

NEWTON FAIR HOUSING COMMITTEE

Newton Housing & Community Development Program
1000 Commonwealth Avenue Newton, MA 02459. Phone 617-796-1156. TDD/TTY 617-796-7089

January 6, 2009 Meeting Minutes

Fair Housing Committee members in attendance: Sheila Mondshein (Chair), Phil Herr, Henry Korman, Josephine McNeil

Staff: Bev Droz, and Robert Muollo, Jr.

1. Review and approval of December minutes

It was noted that "from MCAD" on top of pg 3 should be removed and it should be reflected that Federal housing requirements for architectural accessibility are not being adequately addressed. Approval of minutes were tabled to next meeting due to lack of quorum

2. Fair Housing Committee membership issues

Sheila gave an update on membership regarding the remaining vacant seat and reminded the Committee that adding diversity is important. Members made suggestions of possible individuals to consider and Sheila will contact these individuals before the next meeting.

3. Status of FHC training programs

Sheila reported the status of the fair housing trainings, including information on the upcoming trainings for realtors (tentatively scheduled for February 3) and human service providers and housing counselors (February 22). The realtor training will be co - facilitated by Tracy Brown of the Fair Housing Center of Greater Boston and Nadine Cohen, of the Greater Boston Legal Services' Consumer Rights Division. The total cost will be \$500.00. The human service provider and housing counselor training will be facilitated by Vic Posada from MCAD. Sheila then described the outreach measures for the realtor community, including distribution of a flyer and press release. Josephine made a suggestion that having the Mayor sign a letter to encourage interest from the realtor community may spark additional interest. The members agreed to a 1 to 4 pm timeslot for the human service provider and housing counselor training.

Sheila suggested that although disability discrimination should be a topic in these trainings, that an additional training focusing solely on this topic should be held at a later date for housing providers and perhaps separately for realtors.

4. Fair Housing public education campaign

Sheila suggested that existing material already available through the internet and other sources, and advertisements, print, brochures and radio/TV should be explored and utilized for the campaign. Henry asked if the market is limited to Newton. Sheila suggested that initial efforts focus in Newton and then expand the publicity to include neighboring communities.

Josephine believed that a public education campaign should be connected to a Fair Housing Month event. The Committee agreed with Josephine's suggestion and will start to plan to do publicity in connection with Fair Housing Month, which is April.

Robert updated the FHC on a meeting he attended with Brookline to develop a fair housing TV show and / or podcasts to be added to the fair housing website. Robert will follow up with Brookline regarding the development for a joint effort fair housing TV show / podcast and will gather existing materials for a publicity campaign.

5. Discussion of role and process for architectural access consultant

Sheila started by updating the FHC on where securing a consultant for the City's architectural access compliance stands in light of the changes at City Hall. Sheila described the email sent by Trisha asking Bob Rooney what the best way staff could proceed with getting the issue to the Mayor's attention to eventually help in securing the consultant.

The FHC then made revisions to the draft Consultant RFP by adding language for additional data as part of the evaluation process on the occupancy of units by persons having disabilities at rent up and turnover along with requests made for reasonable modification by tenants. There were questions as to whom / what # 6 was directed towards. The FHC determined that this description was directed towards developers and as such the paragraph will be revised to include language to clarify this. Phil made the point that the consultant should treat the Newton Housing Authority as a major private developer of housing in the City, although the FHC recognized that the NHA is a quasi-public entity. Sheila stated that the NHA may also be subject to additional access requirements under applicable statues. Sheila will draft a revision to reflect the changes.

6. Update on the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice

Robert gave a brief update on the AI, including scheduling a focus group for housing and human service providers and a meeting with the Newton Housing Authority. Robert explained that a draft version of the AI will be given to the FHC for their review and comment at the March meeting.

7. Other business:

a. Revisiting “Guidelines for Uniform Local Resident Selection Preferences in Affordable Housing” of the Fair Housing Action Plan

Henry stated that the wording in the plan was similar to HUD’s language concerning the distribution of units and feels that the real question is not one of policy but: “how does the plan become operationalized.” Henry pointed out that there is no definition, or set of definitions attached to the policy. Phil would like to revisit the policy to develop better clarity.

b. Westchester County write-up

Sheila expressed concern with the language at the end of the proposed draft and supported keeping the write-up on Westchester County objective and factual. Henry suggested editing the draft to keep part of the final paragraph. Sheila will revise the draft for the next meeting.