

## FAIR HOUSING COMMITTEE

May 6, 2009 Meeting Minutes Approved June 3, 2009

**Fair Housing Committee members in attendance:** Sheila Mondshein (chair), Phil Herr, Susan Paley, Esther Schlorholtz, Josephine McNeil, Marianne Ferguson, Henry Korman and Doug Sweet

**Staff:** Trisha Kenyon Guditz, Bev Droz

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1. Meeting minutes from the April 1, 2009 meeting: The minutes were approved with one change: Doug Sweet is no longer a member of the Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities (first paragraph). He is now a member of the Planning and Development Board.
2. Appointments to the Fair Housing Committee (FHC): Sheila said that it is important to have a representative from the Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities on the FHC. In addition, she said that she would follow up on Josephine's two suggestions on prospective members from the real estate community. She also asked the committee for recommendations of organizations that should have a presence on the committee. Two organizations were suggested: The Second Step and the Newton Community Services Committee. The committee decided not to seek a member from the Community Preservation Committee.
3. New housing planner: Trisha informed the committee that Robert A. Muollo, Jr. had been hired as a housing planner and will replace Margaret Siciliano as staff to the FHC. He is currently finishing his MA in Community Development and Planning and begins his Newton position on June 8.
4. FY10 Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER): Sheila stated that she wants the committee to have input into the development of the housing component of the City's FY10 CAPER. (Subsequent to the meeting, Trisha told Sheila that she will provide a draft CAPER to the committee on July 24. The committee members will be asked for their comments on the draft at the August 5 FHC meeting. The Planning and Development Board will be asked to approve the submission of the CAPER to HUD at their September 14 meeting.)
5. Debriefing on the May 4 fair housing event: Thirty-five people attended the fair housing event held at the Senior Center and organized by Esther and Susan. The committee thanked Esther and Susan for their hard work. The committee thought the information presented by Len Raymond and Jim Campen on reverse mortgages was informative and wondered if Jayne Colino, Director, Department of Senior Services, would be interested in having a program for seniors on reverse mortgages. Sheila said that she will call Jayne.

The FHC thought that contacting the Lawyer's Clearinghouse for speakers for future events is a good idea. The committee also thought that it was a good idea to have one or two events annually.

Esther is being honored by the Lawyer's Clearinghouse on June 9.

6. Contacts with other City departments: The committee deliberated over the best way to approach other City departments regarding their fair housing responsibilities. Sheila posed two options: Informing them of what their fair housing responsibilities and affirmative "duty" means or asking them about their progress on compliance such as performing the activities identified on the checklist.

Sheila said that she preferred the former and Esther agreed. Josephine said that the FHC should wait until a new mayor is appointed.

Bev said that she is seeing a lot of nonprofits sending questionnaires to mayoral candidates asking their positions on specific issues.

Josephine said that U-CHAN is discussing sponsoring a forum for mayoral candidates and fair housing would be on the agenda.

Sheila said that if the FHC liked the idea of developing a questionnaire, the members could discuss the concept at their June meeting.

Circling back to the discussion regarding contacting other City departments, Henry said that the City needs to work fair housing obligations into a routine and he is in favor of a more formalized process.

Phil said that he was unable to meet with John Lojek so far.

The committee then began to discuss "How do we know we have a problem or not regarding architectural access?" and stated that compliance with architectural access is a two-stage process beginning with plan review and then at the implementation stage.

The committee discussed the merits of requiring developers to hire a firm specializing in architectural access. Kathy McGinnis has a firm in Newton that does this work. Tom Hopkins, Chairman, Architectural Access Board, can be contacted for additional names.

Phil said that the FHC needs to know how to get the institutional processes in place. "How do we get embedded into the City of Newton?" he asked.

Henry followed up saying that he looks at this issue from points of entry where you can have an impact: These points are the architectural project manual, including specifications for hardware, and in the technical review of the plan.

7. The need for additional documents: Sheila asked for a copy of the City's Transition Plan and self-evaluation for housing and non-housing. She also asked for the Newton Housing Authority's needs assessment and 504 plan.

The meeting was adjourned.