

Housing @ Hildreth House Committee (H@HHC)
Meeting Minutes – October 4, 2017
Small Meeting Room, Town Hall

Members Present: Pablo Carbonell, Sue Guswa, Hank Fitek, Rick Maiore, Fran Nickerson, Victor Normand, Lucy Wallace

Guests: Bill Scanlan, Planner; Marie Sobalvarro, Assistant Town Administrator, Procurement Officer; Joan Eliyesil, *Harvard Press*

Meeting was convened at 3:05 PM.

Administrative:

The minutes of the September 7, 2017 meeting were approved as presented.

Responses to RFP:

Marie Sobalvarro reported that one proposal had been received in response to the RFP. The proposal, from Kishan Realty, LLC, was incomplete and did not meet the minimum sales price. Therefore it had to be rejected.

Next Steps:

There was considerable discussion regarding what may have been the reason(s) for our failure to receive a viable proposal. Marie agreed to follow up with the two developers, Mark O'Hagan and Steve Joncas, who had come for the site walk to ascertain why they had not submitted proposals. Marie will also send an email to the 20+ people she had contacted to advise of the RFP and seek feedback from them as to why they had not submitted a proposal. This will help inform the Committee's decisions in going forward.

Pablo Carbonell and Rick Maiore both felt the appraised value was high and would have expected it to be between high \$800,00 and mid-\$900,000. Victor Normand noted that appraisers seldom change their appraised value. However, the appraisal probably included realtors' commissions which were not anticipated in the RFP. With an average fee of 5%, this would reduce the appraisal by \$60,000. Victor asked Marie if it would be possible for the Town to waive the realtor's commission. On the other hand, would the Town benefit from having a realtor to help a potential buyer navigate the RFP process and purchase of municipal land.

Bill Scanlan wondered if leasing the property for 99 years would be more attractive than purchasing it. Victor asked if it would be possible to offer an installment sale so there would be less of an up-front investment for the developer. Marie offered to look into this. Lucy Wallace wondered if the Land Disposition Agreement was a reason for lack of proposals and, if so, should we eliminate it.

The Committee also discussed whether or not to recommend to the Selectmen proceeding with placing an article on the warrant for the fall Special Town Meeting seeking confirmation of the Selectmen's vote to surplus this land. Both Victor and Pablo urged proceeding with the vote as it would be one less uncertainty for a future developer. The Committee unanimously agreed to recommend proceeding with the vote at the Special Town Meeting.

Pablo asked if we could seek advice from Town Counsel on the Town's ability to negotiate accepting a bid below the appraised value. Bill Scanlan noted that a case might be made to allow such negotiation if the sale is for a public benefit.

Rick reminded the Committee that we had accomplished a lot in less than one year and that we should keep working at this task, seeking options and possible reconfiguration of the offering. The Committee is scheduled to meet with the Selectmen at their October 17th meeting, at which time we can give an update on our work and ideas for moving forward, and recommendation to proceed with vote at the Special Town Meeting.

Marie reminded the Committee of the invoice from Avery Associates which is now overdue. Rick noted that the Committee's expenses had now exceeded the \$30,000 from the Rantoul Trusts authorized by the Selectmen. Victor moved and it was unanimously voted to pay the \$3,950 invoice and to seek additional funds from the Selectmen (Rantoul Trusts) to cover the shortfall in funds.

Lucy noted the Committee is posted to meet on Wednesday, October 11th. She asked if Marie could speak with O'Hagan and Joncas before then and report their feedback to us then. It would be helpful in framing our conversation with the Selectmen on October 17th.

Lucy also asked if we should proceed with our application to the Sewer and Water Commission for a sewer connection. Rick explained the criteria this project would need to meet for being granted a connection: that there is a public benefit with the project. Pablo felt we should apply, as it would be one less uncertainty for a future developer. Pablo asked about the cost of the connection. Rick noted it would need to be addressed with the Commissioners. He explained the "privilege fee", which is a fee charged to a party connecting to the sewer after the initial connection period. The intent of this fee is to be equivalent to having paid the initial betterment. However, as 2/3 of the original betterment was covered by the Town, with only 1/3 covered by residents and businesses connecting to the sewer, he felt an argument could be made that given this Town property is within the sewer district, the Town had already paid its betterment. He will draft the sewer application and bring it to the October 11th meeting for Committee review. The Water and Sewer Commission will be meeting next on October 12th, at which time the application could be presented. He would not ask, or expect, a decision from the Commissioners at that time. Lucy distributed a chart from the 2016 Master Plan's Implementation schedule which cited the need for diversity of housing, moderate-density housing in the Town Center, and housing for seniors – all of which would support the public benefit criteria.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:05 PM.

Next meeting: Wednesday, 10/11 at 8 AM