

**Hamilton Affordable Housing Trust**

April 25, 2019

Memorial Room, Hamilton Town Hall

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

Town Staff Present: Dorr Fox, Hamilton Community Projects Coordinator; Patrick; Reffett, Director of Planning & Inspections

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Russ Tanzer opened the meeting of the Hamilton Affordable Housing Trust (HAHT) at 6:03 p.m. with a quorum present. He announced there would be a hard stop at 7 p.m. 13 people from the community attended.

MINUTES—MARCH 5, 2019

Mr. Johnson said he sent edits to Dorr Fox. The Trust postponed voting until he and Mr. Fox could check that the changes were made. Later in the meeting they noted “86,000” in the second paragraph needed to be changed to “860,000.” Then they voted on the minutes.

Mr. Olson made a motion to approve the March 5 minutes as amended. Town Manager Mr. Domelowicz seconded the motion. The HAHT voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the minutes.

DISCUSSION ON PETER CONANT PROJECT (BRIDGE STREET AND MILES RIVER ROAD)

Peter Conant, who now controls the Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary site, is proposing to develop 43 two-bedroom homes. He said he intends to take advantage of the State law for affordable housing. He said they received an accurate survey done with a drone and have more information regarding drainage and other issues. He will submit a PEL (Project Eligibility Letter) soon. He discussed that his project won't be visible from the bottom of the hill and wouldn't have much of an impact on traffic.

The HAHT had received a copy of a two-page letter addressed to the CFO of Gordon-Conwell from Glenn Vivian, 262 Bridge St., which had been an effort to try to halt the sale of the property. In addition, they'd received a copy of a six-page letter from Mr. Vivian's lawyer, which Director of Planning & Inspections Patrick Reffett said expressed concerns over the project as it was proposed. Mr. Reffett noted the project is in its infancy. Mr. Conant responded that the items brought up would be addressed by him and the environmental engineer.

Mr. Johnson said they had asked Mr. Conant for renderings showing the aesthetics. While waiting for copies of the drawing to be passed out, the HAHT asked Mr. Conant questions. He confirmed the homes will be sold; they are not rentals. There will be two- and three-bedroom units.

Mr. Tanzer noted a Host Community Agreement was put together by the Selectmen outlining a process for how the Town and friendly 40B developers can work together. He also noted the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) have a policy/guidelines. Mr. Conant said he was agreeable. Mr. Johnson responded that the process involved a collaborative approach that can't be done in two to three weeks before a PEL. He explained it meant walking the site, identifying criteria important to the Town, public outreach in terms of the site and its design elements, and arriving at a project the community would embrace both before and after it's built. Mr. Reffett added it was voluntary. He said Town Counsel had said it was a great approach if a developer were amenable. Mr. Tanzer noted the HAHT hadn't really gone through the process yet except in the case of the two Habitat for Humanity homes.

Mr. Conant asked if the policy included how long the process should take. He said he wanted to make sure he and the Town knew each other's expectations and didn't want the process to continue for years. Backing things up a few months was also something he said he might push back on. While seeking HAHT support, he said he is basing everything on requirements of the State law and found this site meets the criteria. Once the PEL is filed the clock starts ticking, the Trust noted, but Mr. Conant stressed he would have the ability after filing the PEL to make changes in the project.

Mr. Olson said he wanted to see an overall site plan and asked a time frame. Mr. Conant said he will have it in about a month. (He will need it for filing the PEL.)

Mr. Tanzer confirmed with Mr. Conant that he's seeking the HAHT's blessing as well as that of the BOS, the Planning Board, and ZBA. Mr. Tanzer said he isn't comfortable saying he's good with the project not knowing the big picture. He asked Mr. Conant for more information for the Trust to take a look at, including a build schedule, as the Habitat for Humanity project had dragged on for a long time and they wouldn't want that to happen again. Mr. Conant said he's not a nonprofit and would get things moving.

The Trust reviewed stats: 11 units would be affordable. Mr. Domelowicz inquired if Mr. Conant could give them 12. He replied he would take a look.

Joseph Roberts, 164 Bridge St., asked if the drawing was what the houses would look like because on that slope he doesn't see how it can look so flat. He was concerned it would take a long time to prepare the site before houses are even built. Mr. Conant said there are cuts and fills that will be done, which aren't reflected on the drawing. Angela Roberts, 164 Bridge St., said traffic would be dangerous coming down the hill.

Mr. Conant said they were talking about issues that hadn't yet been addressed. He said he spent six hours looking at the traffic generated by Homestead Circle, a loop of 42 homes,

which is nearby. It generated 40 cars a day, which is about one every three minutes. Mr. Tanzer said there would be a requirement for an actual professional traffic study. Mr. Johnson added the study would identify safety concerns, volume, and grading. The volume and grading won't be as big of an issue as safety.

Brad Haley, 80 Bridge St., agreed, saying he is most worried about safety. He said lines of sight there are awful and ground water seeps on top of the road, even on dry days. When it freezes it causes accidents, he said. He works at home and said there are spots where cars slide off the road and hit poles and trees. He asked if Mr. Conant would put in a traffic circle as part of his budget. Mr. Conant said he would consider. He also responded he didn't anticipate any blasting would be done in response to Mr. Haley's noting that there was a gas pipeline located there.

Amy Cavilla, 233 Woodbury St., said she thinks the four-way stop at the end of Woodbury leading onto Essex Street will be a problem with blind drives and poor lines of sight. Mr. Domelowicz said the Town is already looking at that intersection and will do that whether or not this project goes through. It was brought up that a couple of years with construction equipment on the road would make it in worse shape than it is already in. Mr. Domelowicz said Bridge Street is near the top of the Town's list [for road repairs/maintenance.] Mr. Tanzer reiterated all these pieces will be looked at in the professional traffic study. Mr. Reffett said one of the important things traffic studies do is a forensic evaluation of all the accidents that have happened, what contributes to them, and how they would address that.

Christopher Small, 180 Bridge St., said he has repeatedly heard Mr. Conant describe the project as being invisible, but for people living there, unless there is a great deal more trees planted for screening, it will be very visible. They would see all the houses, especially at night, so he said it was a mischaracterization to say the properties will be invisible. Mr. Johnson responded that those were issues that would be addressed through the Planning Board process.

The Trust thanked Mr. Conant and he left the meeting.

Don Preston of Habitat for Humanity hadn't arrived yet so the HAHT moved to the next agenda item.

#### DISCUSSION OF HAHT BYLAW APPROVED AT TOWN MEETING

The bylaw changes, which passed unanimously at Town Meeting, aren't yet approved by the State and won't take effect until then. The changes are that HAHT members have to be residents; Mr. Domelowicz will become an advisory, non-voting member; and while the composition remains at five members, the quorum number was dropped to three.

#### FINDING NEW (HAHT) MEMBERS

The Trust discussed that the Board of Selectmen (BOS) will need to appoint members to replace Mr. Domelowicz, as well as Mr. Johnson who has resigned. Tonight is his last Trust

meeting. Mr. Tanzer will write a letter to the BOS to inform them of the vacancies. Mr. Olson noted the BOS was reassigning its liaisons to board and committee so he could perhaps be reassigned. He was encouraged to talk with new BOS Chair Jeff Hubbard and request to remain as the BOS liaison to the Trust.

While changes concerning Mr. Domelowicz's membership won't take place until approved by the State (probably in about a month or two), the Trust can ask the BOS for an immediate fill of Mr. Johnson's position. Mr. Domelowicz said he will get this on the BOS agenda for May 6. Mr. Tanzer said the Trust would be seeking committed members.

#### FUTHER DISCUSSION ON BRIDGE STREET PROJECT

The HAHT discussed that the Bridge Street project would only pick up six toward the 40B count. They also talked about the pricing. William Massos thought the affordable cost of \$215K seemed low (but the Trust doesn't set that). Mr. Johnson said a developer of a 40B was not allowed to make a return of more than 20 percent above cost and had to return profits above that to the town. Mr. Domelowicz said that could result in money for roads. However, he noted they were talking about a project that wouldn't break ground for another 18 months or so and the market will have changed by then. The Trust discussed current trends and that real estate cycles don't tend to last long.

Mr. Johnson noted this project wouldn't give the Town safe harbor. But Mr. Domelowicz said there was value for the Town to show to the State they're working on affordable housing, plus there is the tax benefit that comes with the addition of the 30 homes [43 minus the 11 affordable]. They discussed housing's impact on the schools and their numbers.

#### DISCUSSION ON 434 ASBURY STREET PROJECT

Although the meeting was to have a hard stop at 7 p.m., the Trust agreed to extend the meeting to talk with Mr. Preston who had just arrived.

Mr. Tanzer said the property owner on Asbury Street had said he would like to sell his land at the assessed rate if it could be used toward affordable housing. Generally speaking, he said the idea looked manageable, and the Trust had reached out to Mr. Preston of Habitat for Humanity to see if he might be interested. The Trust gathered at the desk to review the plans with Mr. Preston. Mr. Tanzer described what he and Mr. Domelowicz had seen on their site walk this past winter: wetland and a bit of highland. Since then there had been conversation about additional area, he said. Mr. Preston confirmed it had gone from one lot to two. Mr. Preston pointed out Lot 1, which the owner would maintain. Lots 2 and 3 have area that's buildable totaling 187,000 square feet. They have drafted a proposal to knock down one of the houses and build seven units or 18 bedrooms. The asking price for the two lots is \$665K (which is the appraised value in 2015). Mr. Preston said the owner wants the price to be based on the appraised value not assessed value as was previously discussed. Mr. Tanzer noted this was a switch. Mr. Preston said the cost for the land was less than \$100K per unit.

Mr. Fox said the Trust has about \$450K in its coffers. Also the money returned to the CPC, although it is CPC money, it needs to go toward affordable housing. Also funding could come from Canter Brook's payment in lieu.

Mr. Preston and the Trust discussed that they first need to come up with a solution regarding the cell tower as the owner intends to maintain the tower and the parcel it is on. They would need to carve out access. They didn't know how long the lease was to the operator of the cell tower but will review the records.

Mr. Johnson said you can't build within a certain proximity of a structure so the plans may need adjusting. As it looked now, two families would be living under the shadow of the approximately 105-foot tall cell tower. Mr. Preston said it was just a rough draft. He said they had proposed seven homes to try to maximize the count for the town. Mr. Tanzer asked if it could be 8. Mr. Fox said they were limited to the number of the bedrooms because it is in a zone of contribution to a public supply well.

The Trust was hoping they could go back to a price based on the assessed value rather than appraised value and were interested in further discussion.

Mr. Reffett asked Mr. Preston if there were a way to speed up this project in light of the long delay with the previous project on Asbury Street. Mr. Preston said that had been due to the school (which supplies labor) missing the deadline and then letting out for summer vacation. He talked about how Habitat's homes are built, with special needs of the homeowners discussed from the outset and planned for. The owners take part in the building of the home, working 400 hours, which can be split among relatives, co-workers, friends, etc.

Mr. Fox asked if they should start working with Town Counsel Donna Brewer on a grant agreement. The Trust said they wanted to get the issue with the cell tower property resolved first. Mr. Massos volunteered to work on it. There's also the issue of the road to be looked at. With four homes, it would need to be paved.

#### OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Tanzer noted it was Mr. Johnson's last meeting and said he had been unbelievable about "sticking it out." Mr. Johnson said everyone on the Trust had contributed in very positive ways. They all thanked him for his hard work.

#### ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Tanzer made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:25 p.m. Mr. Olson seconded the motion. The HAHT voted unanimously among those present (\*4-0) to adjourn the meeting. \*Mr. Domelowicz had left the meeting just a bit earlier due to a family obligation.

Prepared by:

Mary Alice Cookson  
Mary Alice Cookson

Dore Fox  
Attest

7-23-19  
Date