

Town of Agawam  
Housing Committee  
**Minutes**

**February 26,2019**

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

**Members Absent:** Gail Mathes, Vincenzo Ronghi

**Meeting called to order at 6:02 p.m. by Chair Mineo**

**1. Approval of Minutes of January 31, 2019:**

Motion by Member Parzychowski, Second by Member Jenney. All in favor.

**2. Review of progress on recommendations of Housing Production Plan:**

Member Wingard provided copies of Local Initiative Strategies and Regulatory Strategies for review. Making slow progress:

Strategy #1 - Dec 6, 2018 meeting with Mayor William Sapelli, Town Attorney Stephen Buoniconti, Planning Director Marc Strange, CPA Chair Henry Kozloski, CPA Administrator Jen Bonfiglio, Joseph Mineo Vincenzo Ronghi and Corinne Wingard re: Housing Trust or Redevelopment Authority. Not Redevelopment authority, but keep talking about Housing trust and look into further.

Strategy #2 – Housing Committee completed suggested job description.

Strategy # 3 – Town applied for and was approved for CDBG funds.

Strategy # 4 –

Strategy # 5 – Laura Shufelt of Mass Housing Partnership came to Housing Committee meeting and gave info on how complex and difficult it is to convert existing apartments into affordable units to count on Subsidized Housing Inventory.

Strategy #6 – Done.

Strategy #7 –

Strategy #8 – Have talked about infill zoning and Director Strange is getting a grant to draft by-law.

Strategy #9 –

Strategy #10 – have discussed – possibly include in grant.

Strategy #11 –

Strategy #12 – included in grant.

Committee discussed requesting a Joint Workshop with Mayor, City Council, Planning Board, and Housing Committee to review HPP and implementation. Motion by Member Wingard, second by Chair Mineo. All in favor. Chair Mineo will talk with Council Administrative Assistant to set up.

### **3. ZBA Public Hearings:**

Next Public Hearing for 586 Mill St. March 25, 2019.

### **4. January meeting with Manisha Bewtra, Massachusetts Housing Partnership:**

Committee members agreed meeting and presentation very helpful. Ms. Bewtra has not yet sent power point presentation, but getting ready to send some proposals as well. Member Jenney stated ideas good but asked where get money to do this. Member Wingard stated Ms. Bewtra could come out to do meetings and presentations as part of the grant, and all agreed this would be good.

### **5. Project Based Section 8's:**

Member Wingard suggested looking into possibility of getting landlords in town to accept project based Section 8's, as some landlords do have Section 8 vouchers (42 at last known count), because if could get 60 apartments, would get one year of Safe Harbor. Member Wingard will research to confirm that project based Section 8's in town would count on Subsidized Housing Inventory, and if so, how to do this. Member Jenney will talk with landlord at Sutton Place about this.

### **6. Support for proposed housing related legislation:**

CHAPA legislative priorities reviewed and discussed. Member Jenney felt some not do-able, such as funding for right to counsel for tenants facing eviction. CHAPA is holding a Housing Day at the State House March 11<sup>th</sup>. Member Paleologopoulos asked if there were ways of showing support other than going to Housing Day, and said will take more time to research proposed legislation.

### **7. Announcements:**

Member Wingard stated Mass Housing Partnership Spring Housing Institute will be held June 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> in Devens with a focus on rural and suburban affordable housing.

Member Paleologopoulos announced that the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission has developed a very accessible data base where can look up town profile and compare with towns in area. Very comprehensive, civics, demographics, up to 2017 and will update real time data. Member Jenney stated the region is aging and graying, and should market area for senior population.

Next Agenda: First Time Homebuyer Courses for town residents. Non-profit in town, Cambridge Credit Council would do this.

**8. Any other business that may legally come before the committee:**

None.

**Motion to adjourn at 6:37 by Member Wingard, Second by Member Parzyczowski. All in favor.**

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**March 26, 2019**

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

**Members Absent:** Gail Mathes, Vincenzo Ronghi

**Meeting called to order at 6:02 p.m. by Chair Mineo.**

**1. Approval of Minutes of February 26, 2019:**

Motion by Member Jenney, Second by Member Paleologopoulos. All in favor.

**2. Home Buyer Class:**

Member Parzychowski reached out to Cambridge Credit, non-profit agency in town. All programs require different types of education program. When ready to buy. Could do another thing – soft education, with Member Parzychowski, attorney and insurance person. Would support with materials. Could charge small fee, or sponsor by town and no fee. Possibly nominal fee, and refund when participants show up, to avoid registering and not coming. People don't realize there are programs to help buy house. Member Wingard noted Massachusetts Housing Partnership has loan program, but Member Parzychowski feels cumbersome and not many local banks do it. Berkshire Bank does MHP, and possibly Freedom Credit Union. Need to look into ways may be able to count on Subsidized Housing Inventory. Member Parzychowski will be Chair and let committee know what help needed. Will check when room available at Library or Senior Center. Grow first time home-buyer base -growth to town. Lot of people are paying way too much rent who possibly could buy house. Issue home prices in Agawam high.

**3. Review Housing Production Plan and prioritize five local initiative and regulatory strategies recommended in HPP to begin discussion on implementing HPP at Joint Workshop with Mayor, City Council, Planning Board and Housing Committee:**

Member Wingard stated important to implement HPP because: need for affordable housing in town; need to maintain safe harbor to protect against unfriendly 40B developments; and to demonstrate to state that town is working on implementing plan. Member Paelologopoulos noted people don't understand affordable housing, and can be scary. Use power point from MHP to begin meeting. Member Wingard noted joint workshop because different responsibilities for participants and need comprehensive approach for all involved. Send letter to Mayor asking help in setting up

meeting. Consider smaller meeting with Mayor first. Wait until meeting set to discuss priorities.

#### **4. Recommendations for Public Outreach:**

Manisha Bewtra, Massachusetts Housing Partnership consultant for town is leaving the agency April 12, 2019. Sent power point presentation, and email with resources on housing. Member Jenney suggested ask her to send in power point format, so can use for presentation. Ms. Bewtra will send committee plan for public outreach. Question if MHP will have staff to take Ms. Bewtra's place

#### **5. Announcements:**

MHP Spring Housing Institute June 5 & 6, 2019.

CHAPA Breakfast Forum, "Who Shapes Local Housing Decisions" – based on research by Boston University, found local hearings not representative of populations.

Member Jenney, kinds of housing crises – rural homes are getting old. Question where jobs are. Jobs opening up in Pittsfield. Chair Mineo noted Berkshire Mall closing.

#### **6. Next Agenda:**

Member Wingard suggested update from Member Ronghi on possibilities working with Agawam Housing Authority to develop affordable housing, as discussed at meeting with Ms. Shufelt of MHP, e.g. possible use of land at Wade Park. Chair Mineo will reach out to Member Ronghi.

Member Paleogopoulos suggested update on where stand on zoning regulations.

#### **7. Any other business that may legally come before the committee:**

Article in Boston Globe that rent control passed in Seattle.

**Motion to adjourn at 6:50 by Member Parzychowski, second by Member Wingard, all in favor.**