

Town of Agawam Housing Committee

Minutes January 26, 2021

Meeting, held by Zoom, called to order at 6:01 p.m. by Chair Tedeschi.

1. Roll Call: Members Present: Mario Tedeschi, Chair, Corinne Wingard, Secretary, Paul Jenney, Vincenzo Ronghi, Mark Paleologopoulos, Jeremy Casey, Milly Parzychowski, Vice Chair.

Others Present: Chris Johnson, City Council President, Marc Strange, Director Planning and Community Development.

2. Approval of Minutes of December 22, 2020 meeting: Motion to approve by Member Jenney, second by Member Casey. Roll call, all in favor.

3. Introduction City Council President Chris Johnson: Chair Tedeschi stated purpose of meeting to discuss what doing as a committee, and what are priorities. Invited Council President Johnson who was instrumental in putting the committee together to refresh committee on where is and where should be doing. Council President Johnson stated six years ago when put committee together knew there would likely be a 40B and committee driving force to promote affordable and accessible housing in Agawam. At this point have done housing study and plan, and look at what other avenues to attract affordable quality housing. Said there is a substantial amount of money in CPA put aside for affordable housing and a good mission would be to look at what other communities are doing with CPA funds and create an action plan. Noted majority of Council did not have appetite to give money to Wayfinders, but there is \$700,000. or \$800,000. sitting there that Town has to spend on affordable housing, can't be appropriated to another use. Member Ronghi stated he thought that should be primary focus, and over time have created a laundry list to do and meet and talk about so many things, but better to pick one thing and as complete, move on to next. Council President Johnson said CPA money could be used for educational materials, for example for first time homebuyers for affordable housing. Situation now on landlord tenant landscape, he is in zoom court every day re: landlord/tenant, and Wayfinders has considerable amount of money. Not all tenants in need have information to access those funds, so perhaps educational programs to educate landlords and tenants about resources and how to access. Could create online educational program, ask Director Strange assist with CPA money. Promote affordable housing. Affordable housing not all income eligible, try to make sure people who grew up in Agawam who are first time homebuyers can stay and provide assistance for seniors who are downsizing,

with means to stay in Agawam. Member Ronghi suggested go out and look for third party to perform seminars, then CPA request to fund. Council President noted some smaller CPA communities had done this and reach out to network for how done. Secretary Wingard said agree about getting experts, but problem is getting people to watch them, and this not just a problem in Agawam. All over state difficulties in getting people connected to help. Member Casey brought up when market properties, majority not getting info from TV. Using Instagram, Linked in, and Facebook. Suggested something like Facebook ads more effective in reaching tenants, and for landlords, as people don't know where to look. People on Facebook 3 to 4 hours per day and one of best directions to go. Noted only five properties for sale in Agawam and Feeding Hills. As far as run first time homebuyer classes, nothing available to come into Agawam. Can be more competitive if offer CPA funds to help with down payment assistance. Promote education by Facebook create an uptick of opportunity in this market, and also in rental assistance. Secretary Wingard noted there are a number of programs for down payment assistance and not sure about restrictions for CPA for private homes. Council President Johnson stated down payment assistance programs all secured by second mortgages, and first step to figure out if permissible to use CPA funds to create down payment assistance program, and market if is. Then in short term, marketing and outreach program for tenants and landlords. Chair Tedeschi said have on Agenda to look purpose of committee and find ways to do what talking about now. If questions for Chris go over, but want to stick to Agenda, and asked Member Ronghi if had something more general, vs. specific to action plan which will get into. Member Ronghi stated to wrap up if help few people with down payment assistance, or go for rental assistance which serve bigger need right now. Chair Tedeschi said has ideas on how can focus, then discuss action plan. Has a plan, so hold off on specific things, supplemental meetings can be more productive. Council President Johnson left meeting, saying know where he is if need him.

4. TOR-2014-2, An Ordinance to Amend the Code of the Town of Agawam to Establish the Agawam Housing Committee, approved May 2014:

WHEREAS – Review and

Discuss. Establishment and Purpose – Review discuss and define actions to achieve.

Duties and

Responsibilities – Review what has been done for each . Discuss possible actions for each. Discuss action plan and responsibility for each:

Chair Tedeschi read WHEREAS and Establishment of Purpose in Ordinance, and asked if everybody agreed this (particular attention to housing opportunities that are affordable to all income levels and abilities) was the focus of this committee, the

direction of committee. Member Casey asked if committee only focused on affordable housing, or housing in general aspect. Chair Tedeschi noted Secretary Wingard had sent information and one email was Ordinance where list nine items (Duties and Responsibilities) and would read. Secretary Wingard noted part of housing strategy is that the more housing can create, especially that's moderate income, up to 120% of AMI, the better will be for town, but the primary responsibility is to pay particular attention to housing that is affordable and accessible to all, but do want an overall housing strategy. Added know that members on committee have variety of views, and o.k. and want all views to be heard, and all probably want to work on different things, but think really need to be on same page about what responsibilities are and about paying particular attention to housing that is affordable and accessible to all, and not ignore or downplay that charge. Thanked Chair Tedeschi for asking if all accept that, and that seemed everybody said yes. Chair Tedeschi stated primary charge, focus is on affordable housing. There are some other things, as mentioned other people may rather focus on something different. Read these nine charges, then break these down into smaller groups and then into Subcommittees. #4 – Active participating in review of MGL Chapter 40B Comprehensive Permit proposals. Not a Subcommittee, would naturally be done by everyone when comes up. Take other eight, and his suggestions. Combine # 1 – Completion of periodic local housing needs studies and #2- Development and implementation of housing action plans. Those two things put together for one Subcommittee. Second Subcommittee, combine #3, #5, and #9: (#3 - Review of and making recommendations on housing proposals that include the creation of housing opportunities that are affordable to households of all income levels and abilities that are seeking local support or permitting, #5 – Review and making recommendations on local zoning and land use regulations to further promote housing that is affordable and/or accessible, and #9 – Identify suitable parcels for affordable and/or accessible housing development). Seem similar charges so put together. Then combine #6, #7, #8 into one Subcommittee: (#6 – Serve as community resource on affordable and/or accessible housing issues, #7 – Increase public awareness through forums, workshops, and other community events, and #8 – Identify available local, state, and federal resources to support their recommendations). Members can serve on all Subcommittees if they want, or if want be on 1 or 2 – don't have to meet all the time. Open for discussion. If want to do that would have to vote to create Subcommittees. Vice Chair Parzychowski asked how define periodic in #1. Secretary Wingard said Housing Production Plan has to be done every five years, but need data from 2020 Census so should wait to act on this until Census data available. Could ask Director Strange to write to DHCD for us, and let them know want to wait on HPP until get those numbers. Vice Chair Parzychowski agreed, rather than working with 2010

numbers, put on hold. Member Ronghi said liked Subcommittees, more of a long term thing. Would like right now have two impact areas that could effect right away, rental assistance and aging in place can start working on right now. Anything else all would be doing is talking about. Put everything else on back burner. Chair Tedeschi said agree, not to say one Subcommittee more important than others, but some are hot needs. Question if meet once a month and one person take lead, or maybe to get done Subcommittee meet once a week, then bring to full Committee. Secretary Wingard agreed working on those things right now is a great idea. Did bring to attention of Mayor and Director Strange trainings that were available about using CPA money for rental assistance. No appetite then for doing that, but bring together as a Subcommittee now. Doesn't mean can't be different groups meeting on other things and call Committee together when needed. Member Casey agreed that most immediate need is rental assistance. Stated presently there are zero rentals in Agawam, on MLS, and last apartment building in Agawam was built 20 years ago. Said think reason bounce all over is there are a lot of housing needs in Agawam, and housing isn't scaling with it. First work on rental assistance. What is available and how let people know about it. Could put on Agawam forums. Then move on to what else is needed. Member Ronghi made a motion to form a Subcommittee to work on rental assistance and aging in place. Secretary Wingard seconded motion. Member Jenney asked if two Committees. Member Ronghi stated put together because would be easier to get through CPA and Council for both. Member Casey asked for clarification on Aging in Place. Member Ronghi said would be things like retro-fitting house so older person could stay in it. Chair Tedeschi asked Member Ronghi to re-state motion for Secretary to write down. Member Ronghi stated motion is to establish a Subcommittee to explore aging in place and rental assistance funding. Second by Secretary Wingard. Roll call, all in favor. Chair Tedeschi said that one Subcommittee, and saw as important areas, 6, 7, 8 – more like advertising, promotion, seem similar, so be it's own Subcommittee. Secretary Wingard said this Subcommittee would be more long term and take broader strategies. Want to increase awareness about more than rental assistance. There's so much information available through CHAPA and Mass Housing Partnership. There are so many resources out there. Want to take longer view. Would be good to collaborate on publicizing. Secretary Wingard made a motion to create a Subcommittee to work on 6, 7, and 8, and work in collaboration with other Subcommittee. Seconded by Vice Chair Parzychowski. Vice Chair Parzychowski asked if able to use social media for any of this. Director Strange said when put anything on Facebook, sends to Les Tingley and he would be intermediary for us. Vice Chair Parzychowski added for each thing doing needed to have a definitive plan, with steps to follow. Member Paleologopoulos suggested separate Forum for Housing Committee, so

not mixed up with things like Covid denial – have our own and put things just related to Housing. Could advertise on other town Forums, just to let people know. Chair Tedeschi said that reason creation second Subcommittee working out those details, and if any further discussion of motion. Secretary Wingard said in relation to Facebook group, at times when posted things about rental assistance has been ugly response, and make broader Housing Committee Forum page. Vice Chair Parzychowski said she could create a Facebook page for the committee, and not activate it. Director Strange said if official Agawam Facebook page has to go through IT Department and if send him email he will ask IT Director. Member Ronghi said would need to have a moderator for Facebook page, and maybe become more informational, with no posts. Member Casey stated social media can be a double edge sword and whole point to get the word out. Secretary Wingard said the more committee can communicate positive things about affordable housing and make it stop being a dirty word, less negative posts will have. Building community support can be done, CHAPA Municipal Engagement Initiative has done it. Chair Tedeschi said Secretary Wingard had made a motion for that Subcommittee, asked for second, had been seconded by Vice Chair Parzychowski, also seconded by Member Casey. Roll call vote, all in favor. Chair Tedeschi said others considering, not prioritized so not consider now. Asked if wanted to vote for members tonight. Member Ronghi said better have people email Chair and Chairs prerogative to assign, need to be careful Subcommittee not make up a quorum. Chair Tedeschi said would like to see formation of Subcommittees, work of Subcommittees get done, and maybe check in, in a couple of weeks, and not have to meet every month. Member Paleologopoulos proposed each Subcommittee first have some plan of what going to do and propose to full committee before go off and do something. Member Ronghi said set up meeting for next month for both Subcommittees to report and get feedback. Chair Tedeschi said each Subcommittee have outline of what want to have done. Secretary Wingard stated when meeting in person again, have space reserved at library for fourth Tuesday of the month, and meeting space very difficult to obtain in Agawam, but will ask library if can reserve same time, and notify in advance if not going to meet so space available to others if needed. Chair Tedeschi added if want to meet before, can Zoom. Asked all to email what Subcommittee want to be on and if want to Chair, and will do tomorrow.

5. Review and Discuss Mission Statement of Agawam Housing Committee: Chair Tedeschi stated covered in previous discussion.

6. CHAPA membership: Secretary Wingard stated had once brought up to Mayor question of where committee members get information, and mandated

training for members of committees, and that where idea of membership in CHAPA came from. Read statement of what CHAPA does. Said after this brought up at last meeting, talked with membership person at CHAPA and there are Municipalities that have memberships. Cost is \$750.00. Secretary Wingard said would be best to have one membership for Town. CHAPA membership person would work with town to set up if pursue. This would be an educational resource for CPA, Planning Department, Housing Committee, and others. Suggested if CPA took lead, might be possible to pay for with Administrative funds. Chair Tedeschi said thought this nice idea, and hopefully would use it and perfect for one of Subcommittees. Member Ronghi stated thinks all administrative funds are allocated, but will find out and email back to committee. If not CPA, could send to town to pay as dues membership. Vice Chair Parzychowski asked if annual fee, which Secretary Wingard confirmed. Vice Chair Parzychowski suggested then ask CPA to build into their annual budget.

7. Announcements: Secretary Wingard reported that at recent zoom meeting, representative of DHCD said they have made recent innovations to Eviction Diversion with special new program to speed up and simplify, including landlords of 20 units or less can apply for tenants, and need to get word out that homeowners can apply too. Also in terms of long term thinking announced that Mass Housing Partnership is having a Workshop February 24th on the Chapter 40B Local Initiative Program, where we can initiate development of housing ourselves, and will send information if anyone interested.

8. Next Agenda: Chair Tedeschi said meeting every month might not be necessary, Review Subcommittees, Agenda can be driven by Subcommittees. Vice Chair Parzychowski asked status of Memo she put together for City Council. Chair Tedeschi will ask Council President Johnson what he thinks. Member Paleologopoulos asked about names of Subcommittees or name themselves, to which all agreed.

9. Any other business that may legally come before the committee: None

Motion to adjourn at 7:42 p.m. by Secretary Wingard, Second by Vice Chair Parzychowski and Member Paleologopoulos. Roll call vote. All in favor.