

Town of Agawam  
Housing Committee  
**Minutes**  
**August 25, 2020**

**Members Present:** Chair Mario Tedeschi, Vice Chair Millie Parzychowski, Secretary Corinne Wingard, Jeremy Casey, Paul Jenney, Mark Paleologopoulos.

**Members Absent:** Vincenzo Ronghi

**Others Present:** Marc Strange, Director Planning and Community Development

**Meeting, held by Zoom, called to order at 5:34 p.m. by Chair Tedeschi.**

**1. Approval of Minutes of July 29, 2020 meeting:**

Motion to approve by Vice Chair Parzychowski, second by Member Jenny, all in favor except Member Casey who abstained.

**2. Use of CPA funds for Rental Assistance:**

Member Jenney suggested wait until see what money get from RAFT before go to CPA. Secretary Wingard said can almost guarantee money not going to last. Member Jenney said know that but start with this, noting at the last housing committee meeting Member Ronghi had said was hearing negative reaction from home owners in town about helping renters, when they are the ones who pay taxes, which may effect Council's willingness to approve program. Secretary Wingard noted later in meeting was brought up that there is emergency assistance available for homeowners which Member Ronghi thought would make a difference. Said will be something like 494 households in Agawam that will need assistance according to Metropolitan Area Planning Council, so would suggest that recommend that town do this and put it in place, and Mayor decides when to start it, but there and ready to go. Noted takes two meetings for CPA to act on application, which is two months, and two meetings for City Council to approve which is another month, for a total of three months before program could begin to be set up. Vice Chair Parzychowski asked about application process and set amount for each person, and person who owns property has to agree not to evict. Secretary

Wingard stated there is a whole process in place and if go to Mass Housing Partnership, mhp.net and type in CPA rental assistance can get information.

Secretary Wingard stated even Monson has program of \$200,000, for up to \$5,000. per household, being administered by Wayfinders.

Member Jenney stated agree with putting in place. Said he was privy to a meeting with the head of Housing Court and looking at between 20,000 and 25,000 evictions when the moratorium ends, so agrees there will be a need. Secretary Wingard added concern for small landlords in town being able to get money they need. Brought up that CPA can go up to 100% so suggest recommend that Agawam program help households earning up to 100% of Area Median Income and think there will be plenty of town residents with incomes up to 100% of AMI who will need help. Vice Chair Parzychowski stated that's roughly a \$20,000 difference in income and definitely think there's enough people needing help. In mortgage industry have had instances where people who haven't lost income and aren't paying their rent. Secretary Wingard stated to receive help have to show lost income related to COVID-19. Chair Tedeschi asked how this would work – if anyone has pulse on how works if getting additional \$600 month, or if will still be a need out there. Vice Chair Parzychowski said unemployment only gives about 60% of earnings, up to a cap, so know much less. Chair Tedeschi said knew definitely would still be a need, but wanted to know what hearing. Then asked what next pro-active step, what do if want to move forward, if need to make CPA application. Vice Chair Parzychowski asked if should make a motion to ask CPA to pursue this option. Secretary Wingard suggested ask Mayor. Vice Chair Parzychowski made a motion to request Mayor to instruct CPA to investigate and implement a rental assistance program for those residents who would fit. Secretary Wingard said actually have to apply to CPA to do it, so suggest modify to request Mayor to apply to CPA to put in place a program to use emergency rental assistance funds for households earning up to 100% of AMI, who can't pay because have lost income due to COVID, and that the Mayor determine the start date of the program. Vice Chair Parzychowski so modified motion. Chair Tedeschi raised question if we're asking the Mayor to go thru the formal process of applying to CPA, or would he kick it back to us to do. Secretary Wingard said would like to see town administration do the application and asked Director Strange what thought. Director Strange stated need an applicant and a program

manager, and suggested Housing Committee could make application to CPA. Gave example of Historical Commission where Commission was the applicant and he was the program manager and wonder if Housing Committee be the applicant. Secretary Wingard gave example of Director of Parks and Recreation making many CPA applications for recreational programs, and asked who on housing committee would do the application. Director Strange stated town had looked at this when COVID first hit and have program documents and CPA application not difficult, just quick summary on first page and submit documents have. Chair Tedeschi said was thinking housing committee has to do something vs. Mayor and maybe he would support but not be applicant – maybe contact him and see how he would like to see it put through. Secretary Wingard then said maybe go back to Vice Chair Parzychowski's original motion to ask the Mayor to pursue this, rather than to actually apply and the idea being to have the program in place if it's needed, and the Mayor determine the start date. Vice Chair Parzychowski said committee could start working on CPA application and someone else finish if we're not sure where to go in what area. Committee could make CPA application, and maybe ask Mayor what he thought. Secretary Wingard said key that Mayor determine start date because a number of City Council meetings ago, Council President had said he, Mayor and Town Attorney wanted to wait and see what funds received from State and Federal governments for rental assistance. The problem with that is absolutely sure there will not be enough money for everybody, for the whole 20,000 eviction potential people. And since it takes months to go through the process with CPA, need to say want to have program in place. Vice Chair Parzychowski then made a motion that the housing committee ask the Mayor to pursue the use of CPA funds for temporary emergency rental assistance for Agawam households earning up to 100% of Area Median Income, who have lost income due to COVID-19, so the funds will be in place, since it takes three months for an application to go through the CPA and City Council process for approval. Second by Secretary Wingard. All in favor.

### **3. Review draft letter to City Council about beginning dialogue re: zoning:**

Vice Chair Parzychowski stated letter not completed as needs to get some dates to include in letter, and will send out draft.

#### **4. Update progress with landlords about need for rental assistance:**

Director Strange reported hasn't gotten to list yet, and will do. Chair Tedeschi asked if part of reason for doing this was to justify need for CPA application. Also stated he and Member Jenney could help out. Concerned to make sure landlords are aware that there are programs available for their tenants to get help to pay rent owed.

#### **5. Publicizing financial assistance available for tenants and homeowners unable to pay housing costs due to COVID-19: Cable presentation, flyers, other:**

Chair Tedeschi asked what could do to kick start this, and if any funds available to committee to do this. Member Jenney stated committee does not have any money. Secretary Wingard agreed, and said would have to be voluntary effort by committee members. Member Jenny stated he is working with a couple of landlord groups that are doing this. Member Casey stated there are a lot of different groups and one, the Western Mass Real Estate Investors Group uses Facebook a lot. He could post information there. Secretary Wingard said would send out link to flyers created by Wayfinders again. Asked all members to publicize to their networks. Stated Wayfinders is willing to print flyers for committee and town to distribute.

Secretary Wingard reported that she with Vice Chair Parzychowski, and Members Ronghi and Jenney will do the presentation for cable TV. Member Ronghi had advised that he has a zoom account where can do the presentation, then go back to modify if want. Will meet via zoom to plan what want to cover before doing zoom presentation. Feel more important to get it right than to do quickly. Noted according to Metropolitan Area Planning Council study of need for financial assistance for housing due to COVID, there are 494 households in Agawam that will need help, but as of last week only 15 households in Agawam had applied to Wayfinders.

#### **6. Housing Trust for Agawam:**

Member Jenney stated there has not been any appetite for creating this by town leaders. Secretary Wingard said may be more now with situation created by pandemic. Chair Tedeschi noted there is an advantage to having a Trust in place so money can be more easily used when needed.

Secretary Wingard reported that there had been a meeting December 6, 2018, with Mayor, then Housing Committee Chair Mineo, Secretary Wingard, Member Ronghi, CPA Chair Kozloski, Attorney Buoniconti, Director Strange, and CPA Administrator Bonfiglio. Attorney Buoniconti had suggested best to take baby steps, and “bake internally”. Discussion of researching what other towns have done, and suggestion to have Shelly Goering of Massachusetts Housing Partnership come out and talk with CPA and City Council about Housing Trusts, but not done. All agreed Chair Tedeschi speak with Mayor about what he sees as first steps. Secretary Wingard suggested when speaking with Mayor, Chair Tedeschi also ask about what town can do to publicize emergency financial assistance for households in need due to COVID-19.

**Any Other Business That May Legally Come Before the Committee:**

None.

**Motion to adjourn at 6:20 by Vice Chair Parzychowski. Second by Member Paleologopoulos. All in favor.**