

Housing @ Hildreth House Committee (H@HHC)
Meeting Minutes – June 10, 2019
Volunteers Meeting Room, Town Hall
13 Ayer Road, Harvard, MA

Members Present: Pablo Carbonell, Hank Fitek, Rick Maiore, Fran Nickerson, Lucy Wallace

Staff: Chris Ryan, Director, Community & Economic Development

Guests: Merrill Diamond, Diamon & Sinacori; Steve Tise, Tise Design; Joan Eliysil, *Harvard Press*

The meeting was convened by Chairman Rick Maiore at 1 PM.

Potential Site Development

Rick had invited Merrill Diamond and Steve Tise to attend the meeting to provide the Committee with their insights and ideas for development of this site. As one of two respondents to the Committee's recent RFI, Rick felt it would be helpful for the Committee to have an opportunity to meet with them. As development partners, Merrill and Steve have worked on many housing projects for empty nesters.

Lucy Wallace asked an opening question: "Is it feasible to develop this site?" Steve replied that the product we were seeking (detached or duplex houses) would require significant investment in site improvement and probably appeal more to first time, young buyers than empty nesters. Both Steve's and Merrill's experience has been that seniors are not looking for multiple moves after leaving their larger homes; rather they would prefer to age in place and not face another move.

Steve felt our proposed subdivision would not embrace the natural beauty of the site; instead would force a design onto. Both suggested a single building, perhaps 2-3 stories high (using the natural elevation and grade change to the west of the Hildreth House) with common areas and an elevator. Merrill added that consolidating the housing into a single building would preserve the natural surroundings which would be more in keeping with the landscape of the homes seniors would be leaving.

Pablo Carbonell pointed out that the current zoning would not allow a multifamily, single building.

Fran Nickerson expressed her personal preference for bungalows, noting seniors in prior surveys had similar views. Merrill replied that in his experience seniors want single floor living and enjoy sharing common spaces offered in a single building. He added that the site could accommodate 3 – 4 bungalows, if that is what was desired, along with the single multifamily building. The biggest expense in any case is covered parking, so uncovered parking would save some in the cost. However, that is not optimal for seniors.

Chris Ryan asked about the possibility of private/public partnerships mentioned in their response to the RFI. Merrill explained that one way this could be accomplished would be through a discounted sale of the land. Steve added that it could be as simple as collaboration with the Town in selection of the contractor and having a totally transparent process as the project proceeded. Steve further explained that they would go to a small group of investors for funds to prepare a proposal and then to the bank for funds to build. Both groups would expect a 20% return on investment; any return above that amount could, possibly, be shared with the Town.

Both men stressed that the biggest questions to answer would be the market price point for such housing, the type of product (attached, detached duplex or multifamily), and the depth of the market in Harvard.

Merrill asked what the Committee's next steps would be: issuing an RFP? An RFQ? Pablo said that a decision on moving forward would depend on the results of the current Fire Station study, which should be completed in the next 4 – 6 months.

The next meeting will be July 1st at 8 AM to meet with NOW Communities.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:10 PM