

**CITY OF NORWALK
FAIR HOUSING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
NOVEMBER 20, 2023**

ATTENDANCE: Jalin T. Sead, Chairman, Rev. Richard Clarke,
Joe Mann, Carol Frank (3:21)
Sheri McCready- Pritchett,

STAFF: Margaret Suib, Fair Housing Offer,

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Mr. Sead called the order for the meeting at 3:08pm

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

There was no one present from the public to comment at this time.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM SEPTEMBER 26,2023

****MR. MANN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE
SEPTEMBER 26, 2023 MEETING**

****REV. CLARKE SECONDED.**

****THE MOTION PASSED WITH FOUR (4) IN FAVOR (MANN, CLARKE,
FRANKLIN, MC-CREADY-PRITCHETT) AND ONE (1) ABSTENTION (SEAD)**

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business to be discussed.

NEW BUSINESS

A. REVIEW, DISCUSSION AND VOTE ON FHAC BUDGET FOR FY 2024-2025

Atty. Suib distributed copies of the budget application for the fiscal year of 2024-2025. She explained how the commission is a grant agency, that is how the city operates to fund them. The amounts shown on the legal sheet are from the operating budget, which for the last few years have been during the pandemic. Before the pandemic they would spend the full budget around \$10,000. Most expenses for the office are usually paper and printing cost, how much paper the office uses depends on how many events and training and events are booked. With the down turn of in person events, most of the expenses went down.

City of Norwalk
Fair Housing Advisory Commission
Regular Meeting
November 20, 2023

In the coming year Atty. Suib anticipates more in person events. She explained the Budget Application, on page 2 and 3 describe the commission duties, which was from the consent to query. Atty. Suib's work is divided into three areas: Education and Outreach, Monitoring and Advocacy, and Planning and Analysis of Housing patterns and practice. In conjunction with the city, Atty. Suib gave examples of the work she does with them: Annual Reports to HUD, working with housing authority, and advocating for affordable and accessible housing.

Working with the support staff, their duties are monitoring public and private housing practices, identifying problem areas, and making recommendations to the city.

Atty. Suib explained their target population is everyone. They want to accomplish what they have been ordered to do by the court and further fair housing for all. She mentioned the cooperation they have with the city housing authority as they work together sometimes. On page 4 mentioned who they work with and who they support which are nonprofit organizations and agencies.

The next few pages are about the activities they have. First is outreach, which is the training and education material and participation in fair housing groups. Second is serving the residents of Stamford and Norwalk judicial district as Atty. Suib is appointed on the CT advisory program to improve housing courts. The last section explains how the work will be effective.

Atty. Suib found a typo on the next page, "planning an analysis of housing patterns and practices. The word pattern is spelled patters. She will be making a correction on that.

She advocated for fair housing to be included in all city planning as they should be better integrated with the developers when those meetings happen. Since accessibility has no legal enforcement power, the council can speak with developers before building to ensure accessibility and requirements are met.

Ms. Frank joined in at 3:21pm.

Atty Suib proceeded over budget application, with the goals and objectives they want to continue expanding the affordable housing. She advocates for the 35-65k concept that she came up with Ms. Franklin, which refines affordable housing. Making the program more general and fitting to all.

Mr.Mann said everyone is using the term but it isn't really describing what they are talking about. Confusing workforce housing and affordable housing. He believes its something that should get corrected. Developers are building for the workforce housing. Atty Suib responded the reason for all this is it being a state definition, which is considered 80% of the area median

City of Norwalk
Fair Housing Advisory Commission
Regular Meeting
November 20, 2023

income, so to government workers use the state definition while normal people consider the term housing you can afford.

Mr. Mann continued to advocate for more explanation and clarification on the terms being used. Atty Suib responded that the commission needs to see the housing problem as a quilt, not one size fits all. There's small issues within the patches that need to be repaired. Below the workforce is the 35-65k who don't get much help. Along with that issue they need to provide more affordable housing outside of the urban areas. She also suggested incentivizing development on empty lots for 2-4 family houses, which is called infield development. She mentioned having a conversation she had last week with the head of the transit district and brought up creating more bus lines to service more grounds. The fair housing testing program needs to be followed up with, they tested a few times before covid and did some training after the first testing. With the first set of results they found 80% of blacks were discriminated against in the new developments.

Onto the money side of this all, last year there was a budget of \$12,028 for a part time office position for the commission and they didn't receive any interest, possibly due to the low income rate. They removed the budget for the support services but it was aware that the budget would need to be put back because it is court ordered.

Ms. Frank asked when Atty Suib's work contract would end and Atty Suib responded with the end of 2024. Atty Suib further explained they have to budget for the following role since she'll be working for half the year. She suggested that in the spring the commission should start advertising the position because it can take some time. Ms. McCready-Pritchett asked if the city would publish the position and Atty Suib responded as the court ordered the commission to hire the person, who is considered to be an employee of the redevelopment agency.

Atty Suib added in a request for a 3% raise to the personnel cost, which is considered standard fare. The fringe numbers have gone up for health insurance, payroll taxes.

Ms. Frank asked if there is a budget request for educational programs and Atty Suib said yes. Atty Suib went on to discuss how originally the requests were itemized but redevelopment requested a gross amount instead. The commission has been asking for \$10,000 and Atty Suib reduced it by \$1,000 since they haven't been spending the money. She explained commission events have a budget of \$1,500 for the year. Something is to be planned for April, fair housing month. Mr. Mann asked what kind of events and Atty Suib responded they have had speakers, films, discussions with small snacks or lunches. They have hosted events with students reciting poetry, which meant parents and more people in attendance.

Mr. Mann mentions the budget overall is minimal and questions if the budget will cover a salary for someone new to come in without diminishing the budget. He believes the support person is important to have.

City of Norwalk

Fair Housing Advisory Commission

Regular Meeting

November 20, 2023

Ms. Mann affirmed they won't be asking for anything over the budget and the commission is run pretty simple so there shouldn't be much discussion left. Atty Suib reminded everyone she did reduce the budget by \$1,000 but as they have to advertise for the opening coming soon so maybe they should add the \$1,000 back. Ms. McCready- Pritchett mentioned they need to get a job description done for the job listing as well. Atty Suib agrees that is an issue to consider, there is a job description with the court order but the city isn't involved in the hiring process.

****MS. FRANK MOVED TO APPROVE THE BUDGET WITH THE \$1,000 INCREASE.**

****CHAIRMAN SEAD SECONDED.**

****THE MOTION WAS PASSED WITH FIVE (5) IN FAVOR (CLARKE, MANN, FRANK, MCCREADY-PRICHETT, AND FRANKLIN).**

ADJOURNMENT

****CHAIRMAN SEAD MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

****MS.MCCREADY-PRITCHETT SECONDED.**

****THE MOTION WAS PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 3:50 p.m.

Respectfully,

Vianca Rivera
Telesco Secretarial Services