

Town of Agawam Housing Committee
Minutes May 25, 2021

Meeting, held by Zoom, called to order at 6:05 p.m. by Chair Tedeschi.

1. Roll Call: Members Present: Mario Tedeschi, Chair, Corinne Wingard, Secretary, Paul Jenney, Vincenzo Ronghi, Milly Parzychowski, Vice Chair. **Members Absent:** Mark Paleologopoulos, Jeremy Casey. **Others Present:** Marc Strange, Director Planning and Community Development, Becky Basch, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission.

2. Report Age Friendly Agawam Survey Housing Results – Becky Basch, PVPC:

Ms. Basch reported she is working on the final assessment and plan. Once finalized will be submitted to AARP and Age Friendly Agawam. Look at Action Plan and discuss, then conclude in report. Housing Committee would be lead entity on a lot of actions in Action Plan re: housing. Still working on report of survey and results. Found most people live in single family homes and want to stay in community if have to leave homes. Recommend expanding housing choices and opportunities. Pioneer Valley forum on housing June 8th. Ms. Basch will try to have draft by next couple of weeks. Wanted to know what are priorities of Housing Committee and what would lead on. Question how to move forward. Member Ronghi stated could not comment as had just seen material. Possibly Rental Assistance and Aging In Place Sub-Committee have quick meeting. Touch base with Chair and Secretary and plan how to get together and move forward.

3. Approval of Minutes of March 9, 2021 meeting:

Motion to approve by Member Jenney, second by Member Ronghi. Roll call: **Member Parzychowski abstain. All other members in favor.**

4. Report of Subcommittees:

**Community, Public Awareness, Resource Subcommittee.
Rental Assistance and Aging in Place Subcommittee.**

Community, Public Awareness, Resources Subcommittee:

Subcommittee Chair Wingard reported focus on Community Outreach

to thought leaders and stakeholders for support of housing options affordable to all residents of Agawam. Identify who to invite. Suggestions welcome from all. Hold Virtual meeting with CHAPA MEI-lite – all housing committee members invited.

Letters to Editor and Facebook page – gathering and preparing information.

Research information about lower income individuals and families. Number homeless children in school system, number receiving free and reduced lunch. Contact police if have information about homeless individuals. Number of households receiving food stamps. Number of seniors on waiting list for subsidized housing through Agawam Housing Authority. Put faces and stories to numbers. Message these are our friends, neighbors, family, sometimes ourselves.

Publicize improved rental assistance programs. Wayfinders increasing publicity – sign at Phelps School. Consider possibility of volunteers helping people fill out applications as suggested by attorney at Community Legal Services. Rental Assistance program much improved since first started – process simplified, potential more money per household. All committee members do what can personally to publicize.

Member Jenney reported landlord group just met with DHCD and they admit problems. Member Ronghi stated wait list for Agawam Housing Authority now statewide and difficult identify Agawam seniors or families waiting for housing. Secretary Wingard said worth asking Director if any ideas how to get that information.

Rental Assistance and Aging in Place Subcommittee:

Subcommittee Chair Ronghi reported committee will be meeting Thursday. He has gotten information from other cities about first time homebuyers programs using CPA funds. Start, begin to get framework of what would look like. Also how use CPA funds for Aging in Place. Issue deed restriction. Put together first for committee, then Mayor, then Council. CPA has \$1.8 million in unreserved fund and \$800,000. in housing.

Found webpage for housing. Links to all things. Connect to housing committee webpage. Will show to Les Tingley. Once build page not traditional or complicated when look at. Vice Chair Parzchowski said knows designer who may donate time.

Member Ronghi then said why walk away is deed restriction, and how soften deed restriction. Are reasons for it.

5. Discussion of NOAH (Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing) in Agawam:

Planning Director Strange had sent email to committee that Mayor had suggested Housing Committee identify how much NOAH in Agawam. Secretary Wingard reviewed criteria to count on SHI: subsidized so tenant not pay more than 30% of gross income rent, long term affordable, and fair marketed. Chair Tedeschi asked to what end, if no way to convert NOAH housing in town to go towards 10% on SHI. Secretary Wingard said could ask Wayfinders to let Agawam Housing Authority administer Section 8 units in town, so would be project based and count on SHI. Member Ronghi stated Wayfinders has contract and not likely would agree, with which Secretary Wingard agreed. Secretary Wingard also noted could partner with a non-profit to possibly convert existing units to count on SHI, but would need Housing Coordinator to do that.

Chair Tedeschi said need to know our limits and asked if anyone thought we could tackle this. Vice Chair Parzychowski said thought would be an exercise in futility without participation of landlord, and we do not have the expertise to do. Member Ronghi said had this conversation and what steps would take. Get unofficial number even if don't qualify on SHI Talk with Governor for assistance if unofficial number would help us out. Chair Tedeschi suggested getting an intern or have PVPC draw on their data – not a heavy lift for them as they have data. Committee recognizes Mayor's request is valid. Vice Chair Parzychowski suggested could ask to have SHI readjusted for state to have second category. Member Jenney agreed would be useful, but noted can change at a moments notice, for example if Sutton Place were to go condo. Secretary Wingard made a motions to ask the Mayor to contact PVPC to see if they can provide that info from their data base. Second by Member Ronghi. All in favor.

6. Consider recommendation to Mayor and City Council to adjust mill rate per thousand because of rate of appreciation which could negatively impact residents financially, especially senior citizens and lower income families:

Vice Chair Parzychowski said had done some research since talked about this with Subcommittee. Believes next year will be an issue because values have gone up so much. Thinks rate will need to go down more next year because of this. Chair Tedeschi noted Budget Hearing. 1/8% increase in budget, then work with Assessor re: where get money and raise

amount for budget. Member Ronghi stated once have budget, project what state gives, then go to assessor. Would hesitate to make any recommendation as a committee – Mayor and Council have so much information. Could create some sort of friction or frustration in area already is. Chair Tedeschi brought up senior property tax exemption. Will ask assessor what program is and how many get this. Could be something to put on our website. If program exists, possibly put, e.g. \$40,000. toward it. Secretary Wingard stated that State reimburses \$500. for each exemption up to a certain number. There also are exemptions for veterans and legally blind. If get information from Assessor could ask Mayor to publicize.

7. Update CHAPA Membership for Town:

Chair Tedeschi asked how many read all material Secretary sends. Said if not being done by committee members, keep status quo with Secretary Wingard sending information to members. Member Ronghi suggested might be possible to pay for membership with CPA funds. Secretary Wingard said money better spent on other things for housing if not going to be used.

8. Announcements:

Secretary Wingard reported Donaghue Institute just did study on housing needs for region – also reported in Springfield paper. Will send link.

9. Next Agenda:

Special meeting just for two items: Age Friendly Agawam Action Plan recommendations. Report information from Assessor re: property tax exemption. To be scheduled in next week or two.

Motion to adjourn at 7:24 p.m., by Member Ronghi. Second by Vice Chair Parzychowski. Roll call. All in favor.

Town of Agawam
36 Main St., Agawam, MA. 01001

The Agawam Housing Committee will hold a meeting as follows:

Date: August 24, 2021

Time: 6:00 p.m.

Location: Agawam Senior Center Conference Room

AGENDA

1. Roll Call.
2. Approval of Minutes of May 25, 2021 and June 8, 2021.
3. Letter to Mayor to request information regarding NOAH (Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing) in Agawam from PVPC.
4. Creating “Missing Middle” Housing in Agawam.
5. Housing Production Plan.
6. Report of Subcommittees:
 Rental Assistance and Aging in Place Subcommittee.
 Community, Public Awareness, Resource Subcommittee
7. Harvest Festival.
8. Announcements.
9. Next Agenda.
10. Any other business that may legally come before the committee.