

Town of Agawam
Housing Committee
Minutes

February 25, 2020

Members Present: Paul Jenney, Corinne Wingard, Mario Tedeschi

Members Absent: Gail Mathes, Milly Parzychowski, Vincenzo Ronghi

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

Meeting called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Member Wingard, as Vice Chair Parzychowski had emailed would be delayed.

Member Wingard stated presence of Councilor Sandlin made a quorum for the meeting, as per former Councilor Mineo, according to Council rules, a Councilor could fill in at committee meetings to make a quorum.

1. Approval of Minutes of January 28, 2020 meeting:

Motion to approve by Member Tedeschi, second by Member Jenny, all in favor.

2. Motion by Member Wingard to change order of Agenda to take up item 5, which Member Jenney corrected was 5a, since there were two item 5's on agenda. Second by Member Tedeschi, all in favor

5a. Review City Council response to Wayfinders application for CPA funds. Implications, and possible follow up by housing committee:

Member Wingard suggested regardless of final decision by Council on CPA funding for Wayfinders, several things had come up at the Council meeting that committee could follow up on that would be positive for housing in town. During meeting Councilors had discussed creating a Housing Trust, and using CPA funds to benefit current residents through various approved CPA uses. Member Wingard had seen Chris Dunphy while at meeting at PVPC, and talked briefly about PVPC creating some of these programs for Agawam, perhaps following model used for CBDG funds. All present agreed both would be good to do.

Councilor Sandlin noted Councilors are not knowledgeable about Housing Trusts and suggested Council Workshop to familiarize Council with what Trusts are and how they work. Member Wingard raised question of public input, as the public does not comment or ask questions at Council Workshops. Member Tedeschi suggested start with Council Workshop, then have meeting at a later date with public, and all agreed. Member Wingard noted MHP has trainings on Municipal Housing Trusts- very technical.

Member Tedeschi asked if MHP would come to Agawam and Member Wingard said thinks so and will ask. Member Wingard will contact Council President Johnson about setting up Council Workshop on Housing Trusts.

Councilor Sandlin noted that the town had been sued years ago when a farmer wanted to build a dormitory for his Jamaican workers and members of the public spoke in a derogatory manner about this. She is concerned that some individuals in town are expressing their opposition to Rosewood Way funding in a derogatory manner, and does not want the town to be sued again. Member Wingard agreed, adding that in addition to being sued, the town had been fined by the U.S. Dept of Justice, Office of Civil Rights.

Member Wingard suggested that in addition to following up on starting a Housing Trust and creating programs to use CPA funds for current residents as positive outcomes of the CPA application by Wayfinders, it would be good for Housing Committee members to reach out to people they know who would be in favor of Wayfinders application, and ask them to call Councilors or come to Citizens Speak at next Council meeting in support. Mr. Linfield asked that Committee members have anyone who can, come to speak to the Council, and to ask people to contact other supporters to contact Councilors.

Councilor Sandlin asked Mr. Linfield how many one bedroom apartments in other Wayfinders developments are occupied by seniors, what the income levels are and the amount of rents paid. Also, if there was a way to determine how many residents obtained apartments through local preference. Mr. Linfield agreed to send information about income levels and rent, and will request information on number of seniors and local preference as he does not have this information.

Motion to adjourn at 6:27 since Councilors had to leave to attend Academic A's at high school, and committee would no longer have a quorum, by Member Jenney, second by Member Tedeschi, all in favor.