



Ruthanne Fuller  
Mayor

Barney Heath  
Director of  
Planning & Development

Malcolm Lucas  
Housing Planner

*Members*  
Esther Schlorholtz, Chair  
Donna Rigg, Vice-Chair  
Judy Korzenowski  
Josephine McNeil  
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## CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

### Fair Housing Committee

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## MEETING AGENDA

Date: August 2, 2023

Time: 8:00 a.m.

Place: Virtual (Zoom)

**Members Present:** Esther Schlorholtz, Chair

Donna Rigg, Vice Chair

Josephine McNeil

Alexandra Weiffenbach

Steve West

**Members Absent:** Tatjana Meschede

Judy Korzenowski

**Staff Present:**

Malcolm Lucas, Housing Planner

Jini Fairley, ADA/Sec. 504 Coordinator

Lara Kritzer, Director of Housing and Community  
Development

**Public Present:**

Susan Albright, Council President

Alicia Bowman, Council

Julia Malakie, Council

Pamela Wright, Council

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

### 1. Approval of June 2023 minutes

- Upon a motion by SW, AW seconded the motion. The minutes for June 2023 were approved 6-0-0.

### 2. Review of Cambridge study on Resident Experiences of Inclusion and Bias in Inclusionary Housing



- ES introduced the discussion on the Cambridge resident experience study and stated that Cambridge is the oldest and most robust inclusionary housing plan in the country since the 1970s. They have a strong commitment to creating affordable housing, build among the most affordable housing in the state, and commit substantial resources to it, including almost three-quarters of their Community Preservation funds. ES explained that Cambridge's infrastructure is different from Newton's in respect to inclusionary housing. ES stated that it would be great to have someone from the City of Cambridge to talk with the FHC to explain how they are executing and funding their programming to improve the resident experience of affordable housing tenants and buyers because Newton could benefit substantially from their experience. Councilor Bowman stated that it would be great to hear from the City of Cambridge and stated that she has heard from builders who work in Cambridge. Councilor Bowman stated that the Cambridge Multi Service Center that is funded by their CD department: Health and Human Services program, is a valuable model to learn about. The department works with the homeless and on eviction prevention programs. Councilor Bowman stated that the work they do could be very helpful in Newton and is needed.
- ES thanked TM for preparing notes on the study for her. She explained that the study explored 430 Cambridge residents' perceptions and experiences in their buildings and complexes, this includes homeownership, mixed income rentals and 100% affordable buildings. The study includes the sense of community belonging, interactions with neighbors and their experiences with bias. Resident participants had generally positive experiences with the Inclusionary Housing Program (IHP) for both the program and staff in the Community Development Department. 1/3 of the renters and affordable IHP units found the process of applying to Cambridge somewhat or very confusing and stressful.
- ES stated that FHC and Newton Housing Partnership members have heard anecdotes that Newton affordable housing residents describe issues related to experiencing an environment that is not conducive to feeling welcomed and belonging in the community. She said that this experience happens across Massachusetts, and also discussed the broader concerns about the application process that is very challenging. ES pointed out those aspects and continued with the presentation listing the Cambridge study stats: 40% of all renters, and 41% of all owners of affordable IHP units reported encountering bias or discrimination, at least several times in the past year, about 10%, and each group experienced bias less than once a year. ES also stated that the majority of the identification of the sources of the bias were also identified by the tenants and the owners and were largely for the rental population. Property managers were identified as the primary source of the bias, and the lack of sense of inclusion, and belonging. And residents of market rate units in mixed income housing were identified as the source of bias as well.
- Lastly ES discussed the recommendations.
  - Create a task force with representation from renters, owners, property managers, and City staff.
  - Provide information and resources for assessing and addressing bias in inclusionary housing or mixed income settings.
  - Offer and encourage participation in trainings on inclusion and racial equity and inclusive property operating practices for IHP property owners, property managers and other staff, and residents of IHP buildings.
  - Engage local, regional, and state entities and non-profit agencies (e.g., fair housing coalitions, Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination, Greater Boston Legal

Services) to discuss the study findings on bias and develop action steps to address bias in IHP communities.

- Provide guidance for residents and IHP property managers on appropriate avenues for intervention and accountability actions related to residents' concerns with bias and exclusion.
  - Encourage property managers to create intentionally welcoming and maximally accessible environments for people of color, women and non-binary people, individuals with disabilities or health problems, and those with children—for residents and visitors alike— in IHP buildings.
- Councilor Albright stated that she is worried that property managers and real estate professionals are not trained in this area and gave an example of a property manager that she has spoken to. The property manager has to deal with the day-to-day operation in managing the building and also dealing with demanding or difficult tenants. Councilor Albright stated that this is not a property managers' strength and asked what should be done. ES stated that training would be a great start and explained that there is a responsibility there to provide for all tenants and it will be beneficial to provide training by experienced property managers that are also experienced in affordable housing property management. ES gave an example for higher income tenants; she noted that property management is generally very responsive to ensuring that these tenants are satisfied. She said that in her experience, successful affordable housing management has somewhat different requirements and it is a different market niche from 100% market housing that requires other expertise including more access to special resources when tenants experience difficulties, understanding of government requirements when vouchers or other resources are being used by tenants, and other services. ES stated that it needs to be looked into further and reiterated that it would be beneficial for the City of Cambridge to come speak about it with the FHC or even Newton City Council.
- SW stated that from his experience in development and management the study results will be similar across America, and it is an endemic issue. SW does agree with training and stated that good property managers do balance the day-to-day and providing services while trying to help people avoid evictions. SW stated often it is the bigger nonprofits that provide better services for affordable housing property management. SW stated that it is called resident services and stated that these staff are hired for money to provide services. These staff provide advocacy to tenants and their families. SW stated that to ask property managers to manage the day-to-day and add community service and building community is difficult. He stated that there are companies who provide these services and they do it well. He also stated that sometimes there is tension between property management and these resident services programs. SW stated that the development staff and housing departments focus is responding to development and zoning pressures as well as others. SW stated that he doesn't think they should be let off the hook or not have a role, but it would be better for an entity that focused just on that. SW stated that this will cost, and it also would benefit if it were set up in the beginning of the process. Lastly, he stated that these services are normally set up for big developments with the funding sources and anything at 12 or less units he does not know what can be done.
- Councilor Albright asked ES if the FHC would be committed to do a joint docket item to discuss this matter and to have the City of Cambridge to come speak about the study. ES expressed appreciation for this proposal and committee members agreed.

### **3. Subcommittee Updates**

- **Lottery Results & Lease-ups Sub-Committee**
- **Membership & Nominating Sub-Committee**
  - ES stated that the sub-committee has had the discussion and spoke about losing a committee member recently and that they need to find more members. ES stated that Barney Heath is working on the FHC's recommendation on the committee's structure.
- **Fair Housing Award Sub-Committee**
  - ES stated that this topic is for the future.
- **Fair Housing Literature Sub-Committee**

#### **4. Fair Housing Committee Priorities Discussion**

##### **FH Protected Groups**

- **Promote housing choice for diverse populations to advance Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH), with focus on race/ethnicity, public subsidy, and disability**
- **Promote Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging in Newton**
- **Promote effective processes/practices for new affordable homeownership and resales**
- **Promote improved practices for real estate professionals to achieve more housing choice for diverse populations**
- **Identify and work to overcome barriers to successful tenancies and to improve processes/practices for tenant selection in lottery and market rate multifamily rental housing**

##### **Learning/Teaching**

- **Enhance FH literature and website information and access for the public**
- **Promote FH training for real estate professionals, landlords, tenants, the public and committee members**
  - ES asked AW for any updates on the NHA training program for landlords and tenants. AW stated that there were not any updates at this time and that she is hoping to get a date soon and that they are actively working on it.

##### **Data and Analysis**

- **Promote data collection on multi-family rental and new homeownership occupancy**
- **Enhance Project Review of Housing Developments to advance AFFH**
- **Support AI/Consortium Fair Housing Testing and FH testing in Newton**

##### **Collaboration**

- **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**
- **Address committee membership appointments with representation from Human Rights Commission and legal counsel with FH specialty**

## **5. Next meeting Wednesday, September 6, 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](mailto: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