

Hamilton Affordable Housing Trust
Teleconference

August 26, 2020

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

HAHT Coordinator: Patrick Shannon

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

ROLL CALL

Affordable Housing Trust (AHT) Chair Marnie Crouch called the online meeting to order at 6:06 and took a roll call. All AHT members were present at the start of the meeting except for William Massos. Town Manager Joe Domelowicz was absent from the meeting.

APPROVE MINUTES FROM THE JUNE 10 AND JULY 30, 2020 MEETINGS

The AHT deferred the June 10 minutes vote because Mr. Massos had not yet arrived and Mr. Knudsen was not eligible to vote because he was not on the AHT on June 10. (*The vote was taken later in the meeting.)

David Smith made a motion to approve the July 30, 2020 minutes. Jamie 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.

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

Ms. Crouch said she was aware of the Board of Selectmen’s role in the selection of the AHT member but unaware she was expected to write a letter to the BOS to indicate whether the AHT supported the candidate. She asked Mr. Carroll to expand on what he said at the last meeting about why he wants to be on the AHT. He explained he believes affordable housing is a key way to create policies for justice and a Town that is open to people of various socioeconomic status and racial status. He said he also appreciated the Town’s need for senior housing. He talked about his work in the insurance industry and nonprofit field and said he wanted to leverage this experience. He said he also had had a real estate license at one point in his career.

Ms. Crouch said it was helpful that members brought skills to the table and listed the backgrounds of the other AHT members. She asked whether Mr. Carroll had experience looking at appraisals of properties and large projects. He said he did not; however when she asked if he had done underwriting for construction firms, he said he had handled commercial claims for General Electric when he worked for Electric Insurance and had experience looking at the value of properties. Ms. Crouch asked if he were studying finance as part of pursuing a Master's degree and if called upon, could he evaluate which development firm's financial capability was stronger over another. He said he could. Mr. Knudsen asked Mr. Carroll about the focus for his MBA. (Mr. Carroll is enrolled in the MBA program at Endicott College.) Mr. Carroll said the focus was entrepreneurship, but he is exposed to finance and accounting, as well.

Mr. Massos joined the online meeting.

Mr. Smith asked Mr. Carroll if he could help improve the AHT's webpage. He responded yes and that he had had extensive experience with web development in his previous work.

Ms. Crouch discussed a potential conflict of interest because Mr. Carroll lives on the Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (GCTS) campus. He said he would recuse himself from conversations pertaining to GCTS.

Mr. Massos discussed some of the Town's history with "not in my backyard" and noted that not every site is best suited for affordable housing. Ms. Crouch agreed and talked about this issue in light of the Town's water shortage and how development needed to take into account the Town's precious natural resources.

CONSIDER VOTE ON RECOMMENDATION TO THE BOS ON AHT APPOINTMENT

Mr. Knudsen made a motion that the AHT recommend Hunter Carroll to the BOS for appointment to the AHT. Mr. Massos seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken with "ayes" from Mr. Knudsen, Mr. Massos, Mr. Smith, and Ms. Crouch, (4-0) unanimous.

Ms. Crouch said she would transmit a letter to the BOS and would note her one concern with respect to Mr. Carroll residing at GCTS.

APPROVE MINUTES FROM THE JUNE 10, 2020 MEETING

Mr. Massos made a motion to approve the minutes of June 10, 2020 (discussed above). Ms. Crouch seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken with "ayes" from Ms. Crouch, Mr. Massos, and Mr. Smith, (3-0). *Mr. Knudsen did not vote because he was not on the AHT on June 10.

UPDATE ON POTENTIAL RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM—PAT SHANNON

Ms. Crouch said she had been working with AHT Coordinator Mr. Shannon. The moratorium on evictions and foreclosures in Massachusetts is set to expire on Oct. 17, but

she said it may be extended. Currently landlords are prohibited from terminating leases and sending notices to tenants to vacate the premises, and from imposing fees for missed payments. There is a form tenants can fill out if they become delinquent on payments to help stop the eviction process. She asked the AHT if it wanted to publish a notice on its website to inform residents of their rights. Mr. Massos said he was concerned that offering rental assistance for market rate units did not fall within the AHT's purview. He did not have a problem with posting the form and information on the website, but questioned whether the AHT should be involved in a rental assistance program.

Ms. Crouch discussed that the program would be funded through a grant from the Community Preservation Community (CPC). She noted that AHTs in other communities are behind rental assistance projects and said the AHT could spearhead it or act as advisors to the CPC if the CPC wanted to take it on. Mr. Massos said he was concerned about giving resources used to produce affordable housing to subsidize renters instead. Ms. Crouch said if the rental assistance program were to happen, it would be a separate request from funds for affordable housing. Mr. Massos said even so, the money would be perceived as going to the AHT and they would be subsidizing renters. He also wondered who in Town would apply for the program.

Ms. Crouch and Mr. Shannon provided some stats regarding housing in Hamilton: 83% were homeowners and only 17% of the 480 housing units in Town were rentals. The income of renters is significantly less than that of homeowners. Mr. Shannon explained that the idea was brought up by CPC Chair Jay Butler that CPC funds can be used for rental assistance and he was looking into the feasibility of the Town offering such a program. It was unknown how many would utilize it. He had included an analysis in the AHT's packet. \$1,162 is the gross median rent in Town. He said a conservative appropriation might be just over \$60K, or if they wanted a cushion, about \$66K. One way to administrate a program would be to join the North Shore Community Action Program (NSCAP), which would charge a fee.

Mr. Shannon said he discussed with Finance Director Marisa Batista that whatever entity requested the appropriation would make the requests and the funds would be drawn down as needed based on the number of requests. A check for the total would not be cut. He said parameters would need to be set for qualification and details would have to be determined, such as how many months of assistance would be given? Would the program cover the whole rent amount or a percentage of it? Would residents need to provide bank statements showing an inability to pay rent?

Ms. Crouch said one of the first questions the AHT needed to answer was whether there was a need. Mr. Massos noted people who are helped could still lose their apartments later on if they were still unable to pay their rent.

Ms. Knudsen said it might be a great thing for the Town to do, but he agreed with Mr. Massos that he didn't think the AHT should be the entity driving it.

Ms. Crouch said she was coming around to the point that the program would be outside the AHT's purview, but that the AHT could serve in an advisory role. Mr. Smith said the AHT is about affordable housing and the CPC is about community preservation and said rental assistance fell more under the category of community preservation. He said he was uncomfortable with the idea of the Trust administering the program.

Minutes Secretary Mary Alice Cookson said it was her understanding from having attended all the CPC meetings and taken the minutes that the CPC was not looking to take on the program on its own, but was just stating that funds were available for the purpose of rental assistance if another entity, such as The Hamilton Foundation or other nonprofit, wanted to bring a request forward. Mr. Shannon confirmed the CPC was talking about use of funds being available rather than advocating for the program themselves. There was a discussion about whether the Housing Authority might be involved. Ms. Crouch recommended taking the rental assistance program off the AHT table for now and if another entity steps forward to do it, the AHT can offer advice and information it has accumulated.

DISCUSS CPA FUNDING REQUEST

Ms. Crouch said the GCTS project was likely to happen whether or not the AHT contributed monetarily to it. She noted the AHT invested \$35K to permit Habitat for Humanity to have an extension to the Purchase & Sale agreement. Habitat had asked the AHT for \$700K for the acquisition of the property and another \$300K for the construction of 10 units. It was discussed that \$1M is a lot of money for 10 units when considering the potential for having more than 60 units at GCTS.

Mr. Knudsen noted the GCTS project was a big undertaking and said it looks positive, but may take years to happen. He suggested the AHT ask Habitat for Humanity Executive Director Don Preston to come back in for a conversation.

Ms. Crouch expressed that the GCTS was on a list of colleges having financial difficulties. There was talk about how long the project might take and what the timeline would be for getting the units on the Town's Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI).

Ms. Crouch said the previous Asbury Street project restricted deeds were recorded on July 28. The issue has been worked out, and the two units are now finally included on Hamilton's SHI. Mr. Smith congratulated Ms. Crouch on her work to make that happen. He reaffirmed his belief that the GCTS project would proceed, although he said it was an uncomfortable position not to be in the driver's seat and just be spectators.

Mr. Massos said it is his understanding CPC funds are only allocated a couple of times a year at Town Meeting. Right now the big project is the Town Hall renovation to which the CPC had awarded a grant of \$3M. The only other request so far is repair work on the steeple at the First Congregational Church. That project passed the eligibility hearing and a hearing on whether to fund the project will be held at the next CPC meeting.

Mr. Massos asked the question that if the AHT applied for \$200K, was it likely to get it. Mr. Shannon said the CPC would determine that, but it was Mr. Butler's recommendation that the funds for the AHT be tied to a specific project. Mr. Knudsen said it wouldn't surprise him if whomever ends up owning the GCTS property made a request to the CPC.

Hesitation on the part of the AHT about whether to support the current Habitat project was discussed. Ms. Crouch said there are things the AHT could do to prevent the trouble and confusion that happened with previous Asbury Street project from happening again, for example, to see how amenable Habitat would be to have the AHT and Town monitor its progress and demand better controls on completion dates.

Decision:

Mr. Knudsen made a motion that the AHT authorize a request of the CPC for \$200K of CPA funds for the project they are considering at 434 Asbury St. Ms. Crouch seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken with "ayes" from Ms. Crouch, Mr. Knudsen, and Mr. Smith, (3-0). *Mr. Massos had just left the online meeting to attend another meeting.

Mr. Shannon was asked to document the AHT's grant request to the CPC.

UPDATE ON 270 ASBURY STREET

Previously discussed. The units are now included on the Town's SHI.

BOARD BUSINESS

Nothing further was discussed.

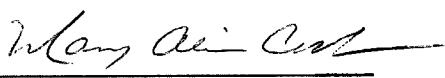
SCHEDULE NEXT MEETING

Wednesday, Sept. 30, at 6 p.m. was set as the date of the next AHT meeting and Mr. Preston will be invited to discuss the status of the Habitat for Humanity project.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Knudsen made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:37 p.m. Mr. Smith seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken with "ayes" from Ms. Crouch, Mr. Smith, and Mr. Knudsen, (3-0).

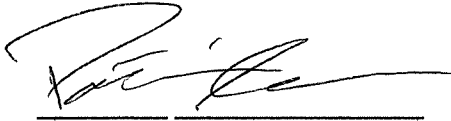
Prepared by:



Mary Alice Cookson
Minutes Secretary

9-30-2020
Date

Attest:



Patrick Shannon
AHT Coordinator

10/2/20

Date