

CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
FAIR HOUSING COMMISSION

Katjana Ballantyne
Mayor

Staff

Hanalei Steinhart
Program Specialist, Fair Housing and
Inclusionary Housing Support

Commissioners

Patrice Faulkner
Dennis Fischman
Rona Fischman
Janine Lotti

Meeting Minutes

February 22nd, 2024, 3:00pm
Via Zoom
Online Video Platform

Attending: FHC members: Patrice Faulkner, Dennis Fischman, Rona Fischman, Janine Lotti
City staff: Hanalei Steinhart, Lisa Davidson

I. Call to Order and Review of Draft Meeting Minutes

The meeting was called to order by roll call vote.

A motion was introduced to approve the minutes from the Commission's January meeting. The minutes were approved by Dennis Fischman, Rona Fishman, and Janine Lotti. Patrice Faulkner abstained from the vote.

II. Working Time for Fair Housing Month Events

1. TAP application is under review by MAPC: Hanalei shared that she should be hearing a decision from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) on the Fair Housing Commission's Technical Assistance Program (TAP) application in either late February or early March. She will notify the Commission as soon as she hears. Rona shared that she feels that while the assistance would be valuable, that the decision is coming too late to make a significant impact on this year's events.
2. Creating a schedule of events: The Commissioners decided to hold the two planned events on April 13th from 1pm to 3pm and April 16th from 7pm to 8:30pm. The April 16th event was later moved to April 27th from 2pm to 4pm. Both events will be held in the Somerville Central Library's auditorium. The venue is wheelchair accessible with some street parking nearby. One event will be a discussion of the book *The Color of Law* and the film *Segregated By Design*. The other event will be a panel discussion on tenant screening processes with a discussion of credit screening practices. Commissioners discussed the potential reception of the panel discussion and how to ensure that the event was positive and productive for all attendees.
3. Creating advertising materials and timeline: After the flyers for the two events described above are finalized, Hanalei will submit both flyers for translation. Rona stated that she will reach out to Somerville's Office of Housing Stability and Greater Boston Legal Services to coordinate the panel discussion. The commissioners discussed where to advertise for the events such as local schools and universities, City Hall, Somerville

Housing Authority mailing lists, property management companies, BOMA Boston, and the Fair Housing Commission Facebook page.

III. **Updates on Specific Activities**

1. MCAD backlog and related issues follow up: Dennis Fischman summarized a meeting that he, Hanalei, and Lisa attended regarding the MCAD backlog. MCAD has reduced their backlog since the Fair Housing Commission wrote a letter to City Council regarding the state of Fair Housing enforcement in December 2022. The meeting discussed what Somerville can do to increase Fair Housing enforcement without needing to submit a home rule petition. Rona shared that the Anti Displacement Task Force has chosen Fair Housing enforcement as one of its next issues to address. Rona will update the Task Force with a summary of the MCAD backlog meeting and share the charts illustrating the backlog that Hanalei created for the MCAD backlog meeting.
2. Review of calls/issues/complaints since last meeting: This item was not discussed and will be postponed to the March meeting.
3. Status on new member appointment process: This item was not discussed and will be postponed to the March meeting.
4. FY23 Annual Report: This item was not discussed and will be postponed to the March meeting.

IV. **Announcements**

1. The next meeting will be on March 28th at 6pm via Zoom.

V. **Adjournment**

1. The meeting was adjourned at 4:13pm by roll call vote.