

## COMMUNITY RELATIONS SUB-COMMITTEE MINUTES

February 11, 2020

**Present:** George Bitzas - Chair  
Anthony Suffriti – Vice Chair  
Cecilia Calabrese  
Gerald Smith  
Robert Rossi

**Also Present:** Councilors Johnson, Tedeschi, Sandlin, Cavallo and Mercadante, Solicitor Buoniconti, Henry Kozloski, Jennifer Bonfiglio, Wayfinder representative Michele McAdaragh, William Clark, Corrinne Wingard and Susan Grossberg

**Called to Order:** Meeting was called to order by Chair Bitzas at 7:00pm in Community Room at the Agawam Public Library, 750 Cooper Street, Agawam

### AGENDA

#### **1. Approval of the minutes dated November 14, 2019**

Motion to approve were moved and seconded.

The vote was **3 Yes, 0 No, 2 Abstentions** (Councilors Smith and Rossi) approving the minutes.

#### **2. TR-2020-17 - A Resolution appropriating from the Community Preservation Fund and authorizing the expenditure of Community Preservation Funds to assist in the creation of Community Housing at 586 Mill Street, Lot 4, as proposed by Wayfinders, Inc. (CPA)**

Discussion was had. The CPA Committee sent a positive recommendation for this item. Councilor Calabrese abstained from any discussion as she has a conflict of interest due to rental property management. Councilor Rossi does not believe Agawam should be using CPA funds for private development. He does not believe this project serves the purposed of Agawam and there in not a tenancy plan. He wondered if there was a guarantee of units specifically for Agawam residents. Councilor Smith asked if there was a percentage of units set aside for seniors (Michele McAdaragh from Wayfinders said this was not possible). Michele McAdaragh addressed concerns about income restricted units and dealing with people that violate housing rules. Wayfinders received a private acquisition loan when they bought the land but have been in the process of putting funding together. The Northampton and Amherst projects have been funded in this way and she noted a 70% preference to local residents. There will be twenty one one-bedroom units. People put their names in a lottery. CPA did their Housing Needs Assessment three years ago and that is posted on the town website. Councilor Suffriti asked how much was the state match for CPA funds. The answer is currently the state match is 30 cents per one dollar and suggested reducing the CPA contribution for this project. Councilor Bitzas discussed using CPA fund to renovate existing buildings with this money for affordable housing. He cannot support this because it would be a slap in the face to the people of this town because they opposed the sale of that property to Wayfinders in the first place. Wayfinders paid \$16 million for the old Peter Pan Building to use for their headquarters and did a capital campaign to get the money for it, sold tax credits and have a mortgage on that property. Councilor Suffriti would like to ask the Solicitor what would happen if we reject using CPA funds for this property – are we jeopardizing the future of the town if we say no to this. Solicitor said it was not a problem.

Motion to send a negative recommendation to the Full Council made by Councilor Rossi and seconded by Councilor Smith.

The vote was **4 Yes, 0 No, 1 Abstention** (Councilor Calabrese) to send a negative recommendation to the Full Council.

**3. TR-2020-18 - A Resolution appropriating from the Community Preservation Fund and authorizing the expenditure of Community Preservation Funds for the construction of the Learning Tree Conservation Park at the Agawam High School (CPA)**

Motion to send a positive recommendation to the Full Council made by Councilor Rossi and seconded by Councilor Suffriti.

The vote was **5 Yes, 0 No**.

**4. Any other business that may legally come before the Committee.**

None.

**5. Adjournment.**

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:00pm

Respectfully submitted,

George Bitzas, Chair  
Community Relations Sub-Committee