

Housing @ Hildreth House Committee (H@HHC)
Meeting Minutes – November 9, 2017
Small Meeting Room, Town Hall

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

Guests: Marie Sobalvarro, Assistant Town Administrator; Bill Scanlan, Town Planner; Carl Sciple, resident; Joan Eliyesil, *The Harvard Press*

The meeting was convened at 8:05 AM.

Administrative:

The minutes of the October 26, 2017 meeting were approved as presented.

Debrief Special Town Meeting and Next Steps:

Rick Maiore opened the discussion by summarizing his view of situation following failure of the November 6th Special Town Meeting (STM) to support sale of the land as follows:

- The desire to have senior housing on the Hildreth House property is not new. An earlier attempt to develop a plan failed due to lack of ability to provide septic on the site.
- With this property now served by the town center sewer, septic disposal is no longer an issue. This enabled us to revisit providing senior housing on the site.
- We were blindsided by the Fire Department's opposition to the loss of its .68-acre of land, as articulated by Tony Shaw's very emotional comments, which turned the STM against the sale of the 3.16 acres. The Fire Chief had raised other issues in meetings with us and other boards, which were addressed in the site plan. However, he failed to advise us of the extent of the Fire Department's objection to the proposal.
- The town has invested both treasure (\$30,000+) and time (volunteers' and staff time) in this project. Considerable thought and effort has gone into the current proposal, for which we thought we had support.
- Rick believes the project can be salvaged, with the Fire Department's land excluded, by dropping 3 units and considering the needs of the Fire Department.

Committee members expressed frustration and disappointment with the Fire Department's lack of support at the STM. It was clear their frustration had been building and yet concerns not brought to the Committee by the Chief.

Rick suggested 3 conditions for moving forward:

- Endorsement that we continue by the Board of Selectmen, including provision of \$10,000 to funds to revise the site plan and appraisal for a smaller parcel.
- Inclusion of representatives of the Fire Department (Chief and officers) in our work in order to find a middle ground.
- An updated survey by the COA reflecting current demand/number of seniors interested in housing on this site.

Bill Scanlan suggested we need to consider relocating the fire station. Lucy Wallace noted that the Fire Chief has asked for \$20,000 from CPIC to do a study of the current facility which is continually postponed by CPIC. Marie Sobalvarro added that the study would also include identifying possible sites for a new station. Lucy then suggested that we encourage CPIC and the Selectmen to support funding the study at this year's Annual Town Meeting.

Another issues raised at the STM was the lack of affordable units. Sue Guswa noted we had not done a good job of explaining why the Committee had decided not to include 2 affordable units. Our goal was to provide *moderate* priced housing, which with the site and construction costs would cost \$450,000 - \$500,000. Adding affordable units would increase the cost of the remaining 15 units to \$550,000+ - hardly moderate.

Marie questioned if the site was truly optimal, given its many challenges and wondered if the Committee should consider other sites. Pablo Carbonell suggested broadcasting a request to town residents for possible sites. Lucy noted that providing septic for higher density housing alone would be a challenge. Fran Nickerson responded that industry standards for senior housing suggest it be located near services and create a sense of community – both within the project and by proximity and easy access to the larger community. This site provides just that.

Victor Normand stated he believes the project is worth pursuing on this site. He suggested breaking the project into 2 phases: the first phase would be to build housing on the 2.48 acres of Hildreth property, and the second would be to build additional housing on the Fire Department land if and when the station is moved.

Lucy reported that the Selectmen expect to hear a report from her on this Committee's recommendation at its November 14th and asked for direction. The following motion was made and unanimously supported:

“The Committee supports the initial concept of senior housing at the Hildreth House and is willing to continue working towards its implementation in cooperation and consultation with the Fire Department; provided the Board of Selectmen also endorses this concept.”

Lucy was asked to have the Selectmen vote on their endorsement. If asked, she will report that the estimated cost to continue our work would be \$10,000.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 AM. No future meeting date was set.