

Housing Committee
Minutes
June 25, 2019

Members Present: Joseph Mineo, Chair, Paul Jenney, Mark Paleologopoulos, Gail Mathes, Corinne Wingard, Mildred Parzychowski, Vincenzo Ronghi

Others Present: City Councilor Rosemary Sandlin, City Councilor Dino Mercadante, City Councilor Anthony Suffretti, City Councilor Paul Cavallo, City Councilor Cecelia Calabrese, Planning Board Member Violet Baldwin, Planning Board Member Mario Tedeschi, Town Attorney Steven Buoniconti, Director of Planning and Economic Development, Marc Strange. Massachusetts Housing Partnership Director of Community Assistance and Strategic Partnerships Susan Connelly, Community Members Magda Galliotis, and Donna Jago.

Meeting called to order at 6:07 p.m. by Chair Mineo.

1. Welcome by Chair Mineo to Mayor, City Council, Planning Board, and Housing Committee, and Introduction of Susan Connelly, Director of Community Assistance and Strategic Partnerships, Massachusetts Housing Partnership.

Chair Mineo welcomed all in attendance, thanking them for coming and introduced Susan Connelly, MHP Director of Community Development and Strategic Partnerships. (Note: Mayor, who has attended prior Housing Committee Meetings, Charing School Committee Meeting).

2. Agawam Housing Workshop - Power Point Presentation

What We Have

What We Need

Housing Production Plan

Accomplishments

Recommendations

Priorities

3. Discussion:

Power Point Presentation and Discussion were combined.

Ms. Connelly said her role is how to move the conversation re: affordable housing forward in a realistic manner that gives what is happening and what is possible in the community. She then gave a brief introduction to MHP, stating they help communities move forward, and could give examples of what other communities have done. Can talk about what available in state so not hit roadblocks.

Ms. Connelly thanked Agawam for being a Purple Heart Community, noting that her father-in-law is buried in the Veterans Cemetery in Town.

She then asked how many had read the Housing Production Plan, noting that any time there is a conversation about difficult issues, people make assumptions, and the more informed of facts, the better the conversation.

What We Have: Ms. Connelly asked how many people live in a house with an empty bedroom, saying we are in a demographic moment where people are living longer, and staying in their homes. Things are changing. As people age, housing needs are different, e.g. stairs, as try to age in place. There are limits on housing type production across the state. Knows 40B is contentious, but we have had 50 years since it passed to get housing stock up to 10% on the subsidized housing inventory – to get more diverse types of housing with some affordability. People are trying to figure out how to control zoning so control housing destiny and we can do that. North Redding example. Had a zone that denied development and just rezoned so level of control community has.

What We Need: In Agawam diversity of income. Be conscious of who are talking about re: affordable housing – our friends, our family, ourselves, which is not realized. Agawam Housing Production Plan identified seven primary needs. When think accessibility (for affordable housing) so much broader than what talk about in coffee shops and online forums. Foreclosures are less of a problem than at time of Housing Needs Assessment. All housing needs are about creating a diverse housing type.

Accomplishments: CBDG grants and Ordinance for accessory dwellings in progress.

Priorities of Housing Committee: A Redevelopment Authority doesn't let do more than a Housing Authority. Housing Trust makes more sense. Can have volunteers vs. paid staff. Part time Housing Coordinator – communities often share or someone in area consult – let know if grant opportunities – keep you in the loop. Ensure affordable housing on Subsidized Housing Inventory remains affordable and not fall out of compliance. Partnerships with landlords are difficult – haven't seen successful – especially an issue if public money.

Problem with development targeting 2 or 3 family homes. Code now is if invest more than 30% of value of home, have to bring up to compliance, including with ADA regulations. Mass Inc/Commonwealth may drive legislation for a Commission to address that.. Not the case for single family homes.

Councilor Sandlin raised issue that there are a lot of apartments in town and as rehab, could make affordable. Would need consultant to do that. Like triple decker. Ms. Connelly stated need to have clear idea of what want coordinator to do. Zoning look at adoption of accessory apartments. Look at how Agawam's CPA money is used. Look at how count on Subsidized Housing Inventory. Know want to do rental, if 25% of units at 80% of Area Median Income, all count on Subsidized Housing Inventory.

Councilor Sandlin asked if developer wanted to do large number of rental apartments, how do it. Ms. Connelly replied would do a LIP (Local Initiated Project). Negotiate with developer for % of units to be at 80% or less. Town and developer do joint application. Member Ronghi asked why would developer do it – what's in it for them. Councilor Sandlin replied if developer asking for an ordinance, e.g. three story

buildings, negotiate with developer for them to get it - inclusionary zoning. Noted with 25% at 80% of area income, developer still getting decent rent. Ms. Connelly pointed out that if had a coordinator, and know there are lower income people in need of housing, could buy down a couple of units at 50% - start using other resources. Math problem. Stated every community should have inclusionary bylaw so not doing as a "one-off". Look at Community Tool Box online. MHP can help communities write inclusionary zoning that makes sense for them. Trust can bring people together to properly inform conversation. Want Inclusionary Zoning that is predictable, transparent, in writing on your website, so know what talking about. There are great case examples about how to work with town. If have done nothing, makes opportunity for thing that don't want to happen more likely to happen.

Councilor Sandlin stated developer, especially big developers out of Boston, have more experience with this than we do. Ms. Connelly stated if have Inclusionary Zoning it's simple math – clear, transparent, prescriptive. Member Wingard stated the more people understand the advantages of Inclusionary Zoning the better.

Ordinance requires 2/3 vote – 8 votes. Ms. Connelly stated there is a way for professionals to come in - for MHP to pay for consultant, to show what is feasible and what would look like for Agawam. "One-offs" are a slippery slope. Broader inclusionary zoning ordinance gives us power and legal power. MHP would provide funding and resource referrals if the City Council is serious about Inclusionary Zoning and there is real support for getting this done. Would need a letter from the Council saying are committed to looking at issue, and feasibility of moving forward - understanding fiscal reality, and how would be community wide zoning initiative for inclusionary zoning. There was general discussion if this should be responsibility of the Mayor or the City Council, and Ms. Connelly stated need to come from City Council.

Director Strange reported Housing Committee has talked about an infill bylaw for non-conforming lots, and there is a meeting about this tomorrow.

Ms. Connelly stated part of integrated strategic plan – great if active Habitat for Humanity in area. "Pick up truck" developer not have expertise to do this. Asked if any town owned property or tax title property. Put all pieces together. MHP has bunched together properties – do analysis top 10 feasible, then "windshield analysis" (drive by and look at), then RFP to select developers. Brought some trust money. Host of things come together. All a puzzle that comes together. State wants to help. Resources - land, CPA. Ms. Connelly working with Quincy Housing Authority with surplus land.

Town has Tuckahoe Turf land – already some building lots.

Accessory Dwellings – what get out of that can be complicated. Talk with other communities that have had Accessory Dwelling Unit for a while. Be careful how structure and how use.

Funds to hire consultant. Ms. Connelly stated can only use CPA administrative money. MHP and Department of Revenue disagree about this, and think this will change. Committed affordable rental housing.

If town owned land, hire consultant with CPA, to look at feasibility of site. Attorney Buoniconti stated we don't have land. Ms. Connelly suggested look at other public land, not just town owned land.

DHCD has money for Public Housing - deteriorated FCI (Facility Condition I - ?)

General discussion of funding – and how Agawam has not qualified for funding, e.g. because schools kept in good condition. Ms. Connelly stated sees lack of funds for schools, housing, etc. because State has embraced a no tax environment. We created our own problem, and lack of Federal support.

Member Wingard asked about funding from MHP for Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance, wanting to make sure understood clearly. Ms. Connelly repeated that MHP will give us funds to give us the facts to help pass it. Data has to be real. Town has a ton of control. Request has to come from the City Council. MHP will not pay for analysis (\$10,000), if Council philosophically opposed.

4. Maintaining Local Control: Why Important and how Housing Production Plan can help to achieve/

Not discussed.

5. Next Steps.

Councilor Suffretti suggested Housing Committee put together something about Inclusionary Zoning for Council President Johnson to look at. Council President then give to Town Attorney, then put to up or down vote of Council. Councilor Suffretti stated we will get it (affordable housing) without our control or get it with our own control.

Members discussion of what Inclusionary Zoning would do and MHP providing funding to move it along. Member Parzychowski made a motion to put forth a proposal to the City Council recommending adopting an Inclusionary Zoning Bylaw, based on research and information that MHP would fund. Second by Member Paleologopoulos. All in favor.

Motion to adjourn at 7:24 p.m. by Member Mathis, Second by Member Parzychowski. All in favor.