

CITY OF NORWALK
FAIR HOUSING ADVISORY COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
JANUARY 22, 2024

ATTENDANCE: Jalin T. Sead, Chairman (via phone conference); Rev. Richard Clarke,
Joe Mann, Daisy Franklin

STAFF: Attorney Margaret Suib, Fair Housing Offer

Chairman Sead called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Atty. Suib requested the following corrections:

Pg. 2, paragraph 1, sentence 1 'to query' to 'decree'; sentence 2: Replace 'support staff' with 'Fair Housing Authority', the Commission duties... Paragraph. 6: 1st sentence: replace council with Commission, delete 'and'; paragraph 7, last sentence: concept that she and Ms. Franklin came up with, which defines affordable housing. Pg.3, first sentence delete 'te' paragraph.2: 'quit' to 'quilt' sentence 4: replace 'infield' to 'in fill'; sentence 5: delete 'having' replace 'grounds' with 'areas'; last sentence insert after 80% insert 'of the time'; paragraph.3, replace 'low income' with 'low pay'; last sentence insert after but, 'The Finance Dept. was aware that the budget 'item' would need to be put back 'in the future' because... paragraph 4: after Atty. Suib's add 'work time'; next sentence add 'still' before have change 'role' to 'year', add 'and hopefully someone new will be hired quickly.' Capitalize Redevelopment Agency; next sentence after taxes add ', etc.'

** MR. MANN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 20, 2023
MEETING AS AMENDED WITH CORRECTIONS AS NOTED.

**REV. CLARKE SECONDED.

** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

OLD BUSINESS

Discussion Regarding City's Affordable Housing Study

Atty. Suib reported that the City had hired a consultant to do a study as work force housing has not addressed the need for 'affordable housing'. She outlined the issue of how the market rate has attracted those from New York and outside of Connecticut that can afford the high housing costs so that there is a gap of those that are not served. She reviewed excerpts of her email response to the consultant Kevin Dwarka as follows:

Something we did locally was to try to change the lingo we use since 'affordable housing' is both nonspecific (in the sense that everyone has their own idea of what's affordable), and the term tends to bring out discriminatory animus ('Those people') even though we know it means housing affordable to many of US (rather than 'them').

We started using the term '35-65' housing affordable to people making \$35,000-\$65,000 or thereabouts. This is a population making more than people in public housing typically make, but not making enough to afford market rate housing. Our theory worked! We got almost no push back, as I suspect, people recognized themselves, their parents, their young adult kids, as falling not this income group.

Another resource I mentioned: The national low income housing coalition's annual report called 'Out of Reach', which measures the need, by looking at how many people are paying more than 30% of their income on housing, both ownership and rental. In Norwalk it's at or over 50%. This tells the story of 'need'. Here's the link: [Out of Reach/National Low Income Housing Coalition \(nlihc.org.\)](https://www.outofreach.org/) You can get state data and Norwalk data here and see prior year reports to see trends.

Mr. Mann noted that this was a very good start to address the complexity of affordable housing and to keep this as an important issue to meet the needs of residents of Norwalk. Atty. Suib added that the issue is one that many local companies face when their employees need better options to meet their needs of where they can afford to live. She added the following information from her email:

I also suggested you contact Open Communities Alliance as they work statewide on issues regarding segregation and how to better integrate Connecticut including their proposed 'fair share' approach, which takes the number of affordable units needed and spreads them throughout CT so that every town participates equitably. The website is [Open Communities Alliance \(ctoca.org\)](https://www.ctoca.org/).

Chairman Sead spoke about a conversation he had with Council President Greg Burnett regarding the Ad Hoc Committee. He mentioned the last meeting was held July/August last year and next month will be a round table discussion with community stakeholders. The meeting is planned for Wednesday, February 28, at 6:00 p.m. and will include members from local churches, Carver Center, etc.

Rev. Clarke suggested the time be moved because of Wednesday evening bible study sessions held at local churches at 7:00 p.m. Atty. Suib acknowledged the importance of including this important group, and it was agreed to move up the meeting time to 5:00 p.m. Chairman Sead will email the Commission with details as things are confirmed.

Discussion Regarding Fair Housing Month April

Chairman Sead spoke on a proposed event to highlight Fair Housing month of April to include viewing of a short film and panel discussion. Atty. Suib suggested a short film developed by former Mayor Collins "Survival of a Small City". There was discussion on the length of the film to be edited from 58 minutes to approximately 30 minutes.

Chairman Sead proposed the date of the week of April 8 to avoid Easter holidays and the spring break week of the schools. He will work with Atty. Suib on identifying panelists and to include someone from the CT State Department of Housing. More information will be provided at next month's meeting.

Chairman Sead thanked the Commissioners and Atty. Suib for sharing their knowledge and their years of hard work to keep their legacy of advocacy for fair housing as an important issue for the City.

ADJOURNMENT

** MR. MANN MOVED TO ADJOURN.
** MS. FRANKLIN SECONDED THE MOTION.
** THE MOTION WAS PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

Respectfully,
Telesco Secretarial Service