

HAMILTON DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

MINUTES OF MEETING

Memorial Room, Hamilton Town Hall, 577 Bay Road

June 12, 2019

Members Present: Rick Mitchell (President), Anthony Nickas, Bill Gisness, and Tom Goodwin

Members Absent: Brian Stein

Coordinator: Dorr Fox

Rick Mitchell opened the Hamilton Development Corporation (HDC) meeting at 7:30 a.m. Board of Selectmen (BOS) Chair and liaison to the HDC Jeff Hubbard was in attendance.

Warrant for Bills

Mr. Mitchell presented Warrant #HDC-1930 for the monthly management fee, staff work, and payment for the geranium plants downtown.

Anthony Nickas made a motion that the HDC approve Warrant #HDC-1930 in the amount of \$3,285.60. Bill Gisness seconded the motion. The HDC voted unanimously among those present (4-0) to accept the motion.

Approve Minutes

Mr. Gisness made a motion to approve the May 29 minutes. Tom Goodwin seconded the motion. The HDC voted unanimously among those present (4-0) to approve the motion.

Downtown Improvements

Mr. Mitchell attended the Shop Local (business owners') meeting at 15 Walnut last Wednesday. He said the businesses were pleased with the Street Fair and excited to hold it again next year. Also they discussed planning an expanded version of the merchants' Christmas stroll where they'd like to have a trolley conveying people back and forth between Hamilton and Wenham. He had suggested to the group that they approach the local banks for funding. The merchants' thought was that planning the Street Fair went fairly quickly so there wasn't enough time for the health agent to process the forms, but they weren't complaining. They hope more food and alcohol trucks will take part next year.

Mr. Gisness inquired about the HDC's involvement. The HDC paid for the insurance, coordinated permitting with the BOS, and arranged Police Dept. detail, which was provided free this year.

Dorr Fox noted there was positive interest in the HDC's new website previewed at the 15 Walnut meeting. Mr. Mitchell explained to Mr. Hubbard that the HDC is paying for a new website page. Mary Alice Cookson showed the page she has been editing. Mr. Fox explained the Google map was removed because it was difficult to read and they are just using a map contributed free of charge and drawn by Tim Neill of Allied Conservation. In addition to the map, the website page has business listings, directions to the shops, and links to the businesses' websites. Mr. Fox and Ms. Cookson were told by the site developer Alexa Lucci that grouping the businesses by category wasn't possible, but it was decided to ask the question again as perhaps it can be done for an additional fee.

The page and tab to access the page are being titled "Shop Local." Mr. Goodwin brought up the importance of driving people to the site and asked how they would be doing that. Mr. Fox and Ms. Cookson explained the site is being linked to Shop Local's Facebook page, which is gaining traffic from the business community. Also on the page will be a "Contact Us" tab for businesses to update their listings and provide notices of upcoming events. Cost to the HDC for the website page is \$2,500, excluding HDC staff time.

On an unrelated matter, Ms. Cookson noted the large lighted Christmas tree done by the bank last year was less than attractive. She showed a photo and wondered if the HDC might become involved to help it look better, perhaps involving the DPW [Department of Public Works]. The HDC said the Shop Local group should approach the banks regarding it. Mr. Mitchell said it would be nice to light up some trees, maybe about five or six, in Patton Park; however, the park is not in the commercial district and therefore is outside of the HDC's jurisdiction. He told Mr. Hubbard that if this idea were something the Town might be interested in, the HDC could perhaps donate money to the Town.

59/63 Willow Street

Mr. Mitchell discussed the status of the RFQ [Request for Qualifications] for Willow Street. They had asked the three consultants that were selected to give them a fixed price. The price was \$18K for legal services and \$30K for architectural. The HDC is currently under budget at \$48K, but they haven't heard what the civil engineering will be.

Mr. Gisness wondered if they might need a traffic study. Mr. Mitchell wasn't sure. He suggested they talk with Patrick Reffett about it. Ms. Mann's quote mentioned obtaining ZBA [Zoning Board of Appeals] approval, but that probably isn't necessary except perhaps as it may pertain to setbacks. Assuming that the specs and costs received by the HDC are reasonable, they might not have to meet with the consultants. Mr. Mitchell said he hopes to have them engaged by July 1 and start site plan review by the end of Sept. They think the project will amount to about 20 bedrooms depending on the septic and most likely be rental properties.

Mr. Gisness asked about the current rent collection situation at Willow Street. Mr. Mitchell said yesterday he met with two gentlemen, Chris French and Nate McLaughlin, who would like to rent the space. The tenant continues to say he will pay but hasn't. He owes rent plus utilities. He has left a desk and computer monitors at the office. Mr. Mitchell said they could change the locks. He needs to find out what the HDC's rights are.

The HDC discussed a need to figure out what they are going to do with the building. It is rustic. The bathroom lacks privacy. At a minimum they thought they should patch or replace the roof. Mr. Mitchell will talk with Harborlight about the roof.

Discussion of Associate Members to the HDC

Mr. Mitchell updated Mr. Hubbard that the HDC would like to have downtown business reps. on the board since the HDC is about business development. Angela Arvenites, who runs A Monogram Shop on Railroad Ave. and is on Hamilton's Open Space Committee, and Chad Smith, president of the Rotary Club and a Mariano Smith and Co. realtor, also on Railroad Ave., are the candidates.

Mr. Mitchell asked the attorney if they needed to rewrite the bylaws to allow for associate members and was told to bring them on in an informal, nonvoting capacity, and then as members resign they can become full-fledged board members. He anticipates two HDC board members, Mr. Gisness and Mr. Goodwin, may resign by year's end.

Decision:

Mr. Goodwin made a motion to approve the two candidates, Ms. Arvenites and Mr. Smith, as associate, nonvoting HDC members. Mr. Nickas seconded the motion. The HDC voted unanimously among those present (4-0) to approve the two new members.

Mr. Fox will invite them to the next meeting.

Budget

Mr. Nickas passed out copies of the budget and said he wanted to make sure they knew where the HDC stood based on actuals through May. The columns showed the actual budget, available budget now, and his projections through June 2020, as well as the variance to the budget. In the Consulting Services category, they are off by \$13K from the budget last year. He separated out staff costs vs. consultants' cost, such as Carol Johnson (landscape architects) and Stirling (the website developer). Mr. Mitchell noted they had originally agreed to pay the Town for services the Town provided, but Town Manager Joe Domelowicz had discovered the Town hadn't been collecting that for a couple of years. The HDC paid back \$4,730 to the Town through April 1. He said in the future they should budget \$6K to reimburse the Town. They are ending the fiscal year with a balance of \$67,804 cash. Mr. Gisness said he thought before the year's end they should repair the roof so it's done before the winter.

The consulting line item was \$15K. Mr. Mitchell suggested they make it \$18K. There is a separate line item for the consulting services associated with the Willow Street permitting. Mr. Nickas had budgeted \$100K and said he knows they will get to \$80K easily. Mr. Mitchell said they will most likely have to do a traffic study to be sensitive to the neighbors in the vicinity of the project. Also, landscaping could be extra, although the civil engineering firm can most likely handle it.

Mr. Fox pointed out that the warrant the HDC approved today isn't yet reflected in the budget report.

They discussed the idea mentioned earlier about lights for the trees in Patton Park for the holidays. They may have \$2.5K-\$3K left over that they can spend.

The HDC speculated on what they might make after the property has gone through site plan review and been sold. Mr. Goodwin said it was appraised at \$900K and some of the numbers were over \$1M. Mr. Nickas said they bought it for \$600K and were putting \$100K into it. So they might net about \$300K that they can use for downtown improvements.

Mr. Goodwin said by they should have the actual numbers from Meridian Engineering (the civil engineering consultant) soon. He will make the change they discussed.

New/Old Business


At the next meeting the HDC will vote to approve the proposals from the legal, architectural and civil consultants selected for the Willow Street permitting project. They will also welcome their new associate members.


Adjournment

Mr. Goodwin made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:23 a.m. Mr. Nickas seconded the motion. The HDC voted unanimously among those present (4-0) to adjourn the meeting.

Prepared by:


Mary Alice Cookson


Attest


Date