

**CITY OF NORWALK
FAIR HOUSING ADVISORY COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MAY 15, 2017**

ATTENDANCE: Rev. Jeffrey Ingraham, Chair; Daisy Franklin, Carol Frank, Nancy Burke (3:09 p.m.), Deidra Davis (3:09 p.m.)

STAFF: Margaret Suib, Fair Housing Officer

OTHERS: Former Mayor William Collins

CALL TO ORDER.

Rev. Ingraham called the meeting to order at 3:07 p.m. A quorum was not present.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Former Mayor William Collins was present and said that he was interested in finding out what the status was regarding the 35/65 Housing Plan.

OLD BUSINESS

Recap/Discussion of Fair Housing Month Event.

Rev. Ingraham said that the event was wonderful. However it was not well attended because Redevelopment also scheduled a conflicting event.

Commissioner Burke and Commissioner Davis joined the meeting at 3:09 p.m. A quorum was now present.

The discussion moved to whether there was a community calendar showing the various events and how to avoid scheduling conflicting events.

Commissioner Frank said that the speakers were informative and the Rocky Hill event she had attended was also excellent.

Commissioner Franklin said that the Second Chance and Re-Entry programs were very informative because these were important topics that need to be considered. She said that many of the recent released convicts were prevented from even going home to their families. Atty. Suib said that the statistic that impressed her the most was that a former convict was four times as likely to return to prison if they did not have stable housing available upon release.

Atty. Suib said that the second event in June will not take place because they are out of funds and they were not able to pull the details together.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FOR APRIL 17, 2017.

The following correction was noted:

Page 1 under **ATTENDANCE**: please change "Carol Franklin" to "Carol Frank"

**** COMMISSIONER FRANK MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF APRIL 13, 2017 AS CORRECTED.**

**** COMMISSIONER FRANKLIN SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF APRIL 13, 2017 AS CORRECTED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

NEW BUSINESS

Atty. Suib said that she had gotten three new cases within a week. She said that one Section 8 client was looking for a three bedroom apartment. Another one involved a landlord that had their own formula to calculate the qualification for rent affordability.

Commissioner Burke said that there was an article in the New York Times about the residents in Seattle who voted to raise their taxes by \$122.00 a year in order to fund affordable housing. They have done this before and it increased their affordable housing stock.

Commissioner Davis reported that she had attended a conference in Chicago where the topic of testing all the applicants for drug use was discussed, which is what the Norwalk Housing Authority (NHA) does. Commissioner Davis said that both she and Brenda Penn-Williams were against this practice. There is also a letter from the ACLU about this. Atty. Suib said that the government can only test for probable cause. Discussion followed.

Commissioner Frank asked for an update on the testing program. Atty. Suib said that the testing has been done. 95% completed. Once the testing is completed, the testing coordinator will send a report. Atty. Suib said that Mr. Barron has chastised her for not asking for more money for testing. Atty. Suib told him that the Commission had not received the results from the first round of testing yet. Once those results are in, the Commission can decide the appropriate next steps.

FAIR HOUSING BUDGET

Atty. Suib then reviewed the details of the FHO budget on the handout. She updated the Commissioners on the recent expenditures.

The discussion then moved to the summary of the upcoming 2017-2018 budget, which is flat funded. Atty. Suib said that she had contacted with the Mayor about the increase in the benefits. She also reviewed the Mayor's response. It was agreed to send a letter from the Commission to the Mayor asking for clarification on this issue. Discussion followed.

Discussion regarding Status of the 35/65 Housing Plan

Atty. Suib said that there was no update. The report was drafted and sent to the Mayor. A meeting that had been scheduled about the draft report was cancelled at the last moment. Since then, there has been no update. Right now there is no policy or a plan, only the title. Atty. Suib said that she would reach out to Mr. Mathis for an update.

NEW BUSINESS

Atty. Suib said that they had discussed about having an ADL program with the synagogue across the street, but that will have to be done in the fall. She said that the anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim incidents had skyrocketed recently.

Commissioner Frank asked if it was worthwhile to have the Commission represented at Norwalk Day in at the State Capitol in Hartford on May 22nd. Discussion followed.

Former Mayor Collins said that he was distressed to hear that the NHA was still doing the testing, which is against the law. He suggested that perhaps the item could be put on the agenda and then take it for a vote. Discussion followed. Former Mayor Collins said that there was a shortage of affordable housing in Norwalk and it might be within the purview of the Commission to send a public letter to the Mayor about this. He had several suggestions about different approaches to the issue.

Commissioner Burke asked if there was a possibility of changing the number of NHA Commissioners from four to five. Atty. Suib said that there were five positions and one position is vacant. The Mayor needs to appoint someone to the position. Discussion followed.

ADJOURNMENT

**** COMMISSIONER FRANK MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** COMMISSIONER BURKE SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 4:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
S. L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services

City of Norwalk
Fair Housing Advisory Commission
Regular Meeting
May 15, 2017