

Town of Agawam  
Housing Committee  
**Minutes**  
**September 25, 2018**

**Members Present:** Joeph Mineo, Paul Jenney, Mildred Parzychowski, Vincenzo Ronghi, Corinne Wingard,

**Others Present:** Mayor William Sapelli, City Councilor Dino Mercadanti, City Councilor Rosemary Sandlin, Will Clark,

**Meeting called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chair Mineo.**

**1. Approval of Minutes of August 28, 2018:**

Motion to approve minutes by Member Parzychowski, Second by Member Ronghi. All in favor.

**2. Mass Housing Partnership – Laura Shufelt:**

Ms. Shufelt presented information about MHP, the Massachusetts Housing Partnership, which is a quasi-state organization, established by the legislature which does not receive any money from the State. They use private investment to build affordable housing and have built over 22,000 units, (with \$1.1 billion dollars )(since 1992). MHP administers the One Mortgage program, for home ownership for low and moderate income families. The Community Assistance Team which she is part of works with communities, Housing Authorities, and non-profits, providing direct technical assistance. They provide workshops and trainings, community engagement if needed to get consensus, 40-B consultants if needed to help smooth the process, Publications, and can hire third party consultants for (land/engineering). They can help talk about zoning and how it can hinder housing development. The fourth leg of the stool is the Housing Data Center.

Ms. Shufelt reviewed the Data about Agawam which Member Wingard had requested from the Data Center. From 2007 to 2011 the rental vacancy rate in Agawam was 6.7% which is considered healthy.

Since 2012 to 2016 the vacancy rate is 2.3%, which shows the demand for housing is not being met – for all housing, not just affordable. The demographics show Agawam is an aging community, at a higher rate than the rest of the county. There is a large population over age 65 working full time, not leaving their homes. This gives ideas for housing looking to produce, help shape strategies want to pursue.

Member Ronghi asked for information about help working with Housing Authorities, as he is a Commissioner for the Agawam Housing Authority. Ms Shufelt said if a Housing Authority has surplus land MHP can help get a developer. Since 1987 there has been no new state public housing and about the same for HUD. The Housing Authority must get permission from DHCD to make the land surplus, then decide what want to do, then do an RFP to developers for what want. The process is that the Housing Authority declares the land surplus, then DHCD has to approve. She has never seen them decline. Once the DHCD approval is done, does not have to go through DHCD. The land has to be used for affordable housing and meet 40 B guidelines. Could be mixed income, then at least 25% at 80% of Area Median Income. Once the contract is awarded to the developer, the Housing Authority is hands off. Can do a 99 year lease, but cannot have control. Member Ronghi stated Agawam Housing Authority does have surplus land at Wade Park. Ms. Shufelt said she would happy to help, that she does it all the time and Member Ronghi said he would be in touch.

Member Wingard asked about working with existing landlords of what are essentially de-facto affordable apartments to qualify them to be on the Subsidized Housing Inventory. Ms. Shufelt stated apartments must be deed restricted for at least fifteen years. Needs to be a local action – do something. The tenants are not counted until the units turn over and are affirmatively fair marketed. Need to do present value of units and determine how much landlord losing if do this, then twenty-five years to pay off for deed restriction, per unit. Can use CPA money to buy down unit, but CPA funds are in perpetuity. Local action, beside funding could be a special permit, e.g. higher density to add units to

existing land. Existing units only count at turnover. Has to be 25% of all units at 80% or less of Area Median Income for all units to count on the SHI . Cannot put all in same building – has to be dispersed.

Members Ronghi and Jenney noted that current residents are already income eligible. Ms. Shufelt said that has to be deed restricted.

Councilor Sandlin stated town owns many acres, for example Tuckahoe Turf, and that town at times takes land for tax title. Asked about senior housing. Ms. Shufelt stated that age restricted housing is not a priority for funding sources. To get financing, if town donates land, have to be able to show that have family housing somewhere. Councilor Mercadante asked about family housing creating demand on services of town. Ms. Shufelt responded town does it with market rate housing, saying the average tax is \$3,500. and the per pupil cost is \$15,900. Adding more students, makes the per pupil cost go down, and multi-family housing usually pays for itself. Services for seniors also add to costs of services, with transportation and ambulances. Member Ronghi stated cost comparison would be \$15,000. per child, and \$30,000. per senior. Councilor Sandlin noted added cost of debt for Senior center and for PVT A.

Member Ronghi asked if Housing Authority can restrict housing to seniors, and Ms. Shufelt stated this is not a priority for funding. Member Jenney stated need to make sure all elderly accessible and put services there. Ms. Shufelt stated can do age-friendly housing and AARP has a housing campaign for age-friendly communities. Noted housing developments need to have 10% three bedroom units. Member Wingard stated not all seniors want to live in senior only developments. Ms. Shufelt said she has seen developers do one and two bedroom flats next to three bedroom town houses.

Member Ronghi asked about Housing Authority giving land to city if succeeds in declaring surplus, and trading for part of Tuckahoe. Ms. Shufelt said swapping land can be done, but the regulations say that Housing Authority land has to be used for housing when declared surplus.

Ms. Shufelt stated to qualify existing apartments for SHI has to be a local action piece. There has to be a whole marketing plan which costs a lot of money as DHCD requires print advertising. Have to buy out 25% of units in perpetuity. She noted it is extremely difficult to turn existing apartments to count units on SHI and the only time she has seen it done was with a single house. She stated to restrict accessory apartments as affordable is difficult unless have money to deed restrict.

Regarding infill housing on undersized lot, Ms. Shufelt stated the town of Dennis created zoning on infill lots that they have to be deed restricted affordable. She is currently working with Tewksbury on a template for RFP's for infill housing. Councilor Sandlin stated she is on the town Zoning committee and asked Ms. Shufelt to send information on Dennis and Tewksbury to Member Wingard to forward, which Ms. Shufelt agreed to do. Councilor Sandlin also asked for information on Lenox.

Councilor Sandlin stated another option would be to give smaller lots to Habitat for Humanity. Member Ronghi stated town if owns infill lots, when decide to auction, could put deed restriction before auction off. Councilor Sandlin said if town owns non-conforming pieces there is now an incentive for the town to give the land to Habitat. Ms. Shufelt stated there has to be an RFP, but usually Habitat is the only one to respond. Member Wingard stated that has met Director of Habitat and they are now willing to consider doing rehabs in addition to new builds. Member Ronghi asked if when approving a new development the town could pass inclusionary zoning. Member Wingard stated thought this would not be popular, or well received. Ms. Shufelt noted that if the Governor's Housing Choice program, which was not acted on in this legislative session passes, would only need a simple majority to make zoning changes.

### **3. Zoning:**

Motion by Member Jenney, Second by Member Wingard to table zoning until next meeting as Planning Board Member and Director of

Planning and Community Development not present. All in favor.

#### **4. Letter re: 586 Mill St:**

Committee members had opportunity before meeting to review letter drafted by Member Jenney to send to ZBA once application from Wayfinders for Special Permit for 586 Mill Street received. Member Wingard reviewed two suggested changes sent by email from Member Mathis who was unable to attend meeting.

Councilor Sandlin stated she attended a site review at 586 Mill St. which DHCD had come out to do a few weeks ago, in the rain, as they are required to do a site review, and they said it would take two or three weeks to get back to the town. Member Wingard noted that committee must send letter to ZBA within 30 days of their receipt of application for Special Permit.

Member Ronghi suggested adding language about requesting local preference for the development. Member Wingard stated there was a place in the process for this to be done by the town, most likely to be done by Mayor. Member Jenney said he would check with the Mayor and re-draft the letter to send to members.

#### **5. Discuss Draft Housing Coordinator:**

Member Parzychowski sent initial draft to members, and Member Wingard sent additions to Member Parzychowski. Member Pazychowski will work on new draft. Further discussion postponed to next meeting.

#### **6. Announcements:**

Member Wingard announced MACDC Conference October 20, 2018 in Boston.

#### **7. Suggestions for next Agenda:**

Zoning.  
Housing Coordinator Consultant.  
Review Priorities of Committee.  
Power Point Presentation of Data Information.

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

None.

**Motion to adjourn at 7:22 p.m. by Member Wingard, Second by Member Parzychowski. All in favor.**