

CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
FAIR HOUSING COMMISSION
Katjana Ballantyne
Mayor

Staff

Shannon Lawler-
Program Specialist, Fair Housing and
Inclusionary Housing Support

Commissioners

Patrice Faulkner
Dennis Fischman
Rona Fischman
Janine Lotti
Kay Mammo

Meeting Minutes
Special Meeting

Thursday, June 5th, 2025 — 3:00 pm
Via Zoom—Online Video Platform

Attending: FHC members: Patrice Faulkner, Dennis Fischman, Rona Fischman, Janine Lotti, Kay Mammo
City staff: Shannon Lawler

I. Call to order and review of draft minutes:

The special meeting was called to order by roll call vote.

II. Landscape analysis conversation with Gloria Huangpu and Sarai Zelada from Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)

- The Commission welcomed Gloria and Sarai. Gloria is a Community Engagement Planner at MAPC and Sarai Zelada is a Public Health Planner at MAPC. Gloria reviewed the landscape analysis background presentation and data takeaways. She shared that the most frequently cited protected classes in Somerville fair housing complaints are source of income, disability, and race, and that most complaints come from Wards 1 and 6. Commissioner Rona Fischman commented that most likely, the young adults renting in Somerville are those between 25 and 34, rather than college students. Commissioner Janine Lotti asked for clarification on how the complaints for voucher discrimination are determined and Shannon Lawler responded that this data is from reports of discrimination submitted directly to the Commission.
- The Commission and staff discussed specific groups under each protected class that might be most affected by housing discrimination. They noted many intersections between protected classes and that many groups and individuals who are impacted by discrimination may fall under multiple protected classes which should be considered when planning outreach.
- The second part of the exercise asked the Commission to examine where groups or individuals are already coming together or receiving support and resources. They discussed religious institutions, immigrant service organizations, and school organizations. There was discussion about organizations and religious institutions that may not be located in Somerville but that serve many Somerville constituents because they are more regional in nature. Gloria mentioned that both centralized organizations that provide services and resource channels, such as Whatsapp groups, are ways that some communities receive information. Housing-specific organizations, like Somerville Community Corporation and Community Action Agency Somerville were mentioned, as were small landlord groups. The Office of Housing Stability has overlap with tenants’

rights issues and landlord outreach. Elder Services, the Council on Aging, and senior-specific housing might help with outreach for age as a protected class. Commissioner Rona F. added that because June is Pride month, the Commission could table at some of the Pride events occurring to reach people affected by discrimination under the protected classes of sexual orientation and gender identity.

- The Commission started prioritizing which relationships they want to build and which organizations are their top priorities. Commissioner Patrice Faulkner highlighted immigrant services under the national origin class and the Office of Housing Stability, CAAS, Somerville Homeless Coalition, and elder services. Commissioner Janine L. highlighted school PTOs. Shannon Lawler mentioned CAAS, OHS, and SHC. Commissioner Rona F. shared that she would like there to be an annual or semi-annual meeting of representatives from every City commission to allow for more intersectional and less siloed work. Commissioner Dennis Fischman added that religious organizations are a top priority for him because the Commission currently does not have connections in that sphere, followed by housing agencies and elder services.
- Gloria and Sarai will analyze the conversation and create a prioritized list of organizations to connect with and an outreach plan to meet with these organizations, alongside Commission members. They asked that if Commission members have connections to any of these organizations, that they share specific contacts to reach out to.

III. Announcements

- The next meeting is scheduled for 3:00 PM on June 26, 2025.

IV. Adjournment

- The meeting was adjourned at 4:07 PM by roll call vote.

Document shared:

- MAPC Somerville FHC landscape analysis background presentation
- Landscape analysis exercise Miro board