

Town of Agawam  
Housing Committee  
**Minutes**  
**May 28, 2019**

**Members Present:** Joseph Mineo, Chair, Paul Jenney, Mark Paleologopoulos, Gail Mathes, Corinne Wingard.

**Members Absent:** Mildred Parzychowski, Vincenzo Ronghi.

**Other Present:** Mayor William Sapelli, Director of Planning and Economic Development, Marc Strange.

**Meeting called to order at 6:03 p.m. by Chair Mineo.**

**1. Approval of Minutes of April 23, 2019:**

Motion by Member Paleologopoulos, Second by Member Jenney, Members Paleologopoulos, Jenney, and Wingard in favor, Members Mathes and Mineo abstain.

**2. Home Buyer Class:**

Motion by Member Paleologopoulos to move to end of Agenda since Member Parzychowski not yet present. Second by Member Wingard. All in favor

**3. Review Recommendations from Manisha Bewtra, Massachusetts Housing Partnership re: Public Outreach:**

Member Paleologopoulos stated that committee had requested MHP continue to work with town. Member Wingard said request sent to MHP for a new person, but don't know how quickly they will be able to assign a new person, and suggested there were recommendations that committee could start working on, such as identifying specific stakeholders. Member Paleologopoulos suggested wrapping in with Home Buyers class.

Director Strange stated lot of people are surprised at the amount of income that is allowed at up to 80% of Area Median Income to qualify for subsidized affordable housing, which is \$49,700. for single person, and \$70,950. for a family of four, much higher than people would expect.

Mayor Sapelli stated people don't understand the difference of what counts as affordable housing on the State Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) because there is a lot of naturally affordable housing in Agawam with lower rents, especially in North Agawam. Member Wingard agreed, noting the term NOAH, Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing, that is used. Director Strange stated there is specific criteria that must be met for units to count on the SHI toward the

10% standard set by the state, such as fair marketing, deed restricted for long time, and subsidized. Mayor Sapelli said that it is very complicated and people don't understand it. Director Strange noted it is very bureaucratic. Member Jenney stated Sutton Place rents, as an example are \$1,200. for a two-bedroom apartment, including electricity which is heat source.

Member Paleologopoulos asked if the Agawam Advertiser had ever done an interview format about housing and Member Wingard reported this has not been done. Mayor Sapelli informed committee that he has hired an individual for the IT department to monitor all media in all areas for the town, cable, website, facebook, and suggested that he and Director Strange could do an interview about housing for our cable station. The new person will start in a week or two.

Member Wingard suggested we could talk with small groups, like the Ministers lunch, and Member Mathes suggested groups such as the Garden Club or Rotary. Member Wingard said Members could also talk together about messaging and suggested Frameworks Playbook as a good source of information in addition to those recommended by Ms. Bewtra.

Director Strange has reached out to Waltham where a CDC has a proposal for NOAH, using CPA funds for the subsidy, but not yet received information. Member Wingard said there is information in our Housing Production Plan that owners of apartments can donate them to a non-profit for a tax credit, of 50% or possibly more and that this may be a good avenue to pursue. Also noted that 25% of the units in an apartment complex must be affordable for it to count on the SHI and that when Laura Shufelt of Massachusetts Housing Partnership met with committee, she had said this is very difficult because of the amount of money required and that she has not seen it done.

Director Strange stated it may be awhile before MHP can assign a new person for town. Member Wingard will keep committee informed of status.

#### **4. Discuss June 25, 2019 Housing Committee meeting with Mayor, City Council, and Planning Board, 6:00 p.m. at Senior Center:**

Member Wingard apologized to Mayor for not realizing this was a School Committee night and Mayor stated he will come and stay for as long as can.

Discussion will be led by Laura Shufelt, from MHP, and Member Wingard will share committee's thinking with her.

Member Wingard said had talked about starting with brief power point presentation. Mayor Sapelli thought this was a good idea, but emphasized it should be very brief – five or ten minutes at the most, and not be too detailed. Feeling of committee that too much data turns people off. Committee agreed to include statement of Agawam's housing needs, presentation/discussion of Housing

Production Plan, and what has been accomplished so far. Also importance of maintaining local control of affordable housing development, which can be done through HPP.

Committee discussed prioritizing the twelve strategies in the HPP, and decided to present three at the meeting.

Director Strange reported that 12. Adopt an accessory apartment ordinance to expand housing options is in process. Also 4. Secure CDBG funds for a home rehab program, and 5. Secure CDBG funds for “Aging in Place Program”.

All agreed that first two should be included. 1. Build local capacity with the creation of a municipal housing trust or re-development authority. Member Wingard noted that a re-development authority could only do blighted housing, while a housing trust is broader and able to create new housing. 2. Build local capacity by hiring or contracting a part time housing coordinator. Member Wingard suggested this could be done on a consulting basis as there are individuals in the area who have retired from the housing field who might be willing to consider consulting, and could be set up as needed.

Member Paleologopoulos suggested 6. Foster partnership initiatives with landlords to upgrade existing apartment complexes and convert to affordable housing. Member Wingard expressed concern about how difficult this was to accomplish, but agreed, and stated could at the least grow understanding about NOAH apartments in town. Member Jenney stated there may be ways to provide the needed funding by offering services in lieu of cash subsidy, such as snow plowing very large apartment lots.

Member Wingard asked if should send any materials to Council about HPP prior to meeting, however committee felt best to start with presentation. Member Jenney suggested sending Council list of twelve priorities after the meeting.

Members discussed setting of meeting. There could potentially be up to 25 people in attendance with Mayor, members of City Council, Planning Board, and Housing Committee and Ms. Shufelt. Member Wingard and Director Strange will go early to set up space at Senior Center and all who can are invited to help. Refreshments were discussed. Director Strange stated senior center often left coffee, water, and cookies for meetings.

Member Paleologopoulos will create the power point for the meeting to include what have in Agawam, what need, Housing Production Plan, what have accomplished, three priorities, and maintaining local control. Goal is to make meeting interesting and for everyone to learn from it. Member Wingard will send information for this to Member Paleologopoulos, then send power point to Laura Shufelt of MHP when done. Director Strange will contact senior center for power point equipment and cookies.

**5. Announcements:**

None

**6. Next Agenda:**

Agenda for June Meeting will be Meeting with Mayor, Council, Planning, Board, and Committee.

Agenda for July Meeting –

Member Paleologopoulos made a motion to table 1. Home buyer class from this agenda and put on July Agenda. Second by Member Wingard. All in favor.

Member Wingard suggested use of land behind Brady Village and Wade park for housing, discussed in meeting with Laura Shufet. Director Strange stated still an issue about ownership of land. Can put on Agenda and discuss how could proceed with this.

**7. Any other business that may legally come before the committee:**

Member Wingard noted that Ordinance creating housing committee called for periodic housing needs assessment, but did not define periodic. Will try to find out if there is a common standard used or recommended.

Member Paleologopoulos asked about housing committee providing information on request for 70% local preference for 586 Mill St. as discussed at last meeting, and Director Strange reported 40B consultant from MHP had sent an email stating this was not necessary. Member Wingard had sent email to all members.

**Motion to adjourn at 7:02 p.m. by Member Wingard, second by Member Paleologopoulos, all in favor.**