

Town of Agawam
Housing Committee
Minutes

January 28, 2020

Members Present: Vice Chair Mildred Parzychowski, Mario Tedeschi, Vincenzo Ronghi, Paul Jenney, Corinne Wingard.

Members Absent: Gail Mathes

Others Present: City Councilor Rosemary Sandlin, James Linfield, Project Manager, Wayfinders.

Meeting called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Vice Chair Parzychowski.

1. Approval of Minutes of January 7, 2020 meeting:

Motion to approve by Member Tedeschi, Second by Member Ronghi. Member Jenney abstain, all other members approve.

2. Letter of support for Wayfinders request for funding from DHCD:

Member Ronghi offered to write letter, following format letter for support of CPA application. Motion to approve by Member Jenney, Second by Member Wingard. Member Tedeschi abstain, all other members approve.

Motion to take Agenda out of order to take up number six next by Member Wingard, second by Member Ronghi. All in favor.

6. Update CPA approval of funding for Wayfinders:

Member Ronghi stated James Linfield of Wayfinders made presentation to CPA committee at meeting. Only issue in dialogue was amount of money that should be recommended. Only one no vote on approval, based on disagreement about amount.

Member Wingard reported Resident Will Clark taped this portion of meeting and later posted online. Councilor Bitzas opposed. Has been intensely negative reaction on town forums. Councilor Sandlin stated this not significant, as not representative of town. Member Wingard reported have been great number of negative posts, and Councilor Letellier posted online that would oppose. Member Wingard suggested sending Housing Committee letter of support to Council. Member Ronghi stated Council should be getting that as part of packet so not necessary. Member Wingard said Housing Committee needs to take a stand in support. Member Jenney said tries to respond on forums. Member Ronghi stated Council would approve, or drop amount, or deny. Member Jenney brought up that CPA has done practically nothing for housing. Member Wingard felt state wants to see local support. Also concerned that if not get

enough money, Wayfinders will need to “value engineer” – cut things out to make numbers work.

Mr. Linfield stated funding from several sources, federal tax credits, state tax credits, DHCD – ELI units, and includes a mortgage. Total cost is \$21,745,000, including CPA funds. Amount requested from CPA is less than 2 ½% of funds. \$350,000. per unit. In state, no one below \$400,000. per unit. Wayfinders wants a nice property, not boxes like in the 1970’s and 1980’s. In the 40B process with Agawam ZBA, Wayfinders reached out to ask what wanted – e.g. second exit and two parking spaces per unit, which State DHCD does not understand because more Boston focused. Wayfinders approach is to do the best they can to offer as much as they can and work positively with the town.

3. Report Member Ronghi on Tax Credit Information and Review of Brochure:

Member Ronghi requested item be tabled.

4. Update Housing Seminars:

Vice Chair Parzychowski reported tried set up Senior Center and Cambridge Credit. Member Wingard stated had seen something being held for home buyers at Senior Center. Vice Chair Parzychowski will speak with Senior Center Director Michael Squindo about this. Member Ronghi stated Maureen Cayer, Director of Agawam Housing Authority is having a program at Brady Village next night, thinks through DHCD, and will ask Maureen about this.

5. Update Stakeholders Meeting:

Member Wingard reported meeting was held January 21, 2020, and more meetings to follow. Name will be Housing in Agawam, and purpose of group is to build understanding and support for affordable housing in Agawam. Will gradually grow group to have stronger voice in Community.

Any Other Business that may Legally Come Before the Committee:

Member Jenney expressed concern about possible legislation being considered about Rent Control, which sees as negative, and long term bad effect on those needing affordable housing. Also concern about potential sales tax on real estate which will kill industry. Landlord group working on this. Member Wingard noted there are a great many housing bills being talked about and considered in the state legislature.

Member Ronghi stated would work on brochure, and go over with Member Jenney.

Motion to adjourn at 6:40 by Member Wingard, second by Member Ronghi, All in favor.