

**Hamilton Affordable Housing Trust**  
Teleconference

July 30, 2020

HAHT Members Present: Chair Marnie Crouch, David Smith, and Jamie Knudsen

HAHT Members Absent: William Massos

HAHT Coordinator: Patrick Shannon

Town Manager: Joe Domelowicz

*\*This meeting was teleconferenced via Zoom with all of the above participants remaining at home.*

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ROLL CALL

Affordable Housing Trust (AHT) Chair Marnie Crouch opened the online meeting at 6:01 and took a roll call. David Smith and Jamie Knudsen were present. There was a quorum.

WELCOME NEW MEMBER AND LIAISON FROM THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN (BOS) JAMIE KNUDSEN

Selectman Jamie Knudsen introduced himself. He said he had attended some AHT meetings and thought diversity in housing was important for the Town.

WELCOME NEW AHT COORDINATOR PAT SHANNON

Mr. Shannon summarized his background, which includes working for municipal government in Colorado. In addition to his role with the AHT, he is Assistant to the Town Manager and Community Preservation Committee (CPC) Coordinator.

INTRODUCTION OF HUNTER CARROLL, AN APPLICANT TO FILL THE OPEN SEAT ON THE AHT

Ms. Crouch introduced Mr. Carroll and invited him to tell about his background and interest in affordable housing. He said he had a background in insurance, had worked in a nonprofit regarding U.S. race relations, and was switching back to insurance to open a franchise. He said the AHT provided an opportunity to lead the way on justice issues and create an environment of equality so that anyone may live in Hamilton.

DISCUSSION WITH MARY BETH LAWTON, DIRECTOR OF COUNCIL ON AGING (COA)—  
*Ms. Lawton wishes to present ideas about satisfying the Town's need for senior housing*

Ms. Crouch referenced Ms. Lawton's background in working with seniors and noted she had served on the BOS in Bridgewater. Ms. Lawton said she and Director of Planning & Inspections Patrick Reffett had spoken about the need for more senior housing in Hamilton, which the AHT has encouraged, but the State's recent emphasis has been on family affordable housing rather than senior housing. She cited statistics from the Town's 2010 Housing Plan: Hamilton had nearly 2,000 seniors comprising more than 20% of the population, and of those 65 and older, almost 43% of them live in poverty (the poverty threshold in 2010 was about \$9,367). She said she wanted to create opportunities to find a vehicle to allow seniors to age in place at home and if that was not possible, to remain in the town where they had raised their children.

She cited a zoning bylaw change progressing through the Senate that would do away with having to have a 2/3 majority vote at Town Meeting and instead require a simple majority. Ms. Crouch clarified that the zoning law had passed both the House and Senate, but said it was unlikely to go to Governor Charlie Baker's desk immediately for signing because of other provisions in it. She said the proposed new law might just be pertinent to smart growth options, but said that was unclear.

Ms. Lawton noted Hamilton now has a young group of individuals interested in affordable housing. She said creating housing through building was difficult because of high construction costs. She said she wanted to look at other creative ways, such as by repurposing existing buildings, purchasing land and partnering with a developer to create housing, and by changing zoning bylaws to create a different density. She said she would like to see the AHT become more collaborative and create a dialogue to find opportunities, and she applauded Mr. Smith's work with the Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (GCTS) Task Force.

Ms. Crouch and Ms. Lawton discussed cottage-style clusters or villages for seniors. Ms. Crouch said Canter Brook is like that, although lacks the affordable element. Some history of the cottage housing bylaw defeated by a previous Town Meeting was discussed. Ms. Lawton will provide some information to Ms. Crouch. Ms. Lawton brought up things being done in other towns, such as seniors living together in single family homes, and said that Taunton had turned an old school building into senior housing. Ms. Crouch noted that often how an idea is presented rules the day.

UPDATE ON GORDEN-CONWELL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY PLANS TO SELL ITS HOUSING UNITS—*David Smith, AHT member and chair of the GCTS Task Force will report on latest developments*

Mr. Smith discussed his continuing dialogue with the GCTS president about promoting a better relationship between the Seminary and Town using social interactions. Mr. Smith noted two GCTS objectives of interest to the AHT: GCTS selling off the 20-acre parcel on the north side of the campus abutting Bridge Street, which was consummated, to help with GCTS's immediate cash needs, and selling 210 campus residences to developers to own and

manage with the idea that a portion would become affordable housing credited to the Town's Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI), a portion would be for student and faculty housing, and another portion would be market-rate units. Mr. Smith stressed patience and persistence, saying this kind of a deal is complicated and takes time to negotiate, but he said he remains optimistic the endpoint will be satisfactory.

Ms. Crouch said she believed the two GCTS representatives who appeared before the Planning Board were men of their word and shared Mr. Smith's optimism. She noted GCTS's financial pressures could put its accreditation at risk so there is impetus to make something happen. Mr. Smith commented on his other dealings with the Seminary in his role as Board of Health chair. Ms. Crouch asked whether there might be an opportunity for senior housing on campus; Mr. Smith said that remains to be determined, but some of the affordable units would most likely go to seniors.

UPDATE ON OBTAINING AFFORDABLE HOUSING RESTRICTIONS IN PERPETUITY FOR UNITS LOCATED AT 270 ASBURY ST.—*Marnie Crouch will apprise the Board of recent developments.*

Ms. Crouch updated the AHT on the two Asbury Street units built by Habitat for Humanity, which are not on the Town's SHI. She has been researching the situation. The two unit owners had moved into the units before they had obtained the deeds recorded on May 1 together with a master condominium deed. Former AHT Chair Russ Tanzer was unaware that the units were condominiums. The deeds should have been coupled with riders that mandated they would be affordable in perpetuity. When she looked at the Registry of Deeds, she came across a deed restriction for 20 years with respect to 270 Asbury St., and a deed restriction for 30 years signed by former Interim Town Manager Robin Crosbie. Ms. Crouch also found an agreement executed in November 2016 by former Town Manager Michael Lombardo and Habitat as well as the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) representative. That document said the units would be condominiums and that the restriction on resale to the qualified buyers would be in perpetuity. That agreement was not recorded with Registry of Deeds until after May 1, 2019. There should have been a rider to the deeds with the affordability covenants, but it did not happen. Corrective deeds and riders that require affordability in perpetuity now been provided. Ms. Crouch said steps were now being taken to have the units included in the SHI and many lessons were learned, which need to be applied to subsequent dealings.

Ms. Crouch noted Ms. Knudsen was a lawyer. He commented he had been present at the previous AHT meeting at which Habitat's Executive Director Don Preston had been present. Mr. Smith said what this discussion tells him is that in the future there must be a competent legal expert on the AHT assigned to track the paper trails for any arrangement the Town enters. Ms. Crouch said she and Mr. Shannon had discussed updating records and keeping detailed records so agreements may be enforced long into the future.

UPDATE ON THE TRAGGORTH COMPANIES, LLC'S WILLOW STREET PROJECT

Ms. Crouch said she spoke Hamilton Development Corporation (HDC) President Rick Mitchell who said Traggorth Companies, LLC, filed its application in a timely manner with the DHCD, using a housing initiative program as one component of their funding need totaling \$1.7M. If that and all the other funding sources are in place, it would add 18 units to the Town's SHI. The AHT granting \$500K toward the project is contingent on every other funding piece being in place and also on Traggorth providing a subordinated note and mortgage. Before the funds are released, Town Counsel will need to review the documentation and assure the AHT that the project is well-funded and can be brought to completion. She said the developer has a good track record and she was optimistic. She said Mr. Mitchell told her that David Traggorth was planning to reach out to the Willow Street neighbors.

#### REPORT ON THE AMOUNT OF AHT FUNDS ON HAND

Ms. Crouch reported the AHT currently has \$842,585.54 and expects another \$217,500 in December from Canter Brook. \$500K has been committed to Traggorth Companies for Willow Street. The AHT had not committed to fund the Habitat for Humanity project, 434 Asbury St., at this time as it would involve \$700K to acquire the property and another \$300K toward the construction of 10 units.

Mr. Smith said he had first supported the Habitat project, but since then wants to wait for the project at GCTS. The GCTS project provides the option to increase the Town's SHI by about 50 units at no cost to the Town, which is much preferable to the Town spending \$500K to \$1M (which it does not have) to fund 10 units.

Mr. Knudsen asked whether anything had been committed to the new Habitat project. Ms. Crouch said yes, the Town advanced \$35K to Mr. Preston to get an extension on the Purchase & Sale agreement with the owner of the property. She said at that time, the Town was unaware that the properties at 270 Asbury St. were not on the SHI. The Town hasn't committed any additional funds to Habitat. She is hoping Mr. Preston will proceed with the project and obtain other funding sources.

#### BOARD BUSINESS

Ms. Crouch discussed the idea of a rental assistance program funded by a CPC grant. The idea had been discussed by the CPC recently and will be going before the BOS. Ms. Crouch looked at similar programs instituted in other towns and had some questions: Is there a need for such a program? Can the AHT use the CPC monies it already has for the purpose of rental assistance or would that have to go to Town Meeting for a decision? Mr. Knudsen said there is interest in finding out about this, but he is just now getting up to speed on it. Ms. Crouch said there would be a lot of oversight required and wondered how it would be set up—as a lottery system, for example. She didn't think the AHT had the capacity to oversee it. People would need to be able to apply online and other issues would need to be worked out. She would like to discuss it at the next meeting.

She said she wanted the AHT to think of ways of helping people on a smaller scale. For example, perhaps the AHT could help seniors who are house rich but cash poor to add to their income by the dividing of their homes into affordable condo units. She asked the AHT members to let her know if they had any specific agenda items they wanted to discuss.

APPROVE MINUTES FROM THE JUNE 10, 2020 MEETING

Because Mr. Knudsen wasn't a Board member at the last meeting, there was no quorum to approve the minutes. Town Manager Joe Domelowicz confirmed the minutes vote will need to be postponed until the next meeting.

Mr. Knudsen noted an error in the minutes under Adjournment: The roll call vote should read: "Mr. Massos" rather than "Mr. Olson."

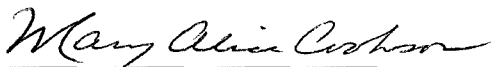
SCHEDULE NEXT MEETING

The next AHT meeting date is Wed., Aug. 26, at 6 p.m.

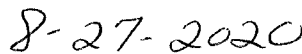
ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Smith made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:10 p.m. Mr. Knudsen seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken with "ayes" from Ms. Crouch, Mr. Smith, and Mr. Knudsen, (3-0) unanimous among those present.

Prepared by:



Mary Alice Cookson  
Minutes Secretary



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Date

