catch basin. David Thompson, 103 Essex St., supplied some details about a section of the hill that he says "bleeds water." He noted where the Town had put in a French drain. Mr. Conant said he hadn't done a perc test yet, but they had dug down and found no water. His sense is that if they can get the water into the ground it would drain well.

Mr. Lawrence asked why Mr. Conant couldn't do a mix of rentals and affordable homes. Mr. Conant said he doesn't do rentals. He detailed other projects he's done. When asked about duplexes, he said they are hard to sell. People would rather have detached units. He said the State has asked for three-bedroom units, so he could perhaps do some of those. The plans are flexible. He is privately funding the project. Mr. Lawrence said he thought that if they were all condos, they would all count toward 40B. He thought he heard that from developer Doug Trees, 557 Bay Road. The others didn't think this was correct. Mr. Fox will check it out.

Mr. Fox said he thought there was a concern about ledge there. Mr. Conant said not what he's found.

Mr. Johnson clarified that there wouldn't be an ask from the HAHT for this. Mr. Conant said no. They discussed the Planning Board's policy about wanting developers to talk with them first and Mr. Conant has agreed to reach out to the neighbors. Mr. Olson asked if he would stay with the project until it was all sold. Mr. Conant answered yes. Mr. Olson asked about the schedule and they said it looked like it would be early April for filing a PEL.

Mr. Thompson said the neighbors will be concerned about run-off water and ground water management. Mr. Johnson said light pollution will be another concern. There was a discussion that there used to be a ski hill there.

Mr. Tanzer noted it would be good to have a sketch of the elevations showing what it might look like. The project's title on the map was "The Hillside in Hamilton."

DISCUSSION ON GORDON-CONWELL TASK FORCE STATUS UPDATE

Mr. Tanzer gave an update on the Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary Task Force of which he is a member. Chair David Smith wasn't able to attend the meeting. He said the new President of the Seminary was due to start working in early April. The Task Force had asked the Trust to "stand by" regarding hiring a consultant to help them with the land use questions that they have. The Seminary has a list of people who could be their counterparts to the Town's Task Force. Mr. Johnson pointed out that the sale that was just discussed could change things. Mr. Tanzer said yes, so the message is to stay tuned.

DISCUSSION ON 434 ASBURY STREET

Mr. Tanzer recapped that Phil Marcorelle had reached out to the Town to see if the HAHT would be interested in purchasing his property. There is a cell tower on it. Some of the Trust members had visited the site a couple of days after their last meeting, about a month ago. Mr. Domelowicz added that Marcorelle had said he's willing to sell the property at its assessed value (not market value) if the Town uses it for affordable housing. The assessed value, according to Mr. Tanzer, is \$209K. The appraised would be considerably more. Mr. Domelowicz gave some details about the property. It fronts Asbury Street, abuts Asbury Grove, and backs up all the way to the Ipswich River. There are three lots there next to each other. Part of the lot is where the cell tower is. The land is slopey, he said, but there is enough land to put housing at the front of the parcel. The number of bedrooms that might work there is approximately 10. It is about 2.5 acres in Zone 2. Mr. Domelowicz said he would like to have as many units there as possible (to count toward the Town's 40B goal).

The Trust discussed the setbacks that might be needed and the wetlands and slope there. Mr. Tanzer noted that it needed to look at the driveway situation, which is quite long, at the front of the property. They didn't know if the road there was a roadway or just a driveway. Mr. Fox was under the impression it was an approved subdivision road. Mr. Johnson wasn't sure. Mr. Olson pointed out that it shows as a road on the map. If the project were a 40B it would need to have frontage. If it is a road there (rather than just a driveway), then it would have frontage.

Mr. Johnson asked the question whether the HAHT, not being a developer, understood the risks enough to lock up the sale. Putting it under contract is one thing, but actually buying it was another. They discussed the logistics of locking up the property until they can get a developer. Mr. Fox asked whether the Trust would have to go to Town Meeting for approval to buy it. Mr. Johnson thought it would require Board of Selectmen approval not Town Meeting approval. Mr. Domelowicz said he would look into clarifying that. He was concerned about the liability to the Town. Mr. Johnson is under the impression that the Trust would get an option on the land and would fund the partner who developed it.

Mr. Tanzer said he was curious to know whether Don Preston of Habitat for Humanity would be interested in having a discussion about it. Mr. Domelowicz said Mr. Preston had expressed interest in finding another parcel in Town. The Trust charged Mr. Tanzer with reaching out to Mr. Preston to gauge his level of interest.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Olson asked if the HAHT had voted on the language for the warrant article regarding the changes on the makeup of the Trust. Mr. Fox said he had sent them a redlined version. At the last meeting, the HAHT had voted to enter the following into the minutes:

The Trust shall have five (5) voting Trustees at all times and the Board of Selectmen shall appoint the Trustees. All Trustees must be residents of the Town of Hamilton, Massachusetts at the time of appointment and at all times throughout the Trustee's term. At all times at least one of the Trustees shall be a member of the Board of Selectmen. In making such appointments, the Board of Selectmen shall endeavor to provide a broad-based membership including legal, banking, financial and real estate professionals, other members of the local business community and affordable housing advocates. The Town Manager shall serve as a sixth Trustee, without the authority to vote.

Decision:

Mr. Johnson made a motion that the HAHT vote to accept any reasonable changes that the Board of Selectmen might make to the article. Mr. Domelowicz seconded the motion. The HAHT voted unanimously in favor among those present (4-0) of accepting the motion.

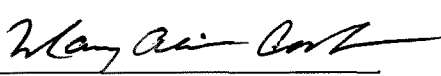
Mr. Fox said he will send the HAHT a clean copy of the language. He will also confirm that they don't have to wait on the State for it to take effect (since it doesn't need to go to the Legislature as Mr. Tanzer understands it) provided Town Meeting approves it.

The next HAHT meeting was set for April 25 at 6 p.m.

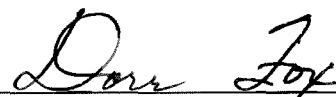
ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Domelowicz made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:55 p.m. Mr. Johnson seconded the motion. The HAHT voted unanimously among those present (4-0) to adjourn the meeting.

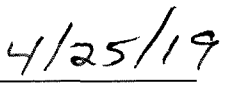
Prepared by:



Mary Alice Cookson



Attest



Date