

Housing @ Hildreth House Committee (H@HHC)
Meeting Minutes – August 30, 2018
Volunteers Meeting Room, Town Hall
13 Ayer Road, Harvard, MA

Members Present: Pablo Carbonell, Rick Maiore, Fran Nickerson, Carl Sciple, Fire Chief Rick Sicard, Lucy Wallace

Guest Present: Marie Sobalvarro, Assistant Town Administrator; Paul Green; Joan Eliyesil, *Harvard Press*

The meeting was convened by Chairman Rick Maiore at 8:10 AM.

Administrative

The minutes of the July 19, 2018 meeting were approved as presented.

Update on Sewer Commission Decision

Rick summarized the outcome of the August 1st meeting of the Sewer Commission regarding our application for a permit to join the Town Center sewer at a 3,000 gal/day capacity. Carl Sciple presented our application. At the conclusion of the discussion the Commissioners voted 2-1 to deny the permit. The written decision will be presented and approved at the next Sewer Commission meeting on September 12th. Rick indicated we could attend that meeting to ask the Commissioners to reconsider their vote or wait for the written decision and then appeal it to the Select Board. Rick had previously received and forward to the Committee an email from Cindy Russo, dated August 8, 2018, regarding the basis for her vote to deny. Fran Nickerson distributed a written response to the email prepared by Bruce Nickerson. Discussion followed on our options, the intent of the overlay district zoning bylaw, and this Committee's charge. Rick reiterated that the intent of the bylaw was to provide moderate-priced housing for seniors to downsize to. While the bylaw does not require affordable housing, we could include it if we believed the market rate units could still be sold within a moderate price range. The matter of requiring affordable housing was considered and rejected when the bylaw was drafted by the Planning Board and initially approved by the Town Meeting. A citizen's petition requiring affordable housing was presented at a subsequent Town Meeting where it was redirected back to the Planning Board for consideration. Again, the requirement for affordable housing was deemed contrary to the intent of the bylaw. In addition, the 2016 Master Plan noted the need for moderate-priced housing for seniors.

Pablo Carbonell added that another reason for this project (the sale of Hildreth property for senior housing) was to generate funds to help offset the cost of Phase 2 of the Hildreth House and that requiring the inclusion of affordable units would lessen the value of the land. Lucy Wallace reported that Phase 2 is moving ahead with the hope of taking a construction funding request to the 2020 Annual Town Meeting for approval. Rick noted that it is unlikely we will be in a position to sell the land before that time, to which Lucy added that proceeds for the sale of the land could be used to offset the debt for Phase 2, rather than having the proceeds available before construction begins.

Fran commented that repeated surveys of seniors has shown a strong desire to stay in Harvard but that they fear they may not be able to as they cannot afford the taxes and have no options for smaller (and less expensive) housing. She also questioned how many seniors could meet the asset test (maximum assets of \$275,000) upon the sale of their homes. Marie Sobalvarro did note that there are some seniors

who do not have sufficient funds to meet Town property tax and other permit fees and are using reverse mortgages to generate needed funds. Fran replied that it is not clear they would qualify for affordable housing after the sale of their homes, even taking into account the need to retire the reverse mortgage, given the value of Harvard's housing.

The Committee reached a consensus opinion that there would be no value in attending the September 12th Sewer Commission meeting and that rather we should wait for its decision and appeal it.

On a motion made and seconded, it was unanimously voted as follows: "To authorize the Chair to submit an appeal to the Select Board if the written decision of the Sewer Commission is in keeping with its vote (to deny) on September 1st."

Update on Fire Station Study

Marie and Fire Chief Rick Sicard reported that the first step in this process will be a traffic study. MRPC had been contacted but could not do the study before next summer. Tim Kilhart, DPW Director, recommended a firm he has worked with, TEC, whom Marie has contacted. They will be doing the study and expect to have it completed by the end of November. The study will involve 3 phases:

1. Study and assess traffic issues "as is" (with current level of use), and including Still River fire apparatus being housed at Center Fire Station;
2. Study and assess traffic issues with the Hildreth House Phase 2 completed (which will increase the dining room capacity to 90 seats); and
3. Study and assess traffic issues with up to 20 units of senior housing adjacent to the Hildreth House.

Following completion of the traffic study and based on its recommendations, a second study will be undertaken on the Fire Station. As the Fire Chief noted, if phase 1 of the traffic study indicates traffic issues cannot be fully addressed, then the second study would not look at the current station, but rather assess other sites for a new Fire Station.

Public Comment

Paul Green spoke to the earlier discussion on affordable housing, raising several points. First, he does not believe the Committee's charge includes specifically that the land sale proceeds are to fund Phase 2. He did allow, however, that this was the general understanding. Second, Kyle Hedrick, as sewer commissioner, had spoken against the permit at the September 1st meeting as he did not believe there would be a 3,000 gal/day capacity once all eligible properties had tied into the system. Rick countered that the 3,000 gal/day surplus capacity had taken into account all properties being on the system. Third, Paul had developed and sent to Rick a spreadsheet using our data to explore the estimated cost of developing the site and each units' potential sales price. He believes it will be difficult to keep the sales price within a moderate range even without affordable units. He supports the project (senior housing on this site), but urged the Committee to run its estimates carefully before going back to the Town Meeting for approval to sell the land. Carl asked for a copy of Paul's spreadsheet.

Lucy asked Pablo for his opinion of prefab housing, recalling that Bob Lerner had been investigating that option decades ago when a small (1+ acre) lot on the corner of Bolton Rd and Mass Ave was being considered for affordable housing by the then Housing Authority. Pablo has worked on prefab housing units and has found they are difficult to modify once installed. For instance, carpeting is often installed at the factory and is put down before the interior walls are installed. Changing carpeting, therefore, can

be problematic. It also can be unclear what are and are not bearing walls. Again, this can be an issue if an owner wishes to modify the unit in the future.

The meeting was adjourned at 9 AM.

Next meeting: September 13th at 8 AM