

CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
FAIR HOUSING COMMISSION

Jacob D. Wilson
Mayor

Staff

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

Commissioners

Patrice Faulkner
Dennis Fischman
Janine Lotti

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 26th, 2026 — 3:00 PM

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

- I. Call to order and review of draft minutes from the meeting on January 22, 2026.
The meeting was called to order by roll call vote.
Commissioner Janine Lotti moved to approve the minutes as written, Commissioner Patrice Faulkner seconded, and the minutes were approved unanimously
- II. Standing Agenda Items
 - Facebook page update- Commissioner Dennis Fischman shared that a question of the week is shared every Friday and an article related to fair housing every Monday, with other items in between on the Facebook page. Since the previous meeting, the most popular post was a question asking if a landlord can refuse to rent to an unmarried couple. Commissioner Dennis F. shared that landlords cannot refuse to rent to any specific family structure, which is a protected class. The post received 167 views, 2 reactions, and 5 shares. A second popular post asked why Somerville has a Fair Housing Commission, which received 151 views, 1 like, and 5 shares.
 - Review of calls and complaints since the last meeting- Shannon Lawler received one complaint from a tenant living in one room of a house. She referred them to Somerville Police Department's Community Outreach, Help, and Recovery (COHR) program, filled out a referral with the Office of Housing Stability (OHS), and directed the complainant to Cambridge and Somerville Legal Services (CASLS), as the complaint was urgent, but not directly related to a protected class. She is working with a case manager from OHS. Shannon also reported that there was no update on the complaint received the previous month.
- III. Updates on Specific Activities
 - Fair Housing Month
 - Council on Aging event-
Commissioner Janine L. shared that the event will take place on April 10th and that the event will be targeted to older landlords and homeowners, following advice from the Director of the Council on Aging to make the event specific, rather than general. There will also be a fair housing bingo game in addition to the presentation. Commissioner Dennis F. will be assisting at the event. Shannon shared that the flyers have been translated and will be sent to the Commission. The Commission discussed the outreach plan for the event, including posting the event at the Council on Aging, on the Commission's Facebook page, shared by

individual Commissioners on social media, emailed to community partners, and posted around the City.

○ *Color of Law* library event-

Shannon shared that the flyers should be sent to the Commission early the next week. Commissioner Dennis F. mentioned that the Department of Racial and Social Justice (RSJ) has partnered with the Commission, and Shannon will reach out to them with the event information and to ask for guidance on the discussion questions. Commissioner Dennis F. will reach out to the Commission for Women and the Commission for Persons with Disabilities to share the event. The Commission will also look into having an asynchronous engagement activity promoting the event at the library.

The event will be on April 16 from 6:30-8:00 PM.

The Commission reviewed the structure of the event and came up with options for discussion questions.

● Review meeting with CAAS on 2/19/26

Commissioners Dennis F. and Patrice F., along with Shannon and Gloria Huangpu from MAPC, met with Community Action Agency of Somerville (CAAS) to discuss planning events with them in the future.

● Vacant seats

Commissioner Dennis F., Shannon, and Deputy Director of Housing Alanna Gaffny have been interviewing applicants for the at-large seat on the Commission.

● Capacity building for future Commission members

Commissioner Dennis F. asked the Commissioners and Shannon to document any activities done, so that they can be recreated in the future. Commissioner Janine L. added that the tools Gloria has created for the Commission have also been very helpful in building capacity and preparedness for future events.

IV. Continued Business

- FY24 Annual Report – with City Council
- FY25 Annual Report – no update

V. Announcements

- The next meeting is scheduled for March 26, 2026 at 3:00 PM.

VI. Adjournment

- The meeting was adjourned at 4:02 PM.