

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

*Interim Staff*  
Mona Al-Abadi  
Housing Compliance Coordinator

*Commissioners*  
Helen Corrigan  
Claudia DeAndrade  
Jose Filho  
Dennis Fischman  
Rona Fischman

**Meeting Minutes**  
October 26, 2017  
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 Claudia Andrade, Dennis Fischman, Rona Fischman, Jose Filho, city staff, Mona Al-Abadi and Mike Feloney and Harvard undergraduate student Delaney Tevis

Members not attending: Helen Corrigan

Before consideration of agenda items, Dennis Fischman requested that his and fellow commissioner Rona Fischman's update to the Board of Aldermen's Housing and Community Development Committee on AFH submittal be included under AFH-related updates. Members and staff agreed that it should be included; Mike Feloney thanked Dennis for thinking to suggest it as an item

*1. Standing Agenda Items*

- Meeting minutes: Members reviewed draft minutes prepared by Mona Al-Abadi and reviewed by Mike Feloney. Dennis Fischman identified two typographical errors in the meeting minutes including the absence of the word "of" on the first page within the second bullet point that reads "high number views" and the misspelling of Joe Filho's last name as "Fihlo." These errors have been corrected and are included in the meeting minutes posted on the City of Somerville's website. Dennis Fischman made a *motion* to accept the minutes, which was seconded by Jose Filho and unanimously *approved*.
- Facebook page update: Dennis reported the most-viewed post on the FHC's Facebook page was related to fair housing rules that apply to two-family housing. Five people shared the post and it received 340 views and 17 likes. Other posts that received a high number of views were on illegal landlord "steering" and a property manager engaging in sexual harassment.
- Review of calls/issues/complaints: Mike shared a call he received from a tenant who was interested in pursuing legal action against her landlord. The individual did not wish to get into any details as to the nature of her concern, so Mike simply referred the tenant to Cambridge and Somerville Legal Services (CASLS) as a possible resource, for which she seemed grateful.

2. *Update on specific activities*

- AFFH (Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing) -- Status update/action items:  
Mona shared that City staff submitted the Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH) to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) on Friday, October 6<sup>th</sup>. On October 20<sup>th</sup>, staff held a debrief meeting among the core working group.  
  
Mona distributed the Assessment of Fair Housing Debrief meeting notes and the AFH Goals and Priorities tracking sheet with attendees. Rona requested that City staff inform the Commissioners with any updates when tracking progress made on each goal in the Goals and Priorities tracking sheet. Dennis suggested utilizing Google Docs as a way to be able to see changes made in real-time when updating the tracking sheet.  
  
Mona spoke on different avenues to share the AFH publicly including the City's website, WINS and FHC page, WINS listserv, City Hall, City Hall Annex and the Somerville Housing Authority. Rona suggested providing paper copies in all three Somerville public library branches.  
  
Claudia noted that some people may not be willing to read the AFH because they are either not fully literate or English is not their first language. People dealing with reading challenges may feel intimidated or embarrassed about asking for assistance when reading. This led to a discussion of how to engage people who may not read the AFH for the reasons Claudia had mentioned.  
  
Mona mentioned an "infographic approach" that outlines the purpose of the AFH and its contents visually. This infographic could be translated into multiple languages. Mona volunteered to follow up with Victor Nascimento, the City's Outreach Coordinator who has experience producing infographics for other City departments.
- AFFH-related opportunities:
  - Fair Housing Assistance Program (FHAP): Dennis reported on his findings on research of the FHAP. He explained that it is a federal grant awarded to state and local agencies. Dennis gathered that the application process is labor intensive and suggested that City staff connect with other organizations like Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD), Boston Fair Housing Commission and the Cambridge Human Rights Commission who may have experience applying to FHAP.

Mike reported on the status of the Program Specialist vacancy. A new draft has been received by the City's HR department of which Mike will be reviewing by the end of the week. Under 'best case' circumstances, the job posting could be advertised in the next week. Interim coverage will continue for November's monthly meeting.

*Mike Feloney left the meeting at 1:50pm to attend another department meeting.*

- Naveo partnership: Joe reported that an email was sent to the CEO of Naveo Credit Union, Rui Domingos to see if he would be interested in a partnership with the FHC to help educate residents on fair housing law in Naveo's first-time homebuyer's class. Rui responded and connected Joe with the VP of the first-time homebuyer's program and is awaiting a response.
- Housing Fair: Mona volunteered to connect with Ithzel Polanco who initially forwarded the housing fair flyer to get more information to share with the FHC.
- Board of Aldermen Housing and Community Development Committee Meeting: Rona and Dennis attended and participated along with Mike Feloney in discussion

of the AFFH process and AFH submittal. Dennis and Rona reported that they advocated for funding for the tenant helper handbook, publicizing the AFH, creating more enforcement capacity for fair housing issues in Somerville by establishing a referral and follow-up process within the City's Housing Division and amending the Fair Housing Commission ordinance itself, so that replacing vacancies becomes easier. Rona and Dennis emphasized the importance of outreach related to fair housing for local residents and landlord training.

### 3. *Announcements*

Mona reminded FHC Commissioners of affordable rental opportunities at Montaje Apartments. Applications must be completed and delivered by 2pm on Monday, November 13<sup>th</sup> to SEB 257 Hillside Ave. Needham 02494. The Lottery will be held December 2017.

Mona also reminded FHC Commissioners of the first info session hosted by the City's Housing Division to review the application, lottery and income certification process for two income-restricted condos available for purchase at The Flatiron (located at the junction of Prospect St. & Webster Ave.) through the City's Inclusionary Program. A representative from Coldwell Banker will also be present to answer any questions about the project. Applications will be available at the info session on Thursday, November 2<sup>nd</sup> from 6-7:30pm in the cafeteria of the Kennedy School. The deadline to submit the application is Friday, January 5<sup>th</sup> at 10am.

Rona reminded attendees to start thinking about the Fair Housing Poster Contest in April and add it as an agenda item for next month's meeting.

On behalf of the Fair Housing Commission, Dennis wanted to share get well wishes to Helen Corrigan.

A *motion* to adjourn was introduced by Rona Fischman and seconded by Claudia Andrade, and approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 2:10PM.

Documents distributed at meeting:

- Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH)-Assessment of Fair Housing Debrief meeting notes.
- Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH) Goals and Priorities tracking sheet