

Town of Agawam Housing Committee
Minutes March 9, 2021

Meeting, held by Zoom, called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chair Tedeschi.

1. Roll Call: Members Present: Mario Tedeschi, Chair, Corinne Wingard, Secretary, Paul Jenney, Vincenzo Ronghi, Mark Paleologopoulos, Jeremy Casey.

Members Absent: Milly Parzychowski, Vice Chair.

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

2. Approval of Minutes of January 26, 2020:

Motion to approve by Member Casey, Second Member Ronghi, Roll call. All in favor.

3. Report Subcommittee for Rental Assistance and Aging in Place:

Chair Tedeschi asked if subcommittees had met and if so if had found this to be more valuable and hopefully smaller meetings more productive.

Subcommittee Chair Ronghi, stated felt very helpful, and able to stay more focused. Member Casey agreed saying very efficient and effective and accomplished a significant amount in very short time. Subcommittee Chair Ronghi said to give overview, engaged in options in front of, Rental Assistance and First Time Homebuyers which not on Agenda, but had talked about in last meeting, so talked about all of those.

First Rental Assistance, looked at CPA funds to determine viability and sustainability and while is a need, are sufficient programs out there state and federal. Not sustainable. Over past three or four years typical CPA funds for housing was about \$50,000. to \$60,000 thousand dollars and breaking down only helps 25 to 30 people a year. Would have to find third party to manage, \$8,000 to \$10,000. Felt not prudent, and would call into question favoritism and preferential treatment, which have seen in town of Agawam before, have seen those accusations, so more of a negative than a positive.

Moved on to First Time homebuying. Jeremey and Paul provided anecdotal and actual experience about current inventory in Agawam, bidding wars happening and simple cost of buying a home in Agawam.

Were careful not to talk about or confuse the two as far as affordable housing which is 80% of that, or being able to afford a first time home, affordable home buying, which what looking at. Found that with amount of money coming in, could begin a program with money in housing right now. First two years get pretty big bang and then sustain it, and be able to set up at least four to five grants or loans per year. Found two towns that already have a first time home buying program in place – looked for towns that did not have a Redevelopment Authority or Trust like Agawam. Will send to Paul and Jeremy and review at next meeting and start put something together that look like a framework for that. Then invite Chair Tedeschi on how to get the Council on Board. So basically that what went over and direction right now. Chair Tedeschi asked if funds could be used to promote other programs like Wayfinders and get message out, or if this would be the other subcommittee and Subcommittee Chair Ronghi said had thought that. Member Jenney stated landlords were really getting the message out to tenants so being handled. Chair Tedeschi asked on first time buying program if thinking about down payment, noted newer member of Rotary club with Habitat for Humanity and asked if thinking along those lines for first time home buyers. Member Ronghi stated one thing looking at is understanding that have to be extremely sensitive to the community we're in and how winds have been blowing about affordable housing. Have to recognize that and be sensitive to that. Looking at programs other towns using CPA money for, actually a loan and does not have to be paid back. One is for a down payment and one for first two or three years of mortgage payments. A lien put on property by community. Grant paid back when property sold and money goes to CPA, so provides conduit for program to sustain itself, as first time homebuyers move up and buy second home. Member Casey stated on average homeowners buy house every seven years so would replenish itself every seven to ten years. Chair Tedeschi asked if CPA funds are for affordable housing, if that would qualify, hope so, and if want to contact Habitat let him know. Member Jenney said they had a few really good ideas and Subcommittee Chair Ronghi agreed, noting for Habitat if come to Agawam could come to Housing Committee and we could bring that to CPA funds and ultimately to Council and let them follow their model.

4. Report CPR Subcommittee for Community, Public Awareness, Resources:

Subcommittee Chair Wingard stated one thing committee realized is that this is a long haul process, this is not a one and done, or overnight. This is something that is going to take time to build trust, to develop a sense of a shared stake in what we're doing for the community. Subcommittees initial focus will be on community engagement, will build on work Manisha Bewtra did with housing committee when with us from Mass Housing Partnership, and will work with CHAPA Stakeholders. The subcommittee will develop materials, review information on successful community engagement experiences, statistics and data sharing, Will start with some letters to the Editor and Press releases, a series of those, to the Agawam Advertiser, Reminder, and possibly the Republican. Will set up a Facebook page, Agawam Housing as means to inform and educate people. Medford Housing has an excellent model for a Facebook page. Will look at Informative videos for town cable and holding Community Forums when can, and Focus Groups and individual conversations. The subcommittee will also identify resources to create housing to meet Agawam's housing needs, then work with the town and residents to actually use resources to create housing to meet Agawam's housing needs. Will meet again in about two weeks and start rolling some of this out. Chair Tedeschi asked if had spoken with anybody like Les Tingley to get input from town, and Subcommittee Chair Wingard said not yet, drafting materials, putting things together, getting ready for roll-out. Member Paleologopoulos noted subcommittee got permission for Facebook page. Chair Tedeschi asked if go to quarterly meetings if put two subcommittees together feeding off each other, what committee feels need to promote, can reach out to each other. Realize at beginning stages and a lot of ground work to be done, seems off to right track. Secretary Wingard suggested would mean more meetings and thought not necessary.

5. CHAPA membership:

Secretary Wingard said talked about at last meeting. Organizational membership cost for non-profit is \$750.00 per year, and would be for the town. CHAPA would work with us to set it up if we decided what wanted to do. Chair Tedeschi asked if had asked anyone from the town if can use CPA funds. Member Ronghi said would not talk with town for CPA funds, but ask CPA first, then Council decide. Secretary Wingard said thought would be good idea to run by Mayor first and maybe talk with a couple of councilors and tell them advantages, like to become more knowledgeable

about resources that can help our town and help us in our work. Chair Tedeschi said can ask around and asked Secretary Wingard to put together quick letter why should have this and he will present to Mayor. Secretary Wingard agreed although not right away. Also will get information on what other towns have joined.

6. Schedule for future meetings:

Chair Tedeschi asked if subcommittees creating own schedules, assume on track, and if main committee want to do quarterly meetings so meet in June. Member Ronghi said with that in mind, make a motion that the Housing Committee supports and recommends the payment of the CHAPA membership. Second by Member Paleologopoulos. Role call vote. Chair Tedeschi, Secretary Wingard, Members Ronghi, Casey and Paleologopoulos in favor. Member Jenney temporarily absent from meeting.

7. Announcements:

Secretary Wingard said hoped everyone got email about Age Friendly Agawam and please do survey and ask friends to, and do two Forum presentations on zoom on town Cable, noting that Becky Bausch, of Pioneer Planning Commission who had come to earlier Housing Committee meeting to talk about project and Age Friendly Working group are asking for support of Housing Committee. Already getting some interesting information including about housing, and more responses get, more awareness have, the better action plan will come up with for Agawam and be in better position to apply for grants.

Also sent email about Fair Housing and Civil Rights conference in April – outstanding conference, and no charge to attend. This year spreading over three days, and sign up for workshops want.

8. Next Agenda

Chair Tedeschi asked if subcommittees needed to make and post Agenda's and Secretary Wingard said not necessary because not a quorum so not a public meeting. Chair Tedeschi asked if anything subcommittee wanted to take action on, if need to vote on as committee as opposed to just a report. Secretary Wingard said thought subcommittees need to do what going to do like letters to the editor, things charged with doing. If something outstanding maybe bring that to committee. Member Paleologopoulos asked if things that need to be on agenda who collect

over three months. Chair Tedeschi said let Secretary Wingard know. Secretary Wingard agreed some things might come up other than report on what subcommittees working on.

9. Any other business that may come before the committee:

None.

10. Motion to adjourn at 6:34 p.m. by Member Paleologopoulos, Second by Secretary Wingard and Member Casey. Roll call. All in favor.