

HAMILTON PLANNING BOARD
MINUTES OF MEETING
September 24, 2019

Members Present: Richard Boroff, Peter Clark, Janel Curry, Dan Hamm, Rick Mitchell (acting Chair), and Bill Wheaton.
Associate Members: Laura Walsh
Planning Director: Patrick Reffett

This meeting was called to order in the Memorial Room, Hamilton Town Hall, 577 Bay Road at 7:00 with a quorum established.

Master Planning – Discussion regarding Housing Master Plan Presentation.

Patrick Reffett said 35 individuals were present for the presentation, which focused on economics and fiscal analysis. Mr. Reffett wished for a better discussion of how the cost of land in Hamilton affected or prohibited housing development. Mr. Reffett had hoped the session would have discussed concepts that would allow the Board to create Zoning amendments in furtherance of the intended effort by the Board and Town. While the Master Plan contained the information, Mr. Reffett restated the Board's goal was to have the public understand and support potential changes to the existing By-laws to create a more diversified housing stock.

Janel Curry thought it was beneficial to discuss the economic pieces, which didn't appear to create a pushback from attendees. Ms. Curry thought it was a balanced meeting. Peter Clark appreciated Peter Britton's comments regarding his four or five acres available for development and wondered what kind of development could be brought forth there. Mr. Clark wondered what kind of developer could be solicited to come into town to change the nature of the housing stock. Rick Mitchell said the four goals were worth pursuing. In response to Mr. Clark saying that Canterbrook was attractive, Mr. Mitchell said the units were selling faster than anticipated. William Wheaton added that they were lower in price than Patton Ridge by \$100,000 to \$200,000. The units on 1A in Wenham were priced at \$1.4M.

Richard Boroff noted that Judi Barrett used information from the Superintendent of Schools that responded to marginal costs of additional children rather than using the average number of total students. Mr. Boroff said there were no new ideas presented. Laura Walsh added that no one appeared to oppose the concept of cottage housing and wondered why there had not been a focus on commercial development. Janel Curry discussed rezoning the Winthrop School property before there was a project.

Rick Mitchell said follow up should occur with Darcy Dale to see if the Selectmen were interested in having a conversation about what it would take to expand the Business District. Mr. Mitchell said the landfill should be revisited if the Con Com and Selectmen wanted to hire a civil engineer to map the property for vernal pools and wetlands to determine if there was access to

buildable uplands as no objective information had been available to date. A survey had occurred for the landfill, which was only three to four acres out of the 20 acre parcel, but not for the adjacent land surrounding it. Patrick Reffett said the solar panels on the capped landfill had been completely installed. Ameresco kept the gate closed to limit access to their solar fields for security purposes and the Hamilton Police Chief was interested in keeping the public out of the area as the shooting range was nearby and within the town owned property.

Rick Mitchell found there to be a lack of specificity regarding next steps to developing Zoning By-laws to obtain the ten-year housing goal. The first goal was to encourage a mix of housing types that were financially obtainable and included smaller housing units, accessible (handicapped) units, and rental options to attract new and existing residents. The second goal was to balance a diversified housing production with a small town feel including smaller scaled, well-designed housing developments and adaptive reuse of existing buildings including estate properties. Goal three was to promote housing in locations that would minimize impacts on existing open spaces, natural resources, and scenic views through creative site planning and adaptive reuse of existing buildings in areas that were already developed.

Mr. Mitchell said there were limited eligible properties available to reuse the existing buildings. Possibly 6,000 sf McMansions could be divided up, which was something to consider. Mr. Mitchell thought modifying the Open Space Farmland Preservation Development By-law might be useful. Peter Clark noted that no one had ever used it.

Goal four of the proposed Master Plan text promoted a maximization of existing resources such as staff strategically and put more CPA funds toward creative housing ideas. Rick Mitchell said the Affordable Housing Trust was currently accomplishing this goal.

Janel Curry thought the discussion regarding rental property amenities and their relationship to higher prices was interesting because rental units would not create as much revenue for the Town. Ms. Curry wondered how the proposed downtown development, which had some amenities would be affected. Rick Mitchell said Judi Barrett had used a template to determine that the building would be revenue positive, neutral, or negative. William Wheaton noted that the condos down the street sold for \$600,000 with private garages and that the proposed apartments would probably only sell for or be valued at \$250,000. Mr. Mitchell said income and profit values would be used. Ms. Curry said rents would likely be in the \$1,800 to \$2,000 range. Discussion ensued regarding various capitalization rates. Mr. Mitchell said the supplementary detail, which outlined the capitalization rate for the downtown proposal would be posted online.

William Wheaton said the marginal cost numbers were close to what the FinCom had assumed. Mr. Wheaton said the assumption of how many students would be considered per unit across the various sized units and categories made no sense and was contradictory. Mr. Wheaton noted that according to the report, bigger units had one-fourth fewer children than smaller units. Mr. Wheaton thought it would have been the opposite. Mr. Wheaton continued that the report

ignored the fact that anyone who wanted to live in Hamilton would have moved here to take advantage of the schools and would have children. Mr. Wheaton said he had written Patrick Reffett an e-mail stating he had disagreed with the financial assumptions made throughout the report and that he was concerned about the fiscal impacts. Mr. Reffett said he would distribute the e-mail to Board members. Rick Mitchell said he wanted to ensure that all Board members were working with sound data.

Rick Mitchell suggested the Board tackle the Open Space Farmland Preservation By-law in an attempt to preserve open space. Peter Clark recalled that there might not be enough parcels to use the By-law. Mr. Mitchell disagreed. Mr. Clark said he had hoped the consultants would have reviewed the assessor's data to determine how many parcels were available and how many were protected. Mr. Mitchell wondered if the Great Estate By-law was worth pursuing again. Mr. Mitchell hoped the FinCom would help guide the discussion to look at options and determine cost benefits.

Peter Clark suggested analyzing the effects of Canterbrook and Patton Ridge. William Wheaton suggested analyzing the Junction to determine how many school children were in the system from the development. Mr. Wheaton thought the Junction was more upscale than developments proposed in the Master Plan. Mr. Wheaton thought there might be three times as many students as was proposed in attached townhome scenarios of the Master Plan. Mr. Wheaton said one student per home would not come close to covering the cost of an average home. Mr. Wheaton wanted to see evidence that if the Town were to build higher density housing, would singles and seniors move in or would it be attractive for families with children. Rick Mitchell wanted to focus on new housing and not be concerned with the impacts of student cost alone. Mr. Wheaton wanted to focus on the fiscal impacts and economics of housing. While Mr. Mitchell said housing would be provided for singles, divorcees, and downsizers, Mr. Wheaton responded that it would provide senior housing for the region and referred to the Canterbrook local need offer wherein not one local senior had requested housing. Richard Boroff said he was aware of divorcees who had remained in town. It was agreed that data needed to be substantiated.

Rick Mitchell asked if providing housing for people from other towns was bad. William Wheaton responded that if the Town wanted to diversity the tax base, it would not be satisfying local needs and would not pay for itself. Mr. Wheaton said the best option for the Town would be to have a single woman living in a 6,000 sf house on ten acres who paid \$40,000 a year in taxes, which would be the same revenue as four or five families. The woman would not use services. Mr. Wheaton continued that proposals would take the ten acres and carve it up for families with children who would use services. Mr. Wheaton said infill developments must be done carefully so as not to raise the tax rate significantly. Mr. Wheaton cautioned about passing a By-law that allowed houses to be built on a small corner lot with children and no financial support. Mr. Mitchell said antidotal data would not help the discussion.

Peter Clark noted the 40 acre Cutler/Rich property that had been divided into eight to ten lots. Mr. Clark suggested investigating the revenue/cost basis of the development. William Wheaton said a \$1.5M home on a two acre lot would contribute \$30,000 per year. Rick Mitchell suggested reviewing a cost benefit analysis for cluster or Great Estate By-law developments. Mr. Mitchell said the Board needed objective data from a reliable source in an effort to avoid making assumptions that may or may not be true. Mr. Mitchell asked if the Board would support going to the Selectmen to request a consultant to review three options. Mr. Wheaton said the FinCom and he would approve of the endeavor. Richard Boroff recalled that Judi Barrett had said her projected numbers on previous projects in other towns had come true. Mr. Boroff suggested using experience from other towns and data from Hamilton. Mr. Wheaton said the Urban Land Institute had information. Mr. Mitchell said it would be important to be able to say that the data had been substantiated. Mr. Clark hoped to obtain Tom Ford's information for the Esdaile property.

Board to review/sign decision text from previously permitted project for the HW Regional High School athletic fields.

Patrick Reffett recalled that the Parks and Recreation Department approached the Board with a \$9M proposal that included artificial turf fields, bathrooms, ADA accessibility, lighting (eight to ten 80' tall lights), and a running track at the high school. The School hoped to develop the proposal incrementally but wanted the entire proposal approved. Hamilton Site Plan Review approval was valid for one year. The original approval was dated September 5, 2017 but a decision had not been written. Mr. Reffett would write a decision based on notes. Mr. Reffett thought it was important to have an understanding of the scheduling of use on the fields. William Wheaton noted that artificial turf fields had been considered 25 years ago. Longmeadow was not being considered. Mr. Reffett said the Schools wanted to have the ability to renew the approval based on how much funding they had at a particular time to allow for construction over time. Mr. Wheaton said the extension was appropriate if no changes had occurred but otherwise the discussion should be reopened.

Board Business

Minutes

Janel Curry moved to approve the minutes of September 10, 2019.

Seconded by Dan Hamm.

Vote: Unanimous in favor.

Adjournment.

Motion made by Peter Clark to adjourn at 8:12.

Seconded Dan Hamm.

Vote: Unanimous in favor.

Prepared by:

Marcie Ricker

Attest

Date