



Ruthanne Fuller  
Mayor

Barney Heath  
Director of  
Planning & Development

Malcolm Lucas  
Housing Planner

*Members*

Ted Hess Mahan, Chair  
Kathy Laufer, Vice-Chair  
Esther Schlorholtz  
Josephine McNeil  
Donna Rigg  
Tatjana Meschede  
Rosemary Larking  
Judy Korzenowski  
Alexandra Weiffenbach  
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## CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

### Fair Housing Committee

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## MEETING AGENDA

Date: June 2, 2021  
Time: 8:00 a.m.  
Place: Virtual (Zoom)

**Members Present:** Theodore M. Hess Mahan, Chair

Kathy Laufer, Vice Chair  
Josephine McNeil  
Esther Schlorholtz  
Judy Korzenowski  
Donna Rigg  
Ellen Tanowitz  
Alexandra Weiffenbach  
Tatjana Meschede  
Rosemary Larking

**Members Absent:**

**Staff Present:** Malcolm Lucas, Housing Planner  
Jini Fairley, ADA/Sec. 504 Coordinator  
Hattie N. Kerwin Derrick, Director of Community  
Engagement & Inclusion

**Public Present:** Councilor Pamela Wright  
Councilor Alicia Bowman  
Councilor Julia Malakie  
Rena Getz  
Sean Roche

Malcolm Lucas, Housing Planner served as recorder, Ted Hess-Mahan, Chair called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

### 1. Approval of May's meeting minutes

- THM stated he reviewed May's minutes and that there may be a couple of parts of the meeting that he thought were inadvertently missing. THM asked if anyone else had any corrections
- ES stated that she has sent edits and TM states she did as well. KL stated that she felt that things were missing as well and that was the advantage of having the meetings recorded. THM agreed and asked the Committee to postpone the minutes until next meeting. The Committee agreed. ML stated that he does review the video to record the minutes especially since he has to host the meetings recently. ML asked what was the specific item that was missing so that he could go to that part of the video and not have to watch it over again. THM stated that he would get back to ML with his annotation of where he thinks that items are missing.

## 2. Information Session for Gateway Project (Kathy Laufer)

- KL stated that the information session was on May 19<sup>th</sup> and that there were 42 people on the call. KL stated that the organization was MCO and the presenter was Maureen O'Hagan. KL stated that Ms. O'Hagan stated that they have already received 12 applications. KL stated that though she was focused, that she could not follow the information being presented. She felt it was too much information in a short period of time and that is why she wanted to bring it up for discussion. KL stated that there were references made to programs and there was discussion of the One Mortgage and Mass Housing loan program for down payments. Ms. O'Hagan did mention that they do not accept VA or Quicken loans.
- KL stated that they spoke about how to get an application, how to secure a mortgage and how to get down payment assistance. KL stated that there was not any reference to the City's program. KL stated that the people asked many questions including the descriptions of the units and the sizes. KL stated that she would have not known next steps other than get the application. KL did state that Ms. O'Hagan explained the lottery pools, how they are going to work and stated that it was very clear. KL stated that people who are chosen in the lottery will have an opportunity to view the units.
- JM stated that she has attended lotteries by MetroWest CANDO and SEB. She stated that the Committee should get some comparisons to get some better information. She stated that after she heard what she heard about the lottery process that the more unhappy she is with it from the beginning to the end because it is not clear. It is very frustrating that nothing is being done about it. JM stated that in her opinion she feels that there are no real outcomes or measurements against what the lottery was set up for. THM stated that he agreed and informed the Committee that he is still waiting on the response from DHCD.
- KL wondered what role the city plays in these information sessions and thought it would be helpful to have some oversight. KL stated that there should be better coordination, communication. Why did the agent not talk about the DP/ Closing Cost Program? Who looks at the ads? DR asked if there were handouts at the meeting and KL said that Ms. O'Hagan referenced some websites. KL stated that they referred to some websites with resources. KL did say that she agrees with JM that she needs some comparison from other meetings.
- KL also discussed the recent Local Preference presentation and study. She stated that the study was helpful despite some information was missing but was happy that there was more information given from when the Committee discuss their project. It still does not answer

all the questions that the Committee have been asking. KL also stated that they really need that information to be able to tell the outcomes. She also stated that they just don't know how to measure whether the program works or not and whether it would make sense to reduce the local preference. There is no way to prove it.

- ES stated that DHCD, MHP and Mass Housing are very experienced in doing lotteries and it does work well. She stated that they have come out to train the FHC. She said these programs are run very well and been in place for a while. ES suggested that MHP could possibly come back to train the FHC again. ES stated that she thinks that the issue really seems to be what the City of Newton is doing to manage it appropriately and that is what the FHC is trying to figure out and can understand where the frustration is coming from. ES stated that this is not a mysterious process, but it is a cumbersome process. She recommended MHP should come out again so it could be explained to the FHC. THM asked who is doing this well and if it is working and they have someone that is responsible for just this function. ES stated that she thinks that the City of Cambridge is always up there and at the top of this topic. Then she mentioned Brookline and Somerville. She stated they may have someone who is dedicated to just monitoring and they have systems in place that have been tried and true and it is possible to get the type of information and to follow those guidelines, but you must put resources in doing it. ES agrees with everyone that the information is a valuable resource and it would be great to figure it out and have it function properly to meet the intent of the affordable housing units that come online. THM mentioned Brookline dropping their local preference and asked if ES knew of someone that she could contact to come and speak to the FHC. ES stated that everyone she knew is no longer there and that she could find out. THM stated that he was looking for someone to tell them that this is working and if DHCD is doing what they are supposed to be doing. THM stated that he is not convinced that the City of Newton is not doing a good job, he stated that just can't tell.
- ES stated that her concern is that THM may be conflating the issue of what the Local Preference policy is in terms of the lottery, which is something that Newton chose to do, and each city and town chooses. This is a separate issue from management of the process of the lottery in compliance with whatever the city chooses on Local Preference, and what all the state requirements are for the lottery process itself. So she would not conflate them. She stated that you can get some results from the data that ~~they~~ we have been able to obtain to help us determine what would be a more appropriate approach to the Local Preference Policy, but they are different issues.
- THM stated that he wasn't purposefully trying to conflate the two issues but that he was trying to make a point that these communities dropped or lowered their local preference and assumed that they did it on the basis of data or some sort of measure. THM stated that he would be interested in knowing this information to determine what makes the lottery process work in these communities.
- ES mentioned that through the CHAPA Homeownership Collaborative, many nonprofit organizations offer ~~offers~~ homebuyer education programs that help respond to the ~~where~~ various questions that were brought up by KL. They give these trainings to individuals who are looking to purchase their first homes. ES stated that ~~it~~ homebuying is a complicated process and that individuals will need training and ~~the~~ support. ES stated that ~~it~~ first-time homebuyer training through the CHPA Homeownership Collaborative is an important resource and that MHP and MassHousing make it mandatory for borrowers getting their loans. ES then went on to say that the CHAPA Collaborative does trainings, stated that their quarterly meeting is next week and stated that the Committee could participate if

interested. ES gave a brief background of the CHAPA Homeownership Collaborative organization and explained the first-time home buyer courses and the cost. ES stated some were free and stated that average cost was about \$35. JM explained that all the information that ES just went through is great but gave a critique of the Committee. She felt that 90% of the people on the committee may not have an idea of the information that was just presented and felt that the Committee has a hard time doing their job effectively because ~~its~~ there is not enough knowledge in the group to raise and ask the right questions.

- JM thought that a retreat with the committee would be a good idea to gain more information and to talk about the function of this Committee and to set goals that they could achieve. Also, she wants to map out to see who has the skill, the interest and the time to really make something happen. JM talked about the non- response from DHCD and stated that she was going to follow up. ES stated that she would help as well.
- THM stated that he would circulate the letter to the Committee again along with the email addresses and the response that he did receive.
- Councilor Bowman commented on the first-time homebuyer program and stated interested parties should be taking this course long before going into a lottery because the lottery time is short. Council Bowman asked if there is anyway or if the City is doing any efforts to reach out to qualified people so they would be able to be prepared to purchase a unit. She stated it should be more hands on and the interested parties need to be found and worked with until they are ready to purchase a home. She estimated a timeline of 6 to 9 months.
- ES stated that this is a great idea, but it does not often end up matching with the training and when the units are available. JM stated that she was thinking about it after Councilor Bowman made her statement and she stated that Boston and other communities have community action agencies that works with low-to-moderate income people and they have an array of programs that help. JM stated that there are no organizations like this in Newton that are geared to this population. JM stated that there is no system in place for low-to-moderate income people. Councilor Bowman asked what could be done.
- KL If the Planning Dept developed such a sheet, then it could be given to everyone on their mailing list plus the agencies who receive CDBG funds. KL also stated that in the past the human service organizations who received CDBG funds would gather to share resources and ideas on a quarterly basis. She stated that this will be helpful to connect with the organizations to share clients. JM asked what organizations would be invited. KL stated the NCDF, NHA, Family Access and the City of Newton's social workers. JM stated the Family Access is broader and may not have a high percentage of Newton residents.
- ES stated that the non-winners of the lottery could be a good place to start. She said offer the information to them about CHAPA's programs to get them into trainings. KL stated that the lottery agent is not going to release the information and stated that the consultant ran into that when the local preference study was happening. KL asked does the City have the authority to say if agents are running a lottery for us, here is our expectations and this is the information that needs to be a part of this process and here is the documentation that is needed. KL also stated that the people who do win the lottery and do not get into the unit because they have not had time to take the first-time homebuyers class is more of an issue. This may be a barrier and is worried that people get the opportunity may end up walking away from the unit and give up.
- JM stated that the City does not pay for the lottery agent and stated that the developer does. KL stated that she understood and stated that as a city we require that for affordable units, and the lottery would be happening if there were not affordable units.

- ML stated that he is not sure if it is across the board for the first-time homebuyers certificate but explained that if a person did not have their certificate in the beginning that they could get it during the application process. ML stated that the Planning department will accept a receipt of registering for the class. ML stated that the issue of not having a certificate is not a barrier.
- KL stated that the timeline from the lottery to purchasing the unit in the presentation was tight. She said the other issue was the condo fees. KL stated that the presenter stated that the condo fee will go up every year on the affordable units. KL asked how a person knows that they can afford it in the future. THM asked if they explain that the condo fees are proportional not to the square footage but to the value of the appraised or assessed price. JM agreed and stated that it is a percentage, and this is listed in the condo documentation. She stated the issue is how much power does this owner have when assessments happen. JK stated that it will be a percentage. JM stated that if the cost is high then there still may be a problem. ET stated that she has a background in condos and stated that it is a percentage and stated that the market units will also have to pay an assessment on a bigger scale. So, everyone will have to pay something. So, there are pluses and minuses. ET stated that she has taught for many years at the Boston Home Center and she taught a condo 101 class
- ET stated a possible way to reach out to people who are looking to buy a home is to connect with the school system. You could send a flier to parents and now you are hitting the demographic that participates in free lunch and this is a huge demographic in Newton. ET also stated that the social workers and psychologists will know the families that are in need. JM stated the economy and how expensive Newton is a barrier and it would be hard for those particular people that are in need, even for an affordable unit. JM stated that most funding that helps these populations are from the federal government and not from the City of Newton. She stated that there is no line item in the City's budget for low-to-moderate income people. JM stated the line items reflect the City's values.
- JF stated that she wanted to get back to JM's point of the services in Newton and stated that she has helped people to get an apartment even though this is not her current position and stated that there is so much information that it would take a village. JF stated that affordable homeownership applications are very different. JF stated that she works with various people and stated that she also refers inquires to ML and they work together to get information to people. JF asked how many people who have signed up to the city's Constant Contact. ML stated around 2500. JF stated we could easily put something together to send out to encourage people to take the CHAPA course.
- JF stated to KL that the Gateway has a huge information packet that a person couldn't get unless they were applying that had some much information in it. JF stated that she has attended three lotteries and she has helped people on the phone to get applications, to give resources for affordable housing. JF stated that she agrees with JM that there is not a non-profit in Newton comparable to South Middlesex Opportunity Council in Framingham. JF stated that it would be good if we had an organization that was close to refer people to. JF stated that the process could be confusing, but she doesn't want people to confuse local preference to this whole process because the City does not oversee picking lottery agents. JF stated that the developers oversee hiring them and the city oversees some of the process, but not all of it. JF stated that staff in the Planning Department and Health and Human Service that are knowledgeable, but it might take something beyond us.
- THM asked if ML had the digital packets to forward to the Committee to get some understanding of what information is actually provided and that his personal feeling is that

there may be some handholding as JF suggested it is pretty intensive. JM stated that it is handholding and it is nothing wrong with that and stated that we all have had some support at one level or another.

- KL agreed and stated that for the people that were fortunate enough who had families, parents to help them and understood the process and worked through it with them. KL stated that not everyone may have experience of that in their family at all.
- ML stated that people who are placed in these positions are here to help people. ML gave an example of himself and stated that he would try to do everything possible to help someone. ML stated that he is sure that organizations are not hiring people to submit paperwork and tell a person that they are on their own. ML stated that people are working to help. THM asked if ML could send copies of the information packet for the most recent developments. ML stated that he would send it.
- KL asked ML if he could distinguish the renters from the homeowners in the Constant Contact list. ML stated no and explained that it is a person who would place ~~there~~ their email and first name on the webpage where they would sign up and list both rental and homeownership opportunities. KL then asked ML are there 50-500 people who have approached ML within the last six months with an interest in homeownership. She asked about the new Beacon Street development and whether ~~has~~ those people have been notified. ML stated that he receives emails daily asking about both rentals and homeownership opportunities and will let them know what is available and direct them to sign up for updates on the website by sending them a link.
- KL stated that this was after the fact and what she is speaking of is to inform these people about the first time homebuyers program and how to access it, the cost and when the next one is available so people are better prepared before an information session. ML stated that he doesn't have several people asking for that information but he gets an occasional person that would need detailed information about homeownership and that he would break it down so it could be understandable. ES asked if we could be more proactive about sending out information to the Constant Contact list that there is homebuyer counseling available and linking people to CHAPA's website. ML stated that he understands and stated that it could be a possibility but explained that the list is for affordable housing and not that type of information. ML stated in the past people wanted to be taken off the list when we sent information other than affordable housing opportunities so we try to keep it specifically for affordable housing.

### **3. Nominations for Chair and Vice Chair**

- THM stated that he has not heard from anyone that was interested and asked the Committee that was interested in either position. THM asked if the Committee was at full capacity. ML stated that there was one vacancy. THM stated that KL has other obligations and stated that she would not be able to serve as Vice Chair. THM stated that he is willing to serve another year with or without a Vice Chair. THM asked about recruitment and who was in charge.
- HKD stated that she is one of the point persons and that they might be able to refer some interested people who are interested in the NHP and refer them over different positions. HKD also stated that later this month they will be doing some advertising for open vacancies across the board for boards and commissions and encouraged the FHC to refer and recommend people. HKD stated that they are looking for new people and are looking with a lens towards diversity and equity. HKD stated that she or Amalia Timbers will be more than happy to explain the process.

- THM stated that this is one of the committees that does not have to be an approval process and that it is mayor appointed. HKD stated that is correct, but an applicant needs to at least attend two meeting and be interviewed by the chair and the staff for the committee and that they recommend them to the Mayor. JM stated that she though it went another way. HKD stated that steps may have been forgotten over the years and they are trying to tighten up things so that it is fair and consistent for all the boards and commissions. KL stated that the FHC has been trying to get a member from the Human Rights Commission because a person needs to be on the FHC that serves in that commission as well. HKD stated that she knows and stated that they are down some people due to her leaving and some illnesses.
- JM stated that she thought the FHC had to be approved by city council. HKD stated that every commission does. She explained the Mayor makes a recommendation and then they go and gets it docketed. But the Mayor makes the recommendation if it has to go to city council. Councilor Bowman stated that it may go to Zoning and Planning and it goes with what is close to whatever work that they do.
- KL made a motion for THM to continue as chair and stated that if anyone was interested in vice chair to let him know. ES seconded. THM made a roll call and all stated yes and THM abstained. Nine in favor.

#### 4. Other Business

- JM stated that she was serious about meeting with the Committee to formulate some plan/action because she feels that there is a lot of discussion but no action. JM feels that they have been meeting consistently but there has not been a resolution.
- THM stated that he needed to check with the law department about open meeting law to see if that is possible. HKD stated that they could set aside a time, so it is possible. THM stated that he will work with ML on the agenda and possibly put just this item for next month. JM suggested maybe getting a facilitator to help create some framework to help the discussion. THM stated if they do that that he would like to wait until September 2021 so have more time to prepare because it will take some work.
- KL stated that the Fair Housing ranking criteria has been really helpful and that they should continue to use that. JM stated that it is more than that and have the discussion in July for people to have an idea of their interest in what they would like to do. THM stated that they will focus on this in July for soliciting ideas and the meeting was adjourned at 9:41 a.m.

#### 5. Next meeting Wednesday, July 7, 2021

\*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