

Question: Could you talk about your involvement with Housing First Minnesota? Coming from a behind the scenes role at the Capitol to a new high-profile role.

James Vagle: The new role will be organizational leadership and try to grow the conversation especially at the Capitol. It's a community issue that needs to be more widespread and the new role is to bring the conversation of homeownership to Minnesotans. This new role matches the technical elements of housing as well as promoting the cause of homeownership.

Question: What was your role in the Ventura administration?

James Vagle: Policy assistant, equivalent to a legislative assistant. It was a first job out of college during Ventura's second year. The introduction to Minnesota politics was a tri-party approach – an independent Governor, a DFL Senate, and a GOP House.

Question: Tell us about your advocacy work at the Capitol for Housing First Minnesota? Starting with the most recent session, what were you tracking this year? What did or didn't happen regarding the homebuilding industry?

James Vagle: Legalize Affordable Housing Act was the most tracked issue (Elkins/Draheim). It proposed ways create a more middle housing market that doesn't currently exist in Minnesota. Portions moved to the end of session on the Senate bill and it was a very important step for Minnesota to modernize zoning. It's time to modernize zoning, it needs to be looked at and refreshed. The coalition of interests fly under the radar for these issues, significantly more buy-in from testifiers and other stakeholders created a broader conversation (didn't mention city groups). The Legislature did an admirable job balancing affordability with new initiatives.

Question: Affordability is a huge issue when it comes to homeownership. How does this tie into zoning issues and the need to modernize zoning?

James Vagle: Zoning is a reason why smaller homes and townhomes aren't as available on the market. Zoning is also used for aesthetic requirements and PUD's drive up home costs. Zoning and affordability are becoming more of a consensus even to be a priority of the Biden administration. The new single family houses are the highest prices in the Midwest.

Question: What can you say about the rising interest rates?

James Vagle: Interest rates matter. As folks consider buying a home, they look at all the tools in the toolbox. Banks have passed their stress test and lending standards are strong. The Fed is

taking steps to cool inflation but interest rates still fluctuate. Alternative mortgage products could explore how to make homeownership happen. We are among the lowest inventory in the country. This could increase the urgency to update and modernize zoning. We need to meet the market where it is.

Question: What is your take on where Parade of Homes is going? What is participation looking like?

James Vagle: We're very proud of the popular legacy of Parade of Homes. We've introduced fun incentives to come and tour the homes such as downpayment assistance for first-time homebuyers. We plan to use that platform to help educate and to help industry members market their product.

Question: I see on your resume you went to the UMN, can you talk about your passion for the maroon and gold?

James Vagle: Been gopher football fans and season ticket holders since graduating. Only lived away from Minnesota for four years when in the Navy.