

Hamilton Affordable Housing Trust

MINUTES OF MEETING

MEMORIAL ROOM, TOWN HALL, 577 Bay Road, Hamilton

December 11, 2023

HAHT Members Present: Chair Jamie Knudsen, Suzanne Soffa, David Smith, and
Caroline Beaulieu
Town Manager Present: Joe Domelowicz
HAHT Members Absent: Natalie Hildreth
HAHT Coordinator: Laurie Wilson

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Affordable Housing Trust (AHT) Chair Jamie Knudsen called the remote (Zoom-only) meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. and took a roll call: David Smith, Caroline Beaulieu, Suzanne Soffa, and Mr. Knudsen were present as well as Town Manager, Joe Domelowicz.

UPDATE ON FINANCIALS

It was noted that the financial report included in the meeting packet was reviewed at the last meeting. Coordinator Laurie Wilson said what was not included is that under CPC (Community Preservation Committee) was just under \$300K in the affordable housing bucket (the 10% of the CPC's budget set aside for housing). As of the end of FY'23, she said there was just over \$700K in the CPC's Unreserved fund and another \$100K had been received from the State in November.

Ms. Beaulieu confirmed with Ms. Wilson that the money the AHT voted at its last meeting to give to Habitat for Humanity for its project on Asbury Street had been given. Ms. Soffa asked for some clarification of some line items, which Ms. Wilson reviewed.

CONSIDER HARBORLIGHT'S REQUEST FOR FUNDING FOR ASBURY COMMONS

Traditionally, eligibility and funding requests of the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) for housing projects go through the AHT, with the AHT being the one to make the grant request. Harborlight's ask is for \$1M. Mr. Domelowicz clarified the funding sources the AHT has access to and there was a discussion on what amount the AHT can and should request.

Kristin Carlson, director of real estate development for Harborlight Homes, gave a presentation on the Asbury Commons project—45 units of family housing, affordable up to 60% of AMI (area median income). She said one thing the State looks for is participation from the local municipality in terms of funding and support. She said Harborlight is in the process of assembling funding, which will take approximately another 12 months. She anticipates breaking ground in 2025. She said a vote of support from the AHT would help Harborlight with its funding application to the State in February.

Mr. Smith suggested Harborlight's Maple Woods project (in Wenham) might be a similar project to the Asbury Commons project and suggested a tour of Maple Woods. Ms. Carlson noted one

difference is that the Maple Woods project is senior-restricted while Asbury Commons is family housing. Mr. Smith's idea of a tour was accepted and will be set up at the beginning of the new year. What approach to take, including the timing and amount to ask for, was discussed. Mr. Domelowicz said the AHT could vote to award an amount from the AHT account right now and offer a letter of commitment. Separately, he said the AHT could request money from the CPC; however, this does not guarantee it will pass at Town Meeting. Ms. Soffa discussed that in the past, the CPC had made adjustments to the amounts it awarded. Ms. Wilson said on occasion, the CPC has also later awarded second grants for projects. Ms. Soffa discussed that adding Asbury Commons to the Town's SHI (subsidized housing inventory) will increase it from 4.07 to 5.1, which is about a 25% increase, and she felt it worth doing.

Mr. Knudsen discussed that \$1M would be the equivalent of about \$20K per unit, which he found reasonable. However, he said as part of the CPC guidelines, they need to certify that they are doing the project at the lowest cost possible. Ms. Carlson said the \$1M represents about 3 ½ percent of the project's total cost and detailed some of the expenses, including septic, elevators, and construction loan interest.

Decision #1:

Mr. Smith made a motion that the AHT issue a letter of support to the State for the [Asbury Commons] project.

Discussion:

Mr. Smith asked who would draft the letter. Mr. Domelowicz said he and Ms. Wilson could handle it and it would make it easier if the motion allowed the Chair to sign when the letter is complete.

Decision (continued):

Mr. Smith amended his motion to include that the letter be drafted at Town Hall and made available to the AHT Chair for signature. Ms. Beaulieu seconded the motion. A roll-call vote was taken with "ayes" from Mr. Smith, Ms. Soffa, Ms. Beaulieu, and Mr. Knudsen, (4-0) unanimous among those present.

Decision #2:

Ms. Soffa made a motion that the AHT include an initial award in the letter of support for commitment in an amount of \$250K as available. Mr. Smith seconded the motion.

Discussion:

Mr. Knudsen said before the writing of the check, he wanted the AHT to make sure there was a reason to write the check (in other words to cover what would happen if the project fell through). Mr. Smith agreed the decision needs to be predicated on Harborlight securing all its other funding for the project.

Decision #2 continued:

Mr. Smith made a motion to amend the previous motion with the award of \$250K contingent on Harborlight securing the other funding it requires for the project to proceed and on the mortgage commitment required for the project. Ms. Soffa seconded the amended motion. A roll-call vote was taken with "ayes" from Mr. Smith, Ms. Soffa, Ms. Beaulieu, and Mr. Knudsen, (4-0) unanimous among those present.

CONSIDER AND VOTE ON A COMMUNITY HOUSING GRANT TO THE CPC

Decision:

Ms. Beaulieu made a motion that the AHT request a grant of \$1M from the CPC to fund Harborlight's Asbury Commons affordable housing project. Mr. Smith seconded the motion. A roll-call vote was taken with "ayes" from Mr. Smith, Ms. Soffa, Ms. Beaulieu, and Mr. Knudsen, (4-0) unanimous among those present.

Ms. Soffa noted one correction needed in the project narrative, which Ms. Carlson said she had already corrected. Ms. Wilson asked if the grant should be written up with what Ms. Carlson had added to her application. Mr. Knudsen said yes. Ms. Carlson left the meeting at 6:53 p.m.

CONSIDER AND VOTE TO SIGN AMENDMENT TO THE AHR [AFFORDABLE HOUSING RESTRICTION] FOR WILLOW STREET

Mr. Smith said he struggled to understand the document. Ms. Wilson said that according to Director of Planning, Patrick Reffett, this amendment would separate out the front building (two condos where the toy store and general store are located) from the rest of the Willow Street Flats property. It was unclear if this action would enable the owners, Traggorth Companies LLC, to sell off the front piece (two condos) in the future.

Decision:

Ms. Beaulieu made a motion that the AHT sign the Hamilton Willow Street Amendment to the Affordable Housing Restriction as is in the packet. Mr. Smith seconded.

Discussion:

Ms. Beaulieu asked about future ramifications and after discussion, the AHT agreed to sign the amendment.

Decision (continued):

A roll-call vote was taken with “ayes” from Mr. Smith, Ms. Soffa, Ms. Beaulieu, and Mr. Knudsen, (4-0) unanimous among those present.

APPROVE MINUTES FROM THE AUG. 3, 2023 MEETING

Coordinator Laurie Wilson noted two edits were needed: changing the year “2022” to “2020” under “Update on Financials” and the addition of the word “to” to correct a small typo in the middle of page 3.

Decision:

Ms. Beaulieu made a motion to approve the minutes of Aug. 3, 2023. Mr. Smith seconded. A roll-call vote was taken with “ayes” from Mr. Smith, Ms. Soffa, Ms. Beaulieu, and Mr. Knudsen, (4-0), unanimous among those present.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Smith had a question concerning something contained in the minutes—whether volunteering to serve on Habitat for Humanity’s steering committee would constitute a conflict of interest for AHT members. Ms. Wilson and Mr. Domelowicz reported Town Counsel had said it could be a conflict of interest.

Mr. Smith brought up another item in the minutes: the AHT’s working on recommendations pertaining to drafting an amendment to a section of the Town’s Inclusionary Housing Bylaw. He said he and Ms. Soffa had reached an understanding of what they should propose to the Planning Board for revisions and he was currently working on a draft. Mr. Knudsen agreed they should add this item to the next AHT agenda. Mr. Domelowicz said the Planning Board has to submit items to the Select Board to be included in the warrant by the end of January; therefore, it was decided that the AHT needs to hold a meeting before then.

Virginia Cookson, 318 Forest St., a resident and Conservation Commission member, asked whether a minutes vote had been taken. It was noted that the vote had been taken.

Mr. Knudsen announced the Human Rights Commission was hosting a service day on Martin Luther King Day. It was noted that participation by the AHT would not constitute any conflict of interest.

ADJOURNMENT ROLL CALL

At 7:13 p.m., Ms. Beaulieu made a motion that the AHT adjourn. Mr. Smith seconded the motion. A roll-call vote was taken with "ayes" from Mr. Smith, Ms. Soffa, Ms. Beaulieu, and Mr. Knudsen, (4-0).

Prepared by:

MAC

Mary Alice Cookson
AHT Minutes Secretary

12/28/23

Date

Respectfully submitted as approved at the 8/22/24 meeting.

Laurie Wilson, Coordinator

LW

Documents discussed at meeting:

- Minutes of the 8/3/2023 Meeting, Mary Alice Cookson
- FY 2020-FY 2024 AHT Budget Report
- Harborlight Homes (email to Jamie Knudsen and the AHT), project narrative, images, and budget, including the Hamilton Zoning Board of Appeals decision on application for comprehensive permit and Town Clerk record of the vote
- Amendment to the Affordable Housing Restriction for Willow Street