

ST. LAWRENCE COUNTY FAIR HOUSING TASK FORCE

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stlawco.org/Departments/Planning/AdvisoryBoards/FairHousingTaskForce



Meeting Minutes

May 27, 2021
Via Zoom

1. **Call to Order and Determination of a Quorum.** Hanss called the meeting to order at 9:02 AM. A quorum was present.

Members Present: Diana Dufresne; Fred Hanss; Mike McQuade; Andrea Montgomery; Chris Nyman; John Tenbusch and Courtnie Toms.

Others Present: Nick Hamilton Honey, Cornell Cooperative Extension of St. Lawrence County; PJ Herne and Amy Casiuk, Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York; Sally Santangelo, CNY Fair Housing; Karen Durham, Department of Social Services; Donnellida Todd, United Helpers; Matilda Larson and Jason Pfothenhauer, Planning Office; and Bob Beckstead, Watertown Daily Times.
2. **Adoption of the Agenda.** Larson asked the agenda be modified to include a presentation from Cornell Cooperative Extension of St. Lawrence County employee Nick Hamilton-Honey about energy efficiency programs that are available to low income households. *The modified agenda was unanimously adopted* (Hanss / McQuade).
3. **Approval of February 25, 2021 Meeting Minutes.** *The meeting minutes were unanimously adopted* (McQuade / Toms).
4. **New Business.**
 - a. Energy Efficiency Programs Available through NYSERDA. Hamilton-Honey provided an overview of various free and low cost financing energy efficiency programs that are available to qualified households across the state (see attached handout). Hamilton-Honey answered questions concerning resources that are available to renters and landlords, and explained that households in Massena Electric Department's district have access to a separate set of resources with their own energy navigators. Members of the board thanked Hamilton-Honey for their presentation.

5. Old Business.

- a. Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing. Larson said she, Tenbusch and Hanss met by phone earlier in the month to select two activities from the Office for Community Renewal's Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing checklist: Conducting an analysis of zoning impacts on the availability of housing; and including questions in the annual survey of St. Lawrence County residents about whether they have experienced housing discrimination in the past year. Larson said the Village of Potsdam will provide its rental housing registry information to the Planning Office to assist with the analysis.
- b. Emergency Rental Assistance Program and Update on Pending Evictions in St. Lawrence County. Toms and Herne provided an overview of the State's Emergency Rental Assistance Program which will come online June 1st. Uncollected rent that is eligible for payment is from March 2020 to March 2021, which may be extended to June 2021. Tenants who owe rent to landlords must have received unemployment benefits during this time period. Toms and Herne said 45% of the available resources must be directed north of New York City, and referenced an Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) eligibility checklist, which was included in the meeting packet.

Dufresne and Herne said the evictions moratorium at the state level has been extended to August 31st, but the CDC's moratorium has not expired. Herne recommended a training overview regarding housing discrimination, especially with New York law. Dufresne concurred. Santangelo said Fair Housing CNY would be happy to provide this training, and include discrimination on the basis of source of income. Santangelo added their organization has standing in court and can participate in court proceedings without an individual who original filed a complaint.

6. Reports.

- a. Updates from FHTF members
 - Toms said because the ERAP applications require signature, MILC is looking to acquire DocuSign software to process applications that are emailed, or filed online. Hanss offered the Village of Potsdam's office as a field office to MILC to accept and process applications. The Library Association of Northern New York (LASNNY) is also offering to distribute applications to local courts.
 - Hanss said the renovation and construction of Quarry Lane in Potsdam will be completed by late 2021, with apartment options available to tenants who earn 60% of area median income (AMI).

7. Announcements.

- a. Pfothenauer said a broadband benefit is available to income qualified households.
- b. Next Meeting date: Thursday, September 9, 2021 at 9:00 am

8. Adjourn. The meeting adjourned by consensus at 10:08 AM (Hanss / Toms).

Respectfully submitted,

Matilda Larson

Planner II

