

Town of Agawam  
Housing Committee  
**Minutes**

**January 31, 2019**

**Members Present:** Joseph Mineo, Mildred Parzychowski,, Paul Jenney, Vincenzo Ronghi, Mark Paleologopoulos, Corinne Wingard.

**Members Absent:** Gail Mathis.

**Others Present:** Manisha Bewtra, Massachusetts Housing Partnership, Marc Strange, Director Planning and Economic Development, Rosemary Sandlin. City Councilor.

**Meeting called to order at 6:05 p.m. by Vice Chair Paleologopoulos**

**1. Approval of Minutes of December 27, 2018:**

Motion by Member Jenney, Second by Member Parzychowski. Members Mineo, Parzychowski, Jenney and Wingard in favor. Members Ronghi and Paleologopoulos abstain.

**2. Public Outreach Assistance – Manisha Bewtra, Massachusetts Housing Partnership:**

Ms. Bewtra introduced herself and the MHP public outreach program, then held a general discussion with members of why had joined housing committee and what would like to see housing committee do, with a goal of taking all information and developing into concrete next steps/strategy. Themes of discussion: Be more pro-active. action plan for committee, see results. Concern demographics - aging population, what means for long term, people at all stages of life. Work with tangible next steps – zoning, community engagement – more productive conversations.

Slide presentation:

Would these people be able to find a place to live in Agawam: Retired person, empty nester(s), young couple with toddler, 74 year old, single parent with three kids, favorite bartender or barista.

State wide housing trends: Housing production has gone down. One of lowest rates in country – fall short of demand across the board. Not on track to meet demand to even maintain status quo, even if fewer people.

Losing skilled workers to other regions where building more housing and have lower costs. Retirements – baby boomers leaving workforce but not moving out of housing. Adequate housing required for future job growth.

Massachusetts an outlier in requiring super majority for zoning changes, and 351 jurisdictions. Costs among highest in nation – are severely cost burdened – one in five households paying more than 50% gross income for housing.

MHP Center for Housing Data for Agawam: Rapid growth 1950-1980, still growth 1980-2000, slow growth 2000-present. By race not as diverse as state or surrounding communities. Fewer college graduates. Most people drive under 30 minutes to work.

Aging population, 1990-2006 to present. Fewer young kids, also fewer young adults. Overall decline in school enrollment.

Housing stock – predominantly single family, some multi-family. Less turnover of homes than state-wide. About ¼ renters – less than state-wide. Median income: \$61,919. State wide: \$74,167. Amount paying for rent – many cost-burdened – renters and owners.

How do zoning, permitting, and other local regulations and processes effect what can be built today?

Agawam SHI (Subsidized Housing Inventory) 4.6%, 556 units. 48 DDS group home, 508 rental.

Member Paleologopoulos stated at one point some wanted minimum 1 acre. Lot split zone.

Ms. Bewtra provided information about Resources: CHAPA Housing toolbox.org. Some documents on community engagement – MHP.net/datatown – brand new. Data backs up what have seen.

#### Questions/Discussion:

Ms. Bewtra noted has been some tension around housing discussions in town. Member Paleologopoulos thinks not just housing – graying community, e.g. no vote on recreational marijuana – different point of view older and younger residents. Older resistant to change, even if inevitable. NIMBY syndrome in town. Member Jenney stated people don't want Agawam to change. Member Paleologopoulos stated population changing, ethnicity changing. Agawam not farming town anymore. Going to have to change. Ms. Bewtra stated need to communicate inevitability of change – people age, buildings change. Member Paleologopoulos stated need to get people to realize change not as terrifying.

Member Jenney stated public only gets engaged on negative, hot button issues. Other than that, do not. Member Paleologopoulos stated if could fast forward Mill St. would be different. Member Ronghi noted especially if 70% local preference for residents. Ms. Bewtra stated need to parse out silent middle or those not sure. Member Ronghi noted that 2/3 town don't think about Mill St. Chair Mineo stated felt if Mill St. had been done in transparent way. Would not have had issue – no one likes element of surprise. Not just Mill St. – e.g. if all of a sudden build shopping complex. Member Ronghi asked how Mill S. different than any other property, underlying entitlement in Agawam, e.g. residents tried to stop subdivision for four years, until people who resisted gave way to leverage. Ms. Bewtra asked how can stop being stuck. Can we identify people already supporting, and how to bring out and people undecided or in the middle- build allies Member Ronghi suggested start conversation about schools, anticipate teaching needs. Start putting faces to people moving into Mill St, rather than just brick and mortar. Member Parzychowski stated see need more information and plan. First target renters who would be first time home buyers, and

need for seniors to age in place. Hold some classes at senior center, spread word what options. Member Wingard noted there are some one bedroom/organically senior units at Mill St. Member Parzychowski stated people in town have vision that residents of Mill St. will be on welfare, seen as those not producing and contribution, using up resources. Member Wingard stated for some opponents, issue is people of color. Ms. Bewtra asked how reach different age demographics. Had thought of focus groups – e.g. are you looking into downsizing – home purchase – people able to learn from each other – asked about meeting spaces. Suggestion Take 5 back room. Member Parzychowski suggested 20 people each time. Agawam Golf Course has meeting space. Ms. Betwra stated need to separate Mill St. and town wide – more comprehensive going forward, pro-active for what happens next. Going to them to where people are – get different voices – public forum. Think about individual success stories. Member Parzychowski suggested seniors who got into senior housing and difference made in their lives. Get photo-graphic story campaign. Member Ronghi stated that along with engaging people to make more receptive, will only work if Council/Mayor/Planner have tools – get zoning rules in place – got developers to come to table – give density bonus, etc. if deed restricted affordable. Ms. Bewtra stated want to have vision. These challenges were not created overnight. Short term focus – something can be general community buy-in – e.g. possible locations – go from there. Hold Listening Sessions, stakeholder conversations, lunch and learn, then reflect back to community. Member Paleologopoulos noted have two major developments today, Brady Village and Pheasant Hill. Let residents meet some of the people – people who live there don't want to be thought of badly. Maybe have event.

Ms. Bewtra stated have enough information to get some ideas on paper. Asked what role committee would like her to play, e.g. if facilitate Lunch and Learn, Listening Sessions, to build allies. Use this time as training agenda for us to follow. Ideally help us build coalition of folks supportive and change community dialogue. Member Ronghi stated members could lead these discussions. Member Wingard stated would like Ms. Bewtra to come out and model initially.

### **3. ZBA Public Hearings for 586 Mill St:**

Next ZBA Public Hearing February 25 2019, 6:30 p.m., Agawam Public Library.

### **4. Announcements:** None.

### **5. Any Other Business that May Legally Come Before Committee:**

Member Paleologopoulos stated town did not purchase property next to Stop and Shop, then thanked Ms. Bewtra for coming out.

**Motion to adjourn at 7:55 p.m. by Member Ronghi, Second Member Parzychowski, All in favor.**