

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, June 25th, 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 May 28, 2026.
The meeting was called to order by roll call vote. Commissioner Patrice Faulkner made a motion to approve the minutes from the meeting on May 28, 2026, Commissioner Janine Lotti seconded, and the minutes were approved unanimously.
- II. Standing Agenda Items
 - Facebook page update- Commissioner Dennis Fischman shared that the Commission's Facebook page, which can be found at SomervilleFairHousingCommission, posts a question of the week on Fridays and a fair housing-related news article on Mondays. The news article that received the most attention in the past month was about a private community in Arkansas that illegally formed a "whites-only" development. This article received 350 views and 25 reactions, comments, and shares. The question of the week with the most attention was about whether a landlord can refuse to rent to tenants under the age of 25. Commissioner Dennis F. shared that this is not allowed under fair housing law unless it is a designated building for seniors. The post had 61 views and 11 reactions and shares.
 - Review of calls and complaints since the last meeting- Shannon Lawler shared that the only complaint in the past month was from a tenant who informed their landlord that a member of the household was pregnant. After learning this, the landlord repeatedly offered to allow them to break the lease both before and after the lead abatement process. The household received the largest rent increase in their tenancy there after the lead abatement was done. Shannon will contact the landlord to share that Massachusetts fair housing law protects familial status and prohibits retaliation for requesting lead paint abatement. Commissioner Janine L. asked if landlords know about the lead abatement grants available through the City. Shannon summarized the Home Improvement Program, which includes lead abatement for income qualified properties. Commissioner Dennis F. added that Fair Housing Month 2026 included an event which informed landlords of resources, such as the Home Improvement Program.
- III. Updates on Specific Activities
 - June CAAS Movement Meeting- Shannon L. shared that the Commission will no longer be joining the Movement Meeting but will do a separate, specialized weekday meeting over Zoom. The Commissioners are available on June 29th or 30th to present at this

meeting and will schedule the date offline. Commissioner Dennis F. asked Shannon to share the slideshow again so that they can divide the presentation between the Commissioners.

- MAPC Technical Assistance Program- Gloria Huangpu, from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) asked the Commission if they had any questions or requests about the final deliverables of the technical assistance. Commissioner Patrice F. requested that Gloria review the final deliverable during the meeting. Gloria shared the final written report and the community engagement toolkit, including the three main findings: relationship building amplifies outreach, relationship building leads to more tailored engagement, and advanced planning and preparation are an investment in successful engagement. She also reviewed recommendations, including expanding relationship building work, refining the engagement planning process, and connecting engagement with structural change. The Commissioners thanked Gloria for the tools and long term structural support she has provided for the Commission to continue their work. Commissioner Dennis F. asked that an item about continued relationship building be on future agendas. Commissioner Patrice F. suggested dedicating two months specifically to focus on continued relationship building, similar to Fair Housing Month. Commissioner Dennis F. suggested that the new members of the Commission have the MAPC final deliverables included in their onboarding. Commissioner Janine L. asked if Gloria knows of any further ways through external assistance to build capacity as a Commission, and Gloria recommended refining the exact type of support needed after using the existing materials in order to find the best fit. Commissioner Patrice F. suggested reaching out to organizations they are already connected with for two-way information sharing, including sharing what has been learned over the past year of work with MAPC.
- Vacant seats- Shannon provided the update that the top candidates for the income-restricted seat were submitted to the Mayor's Office and the top candidate for both the open seat and income-restricted seat will be submitted to City Council at the June 25th meeting and may need to go to the Confirmation of Appointments and Personnel Matters Committee for approval in July.
- Tabling- Commissioner Patrice F. attended Carnival and shared that the biggest issue people she spoke with were encountering was housing insecurity. She provided households with resources, spoke with about thirty people, and stopped by the Somerville Office of Immigrant Affairs' table.
- Relationships with other multi-member bodies and City government- Commissioner Dennis F. reported that in January, he, the Commission for Women, and the Commission for Persons with Disabilities sent a letter to the City administration asking that seats be filled in a timely manner so that there are fewer issues with quorum, that they be given assistance developing working groups that do not violate open meeting law, and that staff to commissions are supported. He added that the previous week, he spoke with the Chairs of the Commission for Women, the Commission for Persons with Disabilities, and the Human Rights Commission. They shared that they have also had difficulty filling seats. Commissioner Dennis F. added that they are collecting a list of other multi-member bodies that are not paid and will reach out to them to see if they would like to have a larger meeting.

IV. Continued Business

- FY25 Annual Report- Tabled for the July meeting.

V. Announcements

- The next meeting is scheduled for July 23, 2026 at 3:00 PM

VI. Adjournment

- The meeting was adjourned at 4:22 PM.

Document shared:

- MAPC Somerville Fair Housing Commission Final Deliverable