

Town of Agawam
Main St. Agawam, MA., 01001

Agawam Housing Committee

Minutes – July 19, 2022

Members Present: Chair Rosemary Sandlin, Milly Potter, Paul Jenney, Michael Dilullo, Corinne Wingard, Vincenzo Ronghi.

Others Present: Pamela Kerr, Director Planning and Community Development.

Meeting called to order at 7:15 p.m.

1. Roll Call:

2. Approval of Minutes of May 17, 2022: Approved with Members not present for meeting abstaining.

Chair Sandlin changed order of agenda to start with 5. Update on 40-R from Subcommittee:

Member Ronghi distributed Agawam Center 40R Smart Growth Overlay district (CC40R) to members. Planning Director Kerr noted that Walnut St. ext is already a Mixed Use Business C district and doesn't know what would mean for 40R. Member Wingard said had talked with Bill Reyelt, the person in charge of 40R at DHCD about this last fall who seemed to think could work out. Chair Sandlin said once Ordinance on the books, discuss with town Zoning Committee. Member Ronghi noted Mayor's concern about creating housing for seniors only and that this is being done elsewhere in the state. Said would look into this. Member Wingard gave Chair Sandlin, Planning Director Kerr, and Member Ronghi information presented by Mr. Reyelt of DHCD April 2022 to CHAPA Municipal Engagement Initiative program about steps to follow in creating a 40-R district, which had brought up before, and will send copies to all members

3. Review of Mission Statement of Committee and Ordinance Creating Committee:

Member Wingard distributed copies of Mission Statement and Ordinance creating committee. Member Ronghi said could not do this without going to City Council. Member Wingard replied that all City Council did was create committee and committee members wrote Mission

Statement based on ordinance when committee started. Also noted need to stress that committee wants housing that is affordable to all, including middle and upper middle income households and concerned that wording “affordable housing” carried too much negative connotation. Suggested adding increasing housing supply that is affordable to lower, moderate, middle, and upper middle income households. Member Dilullo suggested changing the word all to everyone in last paragraph. Member Ronghi said that Member Wingard should rephrase Mission Statement and share with all members to vote on at next meeting. Member Wingard agreed.

4. Increasing Community Understanding of Agawam’s Housing Needs:

Housing Committee will have a table at National Night Out August 2, 2022. Chair Sandlin reported she purchased an 8 x 4 Banner for the front of the table and asked for volunteers. Member Dilullo will be out of town but has pop- up and table that can be used. Member Ronghi said could set up, but not able to stay. Chair Sandlin said would ask Member Jenney to take down. Member Wingard said could be at table. Member Potter said could also be at table. Member Wingard will provide materials for table as did for Harvest Festival last fall.

Member Wingard suggested posting Agenda’s and Minutes on Agawam News Carousel as done by CPA committee, and all agreed.

6. Help for Agawam Households with Energy, Water, and Sewer Costs:

Member Wingard reported had learned about available assistance for Water and Sewer through Valley Opportunity Center which does Energy Assistance and that according to their 2021-2023 Community Assessment Report and Strategic Plan Agawam had 1,654 participants for Energy Assistance. Our Housing Needs Assessment with 11,644 households in town, reported 40% of households at 80% or less of the Area Median Income, thus potentially eligible for this assistance, which would be 4,657 households, so 3003 more could potentially receive help. Stated felt important to do everything possible to help residents stay in their homes, as want to do for Seniors, by publicizing property tax exemptions, and other resources. Chair Sandlin said has talked about this with Shine office. Member Wingard noted Shine office focus is on seniors and many families also need help. Discussion of how to increase public awareness and

publicize available resources. Planning Director Kerr suggested could have link on website. Suggestion also made for video with Mayor. Member Ronghi said knows Valley Opportunity Director personally and will reach out to him for meeting. Also will request materials for Housing committee table for National Night Out. Member Ronghi then said our charge is housing, and although want to help individually does not belong on Agenda for committee.

7. Announcements:

Member Wingard reported received a letter from Senator John Velis in response to letter committee sent about legislation, and forwarded to members.

Chair Sandlin said Senator Velis held meeting in Agawam about problems with CHAMP system for Housing Authorities, with 104 attendees from across state.

Member Potter said planning a seminar for seniors about reverse mortgages, with a tax consultant to talk about tax exemptions, such as circuit breaker, to help seniors. Member Wingard said had agreed to work with Assessor to present info on tax exemptions in the fall, and perhaps could combine into one program. Member Ronghi said his parents got help from Greater Springfield Senior Services, which is free of charge, and will come to home.

General discussion that while primary charge of this committee is housing, the committee supports efforts to help families stay in their homes.

8. Next Agenda:

Committee agreed to skip August meeting and next meet in September.

Vote on Mission Statement.

Update on 40-R.

Report back on National Night Out.

Any other items.

Motion to adjourn at 7:57 by Member Wingard, Second by Member Ronghi. All in favor.