



Ruthanne Fuller
Mayor

Barney Heath
Director of
Planning & Development

Malcolm Lucas
Housing Planner

Members

Esther Schlorholtz, Chair
Donna Rigg, Vice-Chair
David Hedison
Judy Korzenowski
Josephine McNeil
Tatjana Meschede
Alexandra Weiffenbach
Steve West

1000 Commonwealth Ave.
Newton, MA 02459
T 617/796-1120
F 617/796-1142

www.newtonma.gov

CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Fair Housing Committee

MEETING AGENDA

Date: May 3, 2023
Time: 8:00 a.m.
Place: Virtual (Zoom)

Members Present: Esther Schlorholtz, Chair
Donna Rigg, Vice Chair
David Hedison
Judy Korzenowski
Josephine McNeil
Alexandra Weiffenbach
Steve West

Members Absent: Tatjana Meschede

Staff Present: Malcolm Lucas, Housing Planner
Jini Fairley, ADA/Sec. 504 Coordinator
Barney Heath, Planning and Development Director

Public Present: Alicia Bowman, Council
Julia Malakie, Council
Sharyn Roberts, League of Women Voters Newton
Nancy Kritzman, Commission on Disability
Jennifer Gilbert, Housing Navigator
Emma Rial, Housing Navigator
Victoria Decker, Housing Navigator

Malcolm Lucas, Housing Planner served as recorder, Esther Schlorholtz, Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

1. Approval of April 2023 minutes

- Upon a motion by DH, DR seconded the motion. The minutes for April 2023 were approved 7-0-0. ES expressed appreciation to Amanda Berman for her years of service in Newton as director of housing and

community development. BH said that he anticipates hiring a new director this summer.

2. Housing Navigator Presentation

- ES introduced Jennifer Gilbert, Founder of Housing Navigator. JG started this work about four years ago after her long tenure working in affordable housing. She then introduced her staff. Housing Navigator idea came out of abundance of marketing tools and websites for market rate housing. Affordable tools are limited, and JG thought to create something to make it easier for people who are looking for affordable options.
- Housing Navigator's goal to create an accessible and equitable program that has a full inventory for the state which is around 3000 properties. At this current time the usage is about 8000 people a week and 30,000 people a month. They are also trying to schedule a meeting with different municipalities to gather their affordable housing stock and going forward they are seeking data for properties that are financed by the Department of Housing and Community Development.
- Housing Navigator has also had data on accessible units, around 10,000, and they have a partnership with the Centers of Independent Living on how to get more information on where these types of units are located to add to the data and to give applicants more access and opportunity. JG then continued about the history of the Housing Navigator partnerships, board and how it was created.
- Victoria Decker discussed what Housing Navigator is doing with landlord and property management and working on a pilot program around waitlist. VD stated that they will monitor and explore how long and what types of waitlists are kept and to close the gap of what number of vacancies properties definitively have. The goal of the pilot is to have owners commit to be hands on and to manually monitor and to check in with Housing Navigator. This will help applicants know what is available in real time and when they would expect to get a response so there is more transparency. They have had some interesting feedback from renters, community managers and property managers.
- It is a work in progress to get all of the different types of affordable housing: tax credit, public housing, 40Bs, inclusionary zoning, and HUD assisted. They explained that gathering the data was very hard work and that they will continue to get the information needed. Afterward they explained in more detail on how it works with the different entities. A fee is charged to developers who utilize Housing Navigator and found that most affordable agencies that are receiving funding require developers to market with Housing Navigator to secure their funding.
- ES expressed appreciation to JG for working with BH to establish a system for Newton to ensure that all the lotteries and affordable units, including those that are through inclusionary zoning, are reported accurately, timely and completely. She thanked both JG and BH for working together on this initiative in the coming months. JG acknowledged that the Newton Housing Authority has already worked with the Housing Navigator on their properties.

3. Fair Housing Training for Landlords and Tenants

- There is not any update at this time. ES stated that she has been in contact with AW and learned that the NHA Director is interested, and they are currently researching different groups that could provide this training. ES suggested late fall and asked DH to recommend who would

have the best training program. DH stated he has been in contact with NHA and stated that he would share with her the information about organizing the training.

4. Subcommittee Updates

- **Lottery Results & Lease-ups Sub-Committee**

- No update. Group has decided to focus on what is presently going on at Allee on the Charles. JM brought up a discussion that happened about a year ago with including of certain language for section 8 vouchers in the lottery advertisement on new developments. BH stated in the Boston Globe advertisement, the section 8 language was included.
- BH asked what DH's organization does regarding using this language in their advertisement. DH stated that they do use the language in the communities they work in and stated that it works better with units that have rents that are affordable for 80% Area Median Income and below. ES asked BH if he could require the use of the language and BH stated that it would be better to get it in the ordinance and that if the Committee wanted to create a checklist that he would be open to working with them on it.

- **Membership & Nominating Sub-Committee**

- ES said that she has discussed with BH potential changes to membership along the lines discussed in committee, and that he will be letting us know this summer how to proceed.

- **Fair Housing Award Sub-Committee**

- ES reminded members that the award ceremony will be on May 4 and will honor Ted Hess-Mahan and Kathy Laufer.

- **Fair Housing Literature Sub-Committee**

5. Fair Housing Committee Priorities Discussion

- **Promote housing choice for diverse populations to advance Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH), with focus on race/ethnicity, public subsidy and disability**
- **Identify and work to overcome barriers to successful tenancies and to improve processes/practices for tenant selection in lottery and market rate multi-family rental housing**
- **Promote improved practices for real estate professionals to achieve more housing choice for diverse populations**
- **Promote effective processes/practices for new affordable homeownership and resales**
- **Promote data collection on multi-family rental and new homeownership occupancy**
- **Promote FH training for real estate professionals, public and committee members**
- **Enhance Project Review of Housing Developments to advance AFFH**
- **Support AI/Consortium Fair Housing Testing and FH testing in Newton**
- **Collaborate with Related Newton Commissions and Committees to increase affordable housing for households of various sizes and lower incomes and to encourage increased funding for affordable housing**

- **Promote affordable housing production in coordination with other City commissions and committees**
- **Support federal, state and city initiatives that promote AFFH**
- **Collaborate with Human Rights Commission on Fair Housing Complaint Process**
- **Contribute to Newton's FH-related plans**
- **Enhance FH literature and website information and access for the public**
- **Address committee membership appointments with representation from Human Rights Commission and legal counsel with FH specialty**
- **Promote Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging in Newton**

6. Next meeting Wednesday, June 7, 2023

*Supplementary materials are available for public review in the Planning Department of City Hall (basement) the Friday before the meeting. For more information contact **Malcolm Lucas at 617.796.1149**. The location of this meeting/event is wheelchair accessible and Reasonable Accommodations will be provided to persons with disabilities who require assistance. If you need a Reasonable Accommodation, please contact the city of Newton's ADA/Section 504 Coordinator, Jini Fairley, at least two business days in advance (2 weeks for ASL or CART) of the meeting/event: jfairley@newtonma.gov or (617) 796-1253. The city's TTY/TDD direct line is: 617-796-1089. For the Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS), please dial 711