

FAIR HOUSING COMMITTEE

April 1, 2009 Meeting Minutes Approved May 6, 2009

Fair Housing Committee members in attendance: Sheila Mondshein (chair), Phil Herr, Susan Paley, Esther Schlorholtz, Nadine Cohen and Josephine McNeil

Staff: Trisha Kenyon Guditz

1. Election of chairman and assistant chairman: All members voted to approve the appointment of Sheila Mondshein as chairman and Susan Paley as assistant chairman.
2. Meeting minutes from the March 4, 2009 meeting: The minutes were approved with one change: In paragraph three, change the word *available* to *responsible*.
3. New appointments to the Fair Housing Committee (FHC):

The committee wondered if Doug Sweet had asked the co-chair of the Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities (MCPD) to be a representative on the FHC since Doug has been appointed to the Planning and Development Board. Doug is no longer a member of the MCPD and thus will not be the FHC's representative from this committee.

Sheila told the committee that she had spoken to the chairman of the Newton Housing Authority Board of Commissioners to ask if he was interested in becoming the FHC representative from the Housing Authority. He replied that he would bring the issue up at the next Board of Commissioners' meeting on April 11. He was unclear when there would be a decision.

The committee suggested that there may be a preference to have the Housing Authority present but not as a voting member. They suggested that perhaps a staff member could represent the Housing Authority in lieu of a Commission member.

A member of the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) was considered but is not available for meetings during business hours. Later, the committee decided not to try to recruit a member from the CPC.

The Executive Director, Newton Community Development Foundation, was brought up as a possible appointee but later, the committee decided not to pursue this suggestion.

Josephine stated that the committee needed a realtor and suggested two names. She said that a representative from that industry was a higher priority than a member from the CPC. Sheila agreed to contact the two realtors mentioned once the other potential memberships were resolved.

The committee asked that specific names not be included in the meeting minutes. They asked that specific names from the March minutes be deleted.

4. May 4 fair housing event: Sheila expressed appreciation to Esther and Susan for their work in organizing the event to date.

The event needs publicity including the following venues: the *Newton Tab*, HOME Consortium, Newton Housing Partnership, NewTV, *The Boston Globe MetroWest*, Bev Droz's list of attendees from the diversity conference and realtors. Trisha agreed to facilitate publicity with the help of other City staff.

Nadine agreed to bring information that can be distributed at the event.

5. FY10 Annual Action Plan: The housing section of the Annual Action Plan was recently updated to include \$25,000 in CDBG funds for fair housing activities in FY10. Trisha needs to let the committee know what happens at the April Planning and Development Board meeting when the PDB members are asked to recommend approval of the plan's submission to HUD.

6. Mission and organizational statement: The committee made final changes to the statement and voted to approve.

7. Next steps: Sheila asked what steps the committee wanted to undertake next. Suggestions included:

- *Review the City's FY09 Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER)*. The first draft will be available in July.
- *Review City's Section 504 plan*: How old is it? What is involved in updating it? What are the applicable requirements? The committee needs to have the plan for its May meeting.
Sheila will talk to Henry relative to what the Housing Authority is obligated to have. She needs him to clarify what he was referring to at the March meeting.
- *Complete the Civil Rights Checklist*: Phil questioned the helpfulness of the standardized checklist and whether the committee wanted to spend time on this effort. He distinguished between a spirit of helpfulness vs. department compliance. Sheila stated that any effort to use it requires a staff person to implement.
- *Broaden City accessibility compliance*: Phil stated that lack of accessibility compliance is a systemic issue that, to be addressed, requires a relationship with the ISD Commissioner. Phil agrees to speak to the Commissioner.
- *Identify questions for mayoral candidates* (through U-CHAN?)
- *Additional testing*
- *Discussion on how the committee relates to other City committees, commissions and departments*.

Nadine suggested convening an interagency meeting and asking the attendees to identify the barriers they see.

Josephine stated that these groups need the committee to show them how fair housing relates to their work and responsibilities. "We need to introduce ourselves and tell them why this is important. We need to show them what lens they need to be looking through."

Nadine said that she can work on this along with Sheila.

The meeting was adjourned.