

NEWTON FAIR HOUSING COMMITTEE

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

February 3, 2009 Meeting Minutes

Fair Housing Committee members in attendance: Sheila Mondshein (Chair), Sandra Fromm, Phil Herr, Henry Korman, Susan Paley, Girard Plante, Esther Schlorholtz

Guest: Keisha Willis

Staff: Trisha Guditz, Robert Muollo, Jr.

The meeting began at 8:08 a.m.

1. Review and approval of December and January minutes

After a motion, which was seconded, the December 2009 meeting minutes were approved.

After a motion, which was seconded, the January 2010 meeting minutes were approved.

2. FHC membership issues

Robert reported that the request for an interview by the Mayor with Girard remains in the Executive Office. Sheila gave a brief update on outreach to potential members. Sheila then introduced a guest who is interested in becoming a member, and followed up on the status of existing members who have not been in attendance. Susan suggested that, if the existing member does not continue participation, that Sheila write a letter asking for a formal resignation.

3. Status of fair housing training programs

Sheila said that 47 real estate brokers and salespersons attended the recent fair housing training. The FHC then discussed ideas on future fair housing trainings. Esther suggested conducting a future training that focuses on discrimination against households with section 8 vouchers. Sandra suggested focusing on training on small landlords. Sheila suggested training on disability for realtors. Further testing was also

suggested. Trisha asked if the FHC would like to conduct testing with next year's CDBG funds. The FHC agreed to focus on training and not testing at this time.

Sheila reminded the FHC of the work plan, which includes a training on reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities for the Newton Housing Authority. The FHC agreed that Robert contact the NHA staff to ask their willingness to participate in a training, and the possibility of co-sponsoring the training with the FHC. Esther will advocate for the training by contacting Jeff Sacks, who is one of the NHA Commissioners. Sheila will contact Barbara Chandler from Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership regarding the possibility of facilitating the training. The target audience could also include other housing authority personnel or Newton City employees, or both.

4. Discussion on architectural access consultant

Trisha will provide the draft RFP to Candace Havens, interim Director of the Planning and Development Department, who will relay the purpose and process of hiring an architectural access consultant to the Executive Office. Trisha will update the FHC at the next meeting on progress made.

5. Planning for fair housing public information/education event

Robert summarized the various fair housing print, radio, TV, and multimedia education information he found. Robert also explained that the Community Development Department and Human Relations Commission in Brookline were interested in partnering with Newton to develop a fair housing show on public access television. It was agreed that publicity could be conducted in a variety of ways with a variety of different materials. To create a targeted outreach effort, Robert will develop a short 1-3 page outreach and publicity campaign plan by the next meeting. Sheila will join Robert in a meeting with Brookline to discuss the possibility of holding a television show in the near future, preferably to be completed in time for Fair Housing Month (April).

6. Discussion of Westchester County settlement report

Sheila felt concerned regarding the subjectivity of part of the draft Westchester County write-up and explained that any issues should be addressed in trainings and meetings,

rather than in a write-up on the City's website. Phil expressed that many fair housing initiatives and issues have not been adequately addressed over a long time span. Henry suggested that the FHC may want to consider creating an annual action plan or assessment and if no progress has been made on such a plan, the FHC write a letter to the Mayor addressing such deficiencies. The FHC agreed to the proposed revisions on the write-up and it will be placed on the Fair Housing Website.

7. Discussion of local resident selection preference issues

Item tabled for discussion

The meeting adjourned at 9:41 a.m.