

Hamilton Affordable Housing Trust
Teleconference

April 15, 2021

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

HAHT Coordinator: Pat Shannon

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

ROLL CALL

Affordable Housing Trust (AHT) Interim Chair Marnie Crouch called the AHT meeting to order at approximately 7 p.m. and took a roll call. Four members were present: David Smith, Hunter Carroll, and Jamie Knudsen along with Ms. Crouch, which constituted a quorum.

APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE 3/10/2021 MEETING

Mr. Knudsen made a motion to approve the March 10, 2021 meeting minutes. Mr. Carroll seconded the motion. A roll-call vote was taken with “ayes” from Mr. Carroll, Mr. Knudsen, and Ms. Crouch, (*3-0). *Mr. Smith did not vote as he was not present at the March 10 meeting.

REVIEW THE APPLICATIONS FOR AHT VACANCY

AHT Applicant Casey Ryder responded to a question posed by Mr. Carroll pertaining to her interest in affordable housing that one of her passions was finding opportunities to volunteer. [She had applied to serve on other Town boards and committees as well as the AHT.] She currently works with Girls Inc., a nonprofit in Lynn and before that was involved with a Big Sister program. She is fairly new to Hamilton, has two young children, and said she would like to become more involved with the Town. Her background is in the banking industry, in risk management. When asked by Mr. Smith about her experience in the business of real estate, she said that would just include personal experience.

AHT Applicant Candidate Suzanne Soffa was asked by Ms. Crouch about what triggered her interest in applying to the AHT. Ms. Soffa said she has been a Hamilton resident for nearly 24 years and has been attending AHT meetings. She said she was happy about the Housing Production Plan and would like to see some of the objectives met. Like Ms. Ryder, her experience in real estate was mainly personal experience. She has worked in financial

services for several decades, but not in a lending capacity. She cited other experience working for a community-based nonprofit. Ms. Crouch asked Ms. Soffa if she had confidence in her ability to review funding applications and local initiative projects [LIPs]. She responded she was confident in her ability to join in that process with a keen eye to review those documents, which would be in line with her financial services training.

Ms. Ryder responded yes to the question, as well. She said one of the responsibilities she has now was in looking at data and making risk-based decisions, implying that the skills would transfer over.

Ms. Crouch noted both candidates were well-qualified to serve on the AHT, but she asked Ms. Ryder if she might consider the Town's needs on other boards since she was open to working for other committees while Ms. Soffa had just indicated she'd like to serve on the AHT. There are currently openings on the Historic District Commission and Open Space Committee, and Ms. Ryder is going to be interviewed by the Planning Board. Ms. Ryder said she was willing to back away from the AHT and interview with the other committees.

Ms. Crouch reminded the AHT that the Board of Selectmen (BOS) Appointments Policy is that they interview candidates and, if so determined, write a letter of recommendation (or not) which would go to the BOS. The BOS would then also conduct an interview of the candidate. Mr. Knudsen, who is a Selectman, confirmed this.

Decision:

Mr. Knudsen made a motion that the AHT approve Suzanne Soffa for filling the Affordable Housing Trust vacancy. Mr. Carroll seconded the motion. A roll-call vote was taken with "ayes" from Mr. Smith, Mr. Carroll, Mr. Knudsen, and Ms. Crouch, (4-0) unanimous among those present.

Ms. Ryder was thanked for her generosity and left the meeting. Ms. Soffa remained.

UPDATE ON 59-63 WILLOW ST.

Ms. Crouch said there was a slight delay with the building permit, but if all goes well, the loan closing on the Willow Street project will be April 21. The AHT is participating in a loan program colloquially known as Mass Docs. The Town of Hamilton's portion of the fees will be paid by the borrower, Willow Street, LLC, which is the nominee of the Traggorth Companies, that is now responsible for the project and construction.

Assistant to the Town Manger/Community Preservation Committee Coordinator Pat Shannon said the building permit was moving along but still in the review process. He confirmed construction had started. The single family home is gone. Mr. Smith, who lives nearby, said an enormous amount of earth had been removed to prepare for the septic system. After the building permit is issued, 18 units will be added to the Town's Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI).

Ms. Crouch gave some details on the loan closing. The loans provided by the AHT will be handled by an agent that signed an agreement with PM&C, a company that provides lender services and will review every requisition by Willow Street Hamilton and make recommendations to the AHT about payment. Ms. Crouch stressed that in all ways, the \$500K granted by the AHT was well-protected. She said Town Counsel was involved in helping the AHT make the decision to join the Commonwealth entities and be part of the Mass Docs program. She commented that her only worry is that the price of lumber and construction materials has been dramatically increased due to the pandemic and she hopes the budgets for the projects will hold.

UPDATE ON 434 ASBURY ST. HABITAT FOR HUMANITY PROJECT

Ms. Crouch said Essex County Habitat for Humanity had received an extension on the option until September. She said the AHT had in its packets a schematic as to where they would situate the buildings. She invited anyone interested to attend the Planning Board meeting on April 20 and learn more.

AHT Coordinator Mr. Shannon said he had met with Director of Planning & Inspections Patrick Reffett and Mr. Preston and Meegan O'Neil of Habitat to discuss the process. One new piece of information is that due to advertising requirements, they won't be able to meet in front of the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) until June 3. Mr. Preston thought that would be OK to meet the 90-day post-meeting requirement and stick with their closing, although it is cutting it close. Mr. Reffett had asked about outreach to the abutters, and Habitat has planned a neighborhood event at the site. Due to trees there, there will be minimal visual impact to neighbors. Safety concerns so that drivers exiting the driveway will have better sightlines will be addressed.

Ms. Crouch referred to the Affordable Housing Development Update form in the packet that was developed after the last AHT meeting. It is a template that Habitat will use in providing updates on its progress. She asked the AHT members to notify Mr. Shannon if they had any suggested tweaks.

UPDATE ON GORDON CONWELL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY (GCTS) DEVELOPMENTS

Ms. Crouch reported there are some issues with respect to the development of the GCTS site. It cannot be a 40B. Also, it needs a change in use, from student housing to rental units. It is unknown if that will be approved by the ZBA and whether there might be an appeal by abutters. The second issue is financing in that the deal may be more complicated because it won't be a straight 40B. Those two issues will need to be addressed within a relatively short period of time. Some units would be for students, some would be affordable, and some would be market rate. If all the units counted toward the SHI, the Town's goals in the Housing Production Plan would be satisfied. Even though there would be a significant number of people living at the seminary, it is her opinion that the traffic wouldn't be as impacted. The lots on Woodbury appear to be larger than one acre so there aren't as many abutters as there are to some other sites.

NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Crouch reported there is a proposed 40B for across the street from the Habitat project and north and west but directly abutting the Villages at Canter Brook development. Four acres of a site owned by Peter Britton are being contemplated by Harborlight Community Partners for a 40B development. That project will be the subject of a presentation at the Planning Board on May 20. It is a proposal for 45 units and targeting a population at 60% of AMI (Average Median Income). She invited the AHT to attend the Zoom meeting to learn more. There is an option to acquire the property; Harborlight does not own the property.

The other news is that Carriage House Junction has affordable units and six of those units are eligible for the SHI. Mr. Shannon investigated and found that they are back on the SHI. It was an administrative oversight.

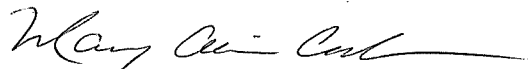
Ms. Crouch said she found it wise to involve Town Counsel regarding these projects to make sure that successors will have a full picture of the records required to track these subsidized units in the future. The Town has 86 units on the SHI. Mr. Hunter asked if the Town was close to the 3.5%. Mr. Shannon said they are at about 3%. The Seminary project would be a way for the Town to satisfy its affordable housing needs in one fell swoop. She said they should remain patient and optimistic.

It was determined that it was not necessary to schedule another AHT meeting at this time, but that the members will be polled after the next Planning Board meeting to see if they should set one up.

ADJOURN

Mr. Knudsen made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:45 p.m. Mr. Smith seconded the motion. A roll-call vote was taken with "ayes" from Mr. Smith, Mr. Carroll, Mr. Knudsen, and Ms. Crouch, (4-0) unanimous among those present.

Prepared by:



Mary Alice Cookson
Minutes Secretary

September 14, 2021

Date

Respectfully submitted as approved at the Sept. 14, 2021 meeting

Documents discussed at meeting:

- Minutes of the 3/10/2020 Meeting by Minutes Secretary Mary Alice Cookson
- Application to the AHT, Historic District Commission, Planning Board, and Open Space Committee from Casey Ryder; Ms. Ryder resume
- Application to the AHT from Suzanne Soffa; Ms. Soffa resume
- Affordable Housing Development Update form completed by Essex County Habitat for Humanity

