

# ST. LAWRENCE COUNTY FAIR HOUSING TASK FORCE

*c/o St. Lawrence County Planning Office  
48 Court Street  
Canton, NY 13617-1169*

*315-379-2292 (Phone)*

*315-379-2252 (Fax)*

[fairhousing.stlawco.org](http://fairhousing.stlawco.org)



## Meeting Minutes

August 26, 2020

Via Zoom – Meeting ID: 812 4339 5087, Passcode: FHTF2020

- 1. Call to Order and Determination of a Quorum.** Chair Fred Hanss called the meeting to order at 1:05 PM. Tenbusch said a quorum of active members was established.

**Members Present:** Fred Hanss, Lashawanda Ingram, Andrea Montgomery, Jim O’Neill and John Tenbusch. Sally Santangelo, Executive Director of CNY Fair Housing was also present.

**Members Absent:** Annette Bowman, Diana Dufresne, Mike McQuade, Amy Simmons and Courtney Toms.

- 2. Adoption of the Agenda.** *The agenda was adopted by consensus.*

- 3. Approval of February 28, June 6 and September 19, 2019 Meeting Minutes.** *The meeting minutes were unanimously adopted* (Hanss/O’Neil).

- 4. Reports.** None

- 5. Old Business.**

- a. Fair Housing Training Session

- A training session originally planned for April was postponed due to the onset of COVID19.
- CNY Fair Housing recently held a webinar for Lewis County regarding Fair Housing updates, reasonable accommodations under COVID19, and the suspension of evictions under COVID19. Approximately 70 people attended. Santangelo presented with Sue Griffith from Legal Aid of Central NY.
- Tenbusch and Larson reviewed correspondence from a Canton Village Trustee about a growing concern over tenant evictions once Executive Orders expire. Tenbusch said there was a similar concern regarding evictions.
- Santangelo said a similar webinar could be scheduled for 10 am on September 24<sup>th</sup> for St. Lawrence County residents and service agencies. Larson and Tenbusch said they would assist in promoting the event once scheduled.
- Hanss suggested a second training session for town justices on evictions proceedings.

- Santangelo left the meeting at 1:05 pm.

## **6. New Business.**

- a. Rental Housing Concerns. Tenbusch asked members to discuss Fair Housing concerns that may have occurred under COVID19.
  - Hanss discussed the removal of an elevator at an affordable housing complex in Potsdam, and the property manager's offer to relocated affected tenants to the first floor of the building. Santangelo talked about repeated attempts to contact property management, and a failure to provide reasonable modifications. A comment was made that as a State funded property, contact could also be made to Housing and Community Renewal about fair and equitable housing. A third option would be legal action.
  - Hanss said fewer college students are projected to return to campuses this fall, which has led to higher vacancy rates in Potsdam.
  - Ingram said COVID19 testing is underway for students who are returning to SUNY Canton for the fall term.
  - Montgomery said her office hasn't received fair housing complaints, but said participation in their nutrition program grew by 40%. Eight congregant meal sites are closed; meals are delivered to participants.
  - O'Neil said Snowbelt Housing shut down its housing rehabilitation program due to COVID19, and said the Executive Director is transitioning to retirement.
  - Pfothauer said the delivery of the County's housing rehabilitation and lead abatement programs slowed due to COVID19, and there is a concern whether the Office of Community Renewal will require recipients to adhere to original project schedules that did not take COVID19 into account. A comment was made that there are also delays in state reimbursements, and that County employees are working remotely until October 23<sup>rd</sup>.
- b. Fair Housing Survey. Tenbusch announced the availability of an online Fair Housing survey by Housing and Community Renewal. It consists of 28 questions, and responses will be incorporated into the State's Housing Plan.

Ingram departed at 1:53 pm for a 2 pm meeting.

## **7. Announcements.**

- a. Reprogramming CDBG awards.
  - Tenbusch said the Office of Community Renewal informed recipients that CDBG awards could be reprogrammed to provide emergency rental relief to tenants. While rental relief is important, both Tenbusch and Pfothauer said there would be insufficient resources available to meet the demand, and the relief would not lead to a long term affordable housing solution.

## **8. Next Meeting Date.**

Thursday, November 19, 2020 at 9:00 am  
Via Zoom  
Access credentials will be sent separately.

- 9. Adjourn.** Diana Dufresne arrived at 2:05 pm, just before the meeting adjourned by consensus.

Respectfully submitted,

*Matilda Larson*

**Planner II**

P:\PLANNING\Fair Housing Task Force\A - Meetings\2020\FHTF Minutes 08.26.20.docx