

Housing @ Hildreth House Committee (H@HHC)
Meeting Minutes – February 15, 2018
Small Meeting Room, Town Hall

Members Present: Hank Fitek, Rick Maiore, Fran Nickerson, Victor Normand, Carl Sciple, Lucy Wallace

Guests: Marie Sobalvarro, Assistant Town Administrator; Beth Williams, COA; Paul Green, resident; Joan Eliyesil, *Harvard Press*

The meeting was convened by chair Rick Maiore at 8 AM.

Administrative:

The minutes of the January 11, 2018 meeting were approved as presented.

RFP:

Rick suggested we have the RFP ready to go after the spring Annual Town Meeting. Marie Sobalvarro indicated that her first priority is finalizing and issuing the RFPs for the fire pond study and new fire alarms, as funds are now available for those two projects. The RFP for development of housing would come afterwards.

COA Survey:

Rick would like to see an update to the COA 2007 survey to confirm what seniors are looking for in housing (sq. ft., number of bedrooms, and optimal/maximum price willing to pay). Fran Nickerson noted that the 2007 survey which she had analyzed had very similar results to one done about 10 years earlier: seniors are concerned about taxes, but want to be able to stay in Harvard. Victor Normand suggested that seniors are often more concerned about monthly housing costs. Fran and Hank Fitek will work on updating the information.

Citizens' Petition:

Rick reported that a citizens' petition had been submitted for this spring's Annual Town Meeting to amend the Hildreth House Overlay District to require 25% of the units be affordable pursuant to Chapter 40B. Fran expressed concern about the impact of this requirement on the cost of the market rate housing, as the market rate units subsidize the affordable units. She said Bruce Nickerson had done a "back of the envelope" analysis and estimated that our previously targeted sale price of approximately \$400,000 would increase to approximately \$490,000. Victor concurred, noting the 40B projects are internally subsidized with affordable units usually selling for 1/3 the cost of the market rate units. There also would be a decrease in tax revenue to the town from the affordable units. However, one way to offset the higher market rate units' cost would be to sell the land for less than the appraised value. Marie asked if the goal of the Committee is to raise \$1 million towards the cost of Hildreth House Phase 2 or to provide senior housing. The consensus has been that the reason for sale of the land was to offset the cost of Hildreth House Phase 2.

Other Considerations:

The issue of access to the site was briefly discussed. Victor felt access could still be provided by the Hildreth House driveway and not impede the Fire Department's access to and parking for the Fire

Station. Marie asked in another access had been considered. Lucy Wallace responded that engineers had looked at access below Hildreth House (closer to Ayer Road) and following up the hill along the property line with the Lees. That route, however, was considered too expensive and so not pursued. Rick noted that it has been known for some time that traffic in this area is problematic as there will be for major activities using the same routes: Town Hall, Fire, Hildreth House, and housing. Victor suggested contracting for a professional traffic study.

Rick raised the issue of water and sewer permits. He recommended not filing for them until after Annual Town Meeting as the public benefit justification for the sewer permit would depend on whether we are proposing moderately-priced senior housing or a 40B senior development.

Marketing was briefly discussed. Victor noted that 40B projects are required to have a broad marketing plan, even with some local preference. He wondered if a non-40B project could also have a local preference component. Rick felt that if it was not illegal, it would be a slippery slope to start down. Lucy felt there would be enough publicity through the local press that seniors would have sufficient notice to act when units become available.

In wrapping up, Rick suggested we not meet again until after Fran and Hank have had a chance to update information on senior preferences. They will try to have this information by April so we can meet before Annual Town Meeting.

Victor asked the Committee members' opinion on the proposed citizens' petition/reframing this project as a 40B project. Fran said she would share this information with the Planning Board when it holds its hearing on March 5th on this bylaw amendment. There was no support for the citizens' petition. Rick summed up the Committee's feeling that while 40B projects and providing affordable housing in Harvard is a needed goal, this is the wrong project and wrong site.

Public Comment:

Rick asked Paul Green if he had any comments. Paul thanked the Committee for its thoughtful consideration and felt it had been useful to hear our questions and concerns. He noted that offsetting the cost of a 40B project might be achieved by asking for CPC or MAHT funds, both of which can be used for affordable housing projects.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 AM. No future meeting date was set.