

ST. LAWRENCE COUNTY FAIR HOUSING TASK FORCE

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Meeting Minutes

December 10, 2020
Via Zoom

- 1. Call to Order and Determination of a Quorum.** In the absence of Chair Fred Hanss, John Tenbusch called the meeting to order at 9:03 AM. Tenbusch said a quorum of active members was established.

Members Present: Diana Dufresne; Matilda Larson; Mike McQuade; Jim O'Neill; John Tenbusch; Courtnie Toms;

Guests included: P. J. Herne, Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York; Connie Jenkins, Church & Community Program; Christopher Nyman, SLC Community Development Program; Amy Plumadore, NBT Bank; Cooper Sirwatka, CNY Fair Housing.

- 2. Adoption of the Agenda.** *The agenda was adopted* (McQuade/O'Neil).
- 3. Approval of August 26, 2020 Meeting Minutes.** *The meeting minutes were unanimously adopted* (Tenbusch/O'Neil).
- 4. New Business.**
 - Welcome to Candidates for Appointment. Mr. Herne, Ms. Jenkins, Mr. Nyman, Ms. Plumadore each introduced themselves. Current TF members also introduced themselves.
 - 2021 Meeting Dates: It was proposed that the FHTF meet in 2021 at 9 AM on the following dates: February 25; May 27; August 26; November 18. The meeting dates were approved (McQuade / Dufresne).
- 5. Old Business.**
 - Fair Housing Training Session
 - Matilda Larson and Cooper Sirwatka reported on the Fair Housing Webinar, held via ZOOM on September 24, 2020. Per report, 32 persons attended.
 - One of the take-home messages was that evictions can still proceed, if they were initiated before the COVID-19 moratoria.
 - **See attached slides** from the Webinar.

b. Housing and Eviction Defense Training workshop

- John Tenbusch reported that he had attended a workshop on Housing and Eviction Defense. This workshop had been presented by housing activists in Rochester, and was co-sponsored by the NYS Poor Peoples Campaign.
 - According to Tenbusch, this training provided little help from an organizational perspective; it mainly focused on how activists could protest evictions as they occurred.
- P.J. Herne reported that eviction courts are re-opening. He noted that there has been an emphasis on mediation rather than eviction.
 - Diana Dufresne agreed that mediation is an emphasis in landlord-tenant disputes.
 - Herne reported that there are two primary causes for evictions: overstaying a lease, and non-payment of rent.
- Tenbusch asked about possible mortgage foreclosures.
 - Herne reported that federally-backed mortgages are stayed, under provisions of the CARES Act.
 - He noted that private mortgages are harder to obtain mediation agreements.

6. Reports.

a. Updates from FHTF members

- Herne reported that people are not applying for, or receiving, tax exemptions that they may qualify for. He reported that Legal Aid Society is collecting data.
- McQuade reported that townships can set income limits for qualification for exemptions.
- Courtney Toms reported not many housing issues; attributed to the eviction moratorium.
- Amy Plumadore reported that mortgage refinancing tends to be rate-driven.
- Connie Jenkins noted that CCP has been bracing for additional clients since last spring.
- Cooper Sirwatka reported that CNY Fair Housing is expecting additional funding from NYS to continue Fair Housing work in St. Lawrence County.
- Chris Nyman spoke about Housing Choice Vouchers offered by CDP.

7. Announcements.

- a. Vacancies. Matilda Larson reported that the FHTF has one additional vacancy, for someone affiliated with Central Trades Labor Council.

8. Next Meeting Date.

Thursday, February 25, 2021 at 9:00 am
Via Zoom
Access credentials will be sent separately.

9. Adjourn. Motion to adjourn at 10 AM (McQuade / O'Neill) was approved.

Respectfully submitted,

John Tenbusch

Planner II