

**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS**  
**FAIR HOUSING COMMISSION**  
*Joseph A. Curtatone*  
*Mayor*

*Interim Staff*  
Mona Al-Abadi  
Housing Compliance Coordinator

*Commissioners*  
Claudia DeAndrade  
Jose Filho  
Dennis Fischman  
Rona Fischman

**Meeting Minutes**  
January 25, 2018  
Somerville Library – Central Branch  
1<sup>st</sup> Floor Auditorium  
79 Highland Ave.  
1:00 pm

The meeting began at 1:05 pm.

Attending: FHC members Dennis Fischman, Rona Fischman, Jose Filho; city staff, Mona Al-Abadi and Michael Feloney.

Members not attending: Claudia DeAndrade

Minutes distribution to: FHC members; staff attending and Hannah Carrillo, SNI Coordinator

*1. Standing Agenda Items*

- Meeting minutes: Members reviewed draft minutes prepared by Mona Al-Abadi and reviewed by Mike Feloney. Jose Filho made a *motion* to accept the minutes, which was seconded by Dennis Fischman and unanimously *approved*.
- Facebook page update: Dennis reported that the most popular fair housing question of the week asked: “Is it against the law for the lease to require a tenant to shovel?” The post received 366 views, 47 likes and 2 shares (Owners cannot require shoveling in the lease, as doing so could violate civil and fair housing rights of residents protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act and/or fair housing statutes.  
  
Dennis also shared the news of HUD’s interest in eliminating the Small Area Fair Market Rent rule allowing Public Housing Authorities in metro areas to calculate housing vouchers’ values based on local, rather than metropolitan-wide, prevailing market rents.
- Review of calls/issues/complaints: Joe mentioned a personal call he received from a Somerville resident whose owner failed to provide adequate heat in the apartment on one of the coldest days of the year to date. The resident opted not to pursue the issue further, but instead wanted to know what could be done in this situation. Mike suggested that the resident contact the City’s Inspectional Services department, which enforces this provision of the state building code

## 2. *Update on specific activities*

- AFFH (Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing) – staff updates
  - HUD notice in the Federal Register on January 5, 2018:
  
  - Public version of AFH, including infographic and projected launch: Mona circulated a draft version of the Assessment of Fair Housing infographic to FHC members. She noted that a few additional, minor edits need to be made before a final version is released and hopes to have a final version ready by the end of February, early March along with a final version of the AFH for public viewing. Rona expressed her view that although the infographic was website-compatible, the format may not be as easy to view when converted into a poster or flyer. She suggested that the print be larger and that converting the text blocks to bullet points could be helpful in presenting information quickly and efficiently to the public. Rona offered to work on the draft infographic for use as a two-page paper copy version. Dennis thought the icons on the infographic were helpful. Rona suggested posting the final infographic at all branches of the Somerville public libraries. Dennis also offered to share and circulate to groups and individuals active on social media. He also suggested connecting with Meghan Ackerman in the Communications Office about advertising the AFH and, including a reminder in local newspaper(s) that the AFH is available. Commission members also thanked Hannah Carrillo for her work on coordinating with Dan Moore to create an online form that allows people to report discrimination claims electronically.
  
  - Fair Housing and Operations Support position update: Mike shared that a conditional offer (pending HR screening requirements) has been made to (and accepted by) the top-ranked candidate. Dennis inquired about whether a transition plan would be put in place for the Program Specialist-Fair Housing and Operations Support position Mike indicated that there would be. In addition, Mona plans to attend Fair Housing Commission monthly meetings until the new Program Specialist is officially hired and has started; Mona plans to have him shadow her for at least one monthly meeting. In addition, all fair housing-related materials including AFH efforts will be shared with the new Program Specialist upon onboarding.
  
  - Housing Fair: Mona will connect with Crystal Rosa, who led the Cambridge’s Housing Fair last April.
- AFFH-related items-Commissioner updates
  - Tenant Handbook revisions: Rona reported that she is in the “outlining process” and is updating information in the Tenant Handbook. She anticipates that the process will take another month to complete.
  
  - Potential Naveo partnership: Joe will revisit the email he sent in December and will connect once more with Naveo.

## 3. *Fair Housing Poster Contest*

Mona shared that she and Mike had reviewed the City ordinance establishing the Fair Housing Commission and are confident its reference to educational efforts is not limited to a school event.

At the same time, Mona reiterated the need to start planning what the Fair Housing Commission envisions for its next public event, whether it be a poster contest or other public outreach.

Rona suggested securing a date and space first, before devising event content. She mentioned that there could be a couple of events, with one being designed for tenants, and another for landlords to inform them of fair housing obligations. The Commission agreed that this item should be added to next month's meeting agenda.

4. *Commissioner Term of Appointment*

Mona has emailed staff in the Mayor's office involved with board appointments (and reappointments). A vacancy announcement is being drafted and will be submitted to the Communications department once complete.

5. *Announcements*

Mona reminded FHC Commissioners of an upcoming affordable housing lottery for two income-restricted condos for purchase at The Flatiron (located at the junction of Prospect St. & Webster Ave.) through the City's Inclusionary Program. The lottery will be held on Friday, January 26<sup>th</sup> at 10am in the Aldermanic Chambers on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of City Hall.

Mona also shared information on the 18<sup>th</sup> annual John T. Dunlop Lecture event with former HUD Under-secretary Raphael Bostic on, "Fair Housing in the US: Past, Present and Future." The lecture will be on Tuesday, April 10<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm at 48 Quincy Street, Gund Hall, Piper Auditorium, in Cambridge, MA 02138.

Lastly, Mona said that she will add "ordinance revisions" as an item on next month's meeting agenda.

A *motion* to adjourn was introduced by Dennis Fischman and seconded by Rona Fischman, and approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 1:58PM.

Documents distributed at meeting:

- Assessment of Fair Housing Draft Infographic