

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, May 28th, 2026 — 3:00 PM
Via Zoom—Online Video Platform

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 March 26, 2026 and April 23, 2026.

The meeting was called to order by roll call vote.
Commissioner Janine Lotti moved to approve the March 26, 2026 minutes as written, Commissioner Patrice Faulkner seconded, and the minutes were approved unanimously. Commissioner Janine Lotti moved to approve the April 23, 2026 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 the Commission Facebook page posts a question of the week every Friday and a news item related to fair housing every Monday. The question of the week which received the most attention in the last month asked “If someone is a member of a protected class, do I have to rent to them?” The answer is that one must treat applicants the same, regardless of whether they are a member of a protected class or not. This post received 354 views and 6 shares. Another popular post was about what landlords must do when their tenants move out and it received 260 views, 6 shares, and 5 other reactions. Shannon Lawler asked if Commissioner Dennis F. had an archive of previous posts. Commissioner Dennis F. has an archive with dates and will share them.
 - Review of calls and complaints since the last meeting- Shannon shared that the two submissions to the referral form were not directly fair housing related but that both were from Tufts students. The first was a roommate dispute unrelated to the housing provider and the second was a question about requesting to view an inspection report for the unit in which the household lives. She also gave an update on the household who had a complaint from the previous month. Shannon and Ellen Shachter, Director of the Office of Housing Stability helped them draft a letter to send to their property management company. Commissioner Dennis F. noted that if someone contacts Shannon with a complaint or question, if it is not directly related to fair housing, she will refer them to the proper channels.
- III. Updates on Specific Activities

- Tabling- Carnaval will take place on June 7 from 2-6 PM. Shannon will attend the entire time, Patrice will attend from 2-4 PM, and Janine will attend from 4-6 PM. Shannon shared the materials and location, including an activity board that Gloria Huangpu created for tabling.
- June CAAS Movement Meeting- Shannon shared that the event was moved to June 27. Commissioner Dennis F. thanked Gloria and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) for helping the Commission meet and create tighter working relationships with organizations like the Community Action Agency of Somerville (CAAS). As a result of these connections, the Commission will be presenting at CAAS' Movement Meeting about fair housing.
- MAPC Technical Assistance Program- Gloria shared a presentation of the final deliverables from the Community Engagement Project the Commission did with MAPC. She reviewed the project progression, takeaways, and recommendations for future community engagement and education. She also shared an overview of deliverables from the project. Commissioner Patrice reflected on using the tools from MAPC and the feedback from events for addressing structural issues, increasing Commission capacity, and for sharing information with other organizations and commissions in Somerville. Commissioner Janine L. asked about the recommendation that the Commission consider connecting engagement with structural changes, including making recommendations about planning, policy, and programmatic changes, questioning how the Commission should share that information. Shannon shared that when she has presented the annual report in previous years, the Housing and Community Development Committee has taken an interest in what the Commission has said within the report, so they may have the option of including recommendations in that format.
- FY25 Annual Report- Shannon asked if the Commission had any comments on the draft FY25 Annual Report. Commissioner Dennis F. asked whether there are general themes or concrete things suggested at the Fair Housing Month events that the Commission would like to endorse. Shannon recalled that the Commission previously spoke about adding returning citizens as a protected class in Somerville and adding fair housing testing, such as collaborating with Suffolk Law's housing discrimination testing program, on a broader scale through the City. Gloria shared that another resounding theme the Commission heard was that people were unsure of what recourse was available to them during or after experiencing housing discrimination, adding that testing may start to address this and encourage residents to report discrimination by providing a concrete purpose for information collection. Commissioner Patrice F. agreed and asked if it would be possible to make the results of such testing accessible to the public. Commissioner Janine L. noted that proactive or random testing may also help support the data the Commission already has about the types of complaints most commonly received. Commissioner Dennis F. agreed and commented that one way to pay for this could be to apply for grants. He added that as the Commission has developed a relationship with the news media, this could be built into a story. Commissioner Patrice F. suggested partnering with Tufts to help think about how to gather and use data.
- MAPC Technical Assistance Program- Gloria shared that the final deliverables will include a final report and a community engagement tool. She walked the Commission through using the Community engagement tool. The project will close out by June 30, 2026.
- Vacant seats- Commissioner Dennis F. shared that the Commission hopes that the nominee for one open seat will be approved by the appropriate City Council committee the upcoming Monday, June 1. He added that Shannon will forward a letter that he sent to the Community Partnerships Liaison objecting to the removal of Commissioners from the

selection process for vacant seats. He invited the other Commissioners to read and respond to this letter.

IV. Continued Business

- FY25 Annual Report- Reported on above.

V. Announcements

- The next meeting is scheduled for June 25, 2026 at 3:00 PM

VI. Adjournment

- The meeting was adjourned at 4:22 PM.

Document shared:

- MAPC Somerville Fair Housing Commission Final Deliverable 05.25.2026