



Portland Housing Bureau

Fair Housing Advisory Commission

Tuesday, July 8, 2014

3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Steel Bridge Conference Room

421 SW 6th Ave

Portland OR 97204

- ✓ = FHAC member action item
▶ = PHB staff member action item

Draft FHAC Meeting Minutes

FHAC Members: Abby Ahern; Michael Alexander, Betty Dominguez, Deborah Imse, Elisa Harrigan, Jason Trombley; John Miller, Lynne Walker, Mary Rain O'Meara, Jerad Goughnour, Maxine Fitzpatrick

Excused Members: Kayse Jama, Rachel Payton, Marc-Daniel Domond, Joe VanderVeer

Staff and Guests: Kim McCarty, Traci Manning; Laurie Wells, Regena Warren, Diane Hess, Nicole Edner, Christina Dirks; Elisa Harrigan

Agenda Item	Discussion Highlights	Outcomes / Next Steps
Welcome • Introductions • Welcome Maxine Fitzpatrick • Approve April Meeting notes	• Kim thanked everyone for coming and encouraged everyone to have refreshments and get settled. • Jason started a round of introductions of the council present • Kim welcomed Maxine Fitzpatrick and to the council • Lynn stated that the notes from last meeting had typos that she would like to be corrected • Jason also introduced Michael Alexander • There was a discussion of how folks wanted to receive the agenda	The minutes will be corrected prior to the October meeting. Let members know if they should bring copies of the materials or not.

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Implementation of recent Landlord-Tenant Law	Jill Smith Home Forward • Jill Smith presented a handout and a PowerPoint about how Home Forward is implementing changes in response to the passage of HB 2629 that went into effect July 1, 2014. • One chart showed the how the payment standard is different depending on the market rent of the neighborhood. Another chart consisted of answering questions about Section 8. • In the densest neighborhood, zip code 97233, there are 866 voucher holders or 12% of the neighborhood. Showing that Section 8 voucher holders do not lead the market. • The rent assistance program serves about 10,000 people. • Home Forward received 21,000 voucher applicants in ten days, and there are now 3,000 on the waiting list. Only 400 vouchers have been distributed to date. • Jill felt it was important that everyone understands that the voucher program does not exempt the renter from the normal process of renting. • Jill explained, to qualify you cannot be a sex offender, or have drug or violent offenses within the past 3 to 5 years. Exceptions are made with successful rehabilitation etc... There must be one person in the household that is in the country legally to receive assistance and cannot owe Home Forward money. • The Section 8 funds come from the Federal government and HUD regulates the use. • Home Forward allows clients to use up to 70% of income for rent, but thinking of changing it to 50% because most households cannot sustain spending 70% of their income on housing.	The presentation materials can be found on PHB's website at http://www.portlandoregon.gov/phb/61213 Additional information about Home Forward can be found at: http://homeforward.org/landlords/the-section-8-partnership http://homeforward.org/landlords/faq

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	• At the end of 2013, out of 100 vouchers given out, only 83 clients were successful in finding a unit to rent. Perhaps because the market is more expensive, and vacancy rates are lower, landlord did not accept a voucher, lack of financial capacity to search, i.e. pay screening fees. As a result voucher holders are now allowed 120 days to find housing and they may request extensions. When the voucher is not in use Portland is losing an important resource. • To assist in making the process for landlords go more smoothly Home Forward has simplified the forms and hopefully will replace paper applications with an electronic application. • Home Forward committed to doing inspection of units within 3 to 5 days. • Home Forward only screens for program eligibility not tenancy. • If there is a problem with the tenant (not paying rent or not following program or rental agreements) and Home Forward finds out about it, there is a warning letter that is sent to the tenant and a copy is sent to the landlord, and sometimes they will have the tenant come to the office to discuss the issues • There is a team that is dedicated to answering questions and concerns of landlords. • Building and unit inspections are now every other year. Home Forward asks for a copy of every notice this helps them to intervene when a tenant is at risk of losing their housing. • A family always has the right to move, subject to the terms of the lease. • Home Forward gives a 60 day rent increase notice because they must give a 30 day notice to HUD. • The landlord guarantee fund is helpful.	

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	- The controversial parts of the bill include the definition of “timely” inspections. Landlords prefer 3-5 days. HUD says 15 days is timely. Home Forward is making efforts to make inspections in the landlord preferred timeframe. They no longer use City Code as an inspection criteria which helps shorten the inspection time. Deborah Imse, from Multifamily NW, presentation - Debra Imse handed out the summary for the 2013 Provisions Related to the Housing Choice Voucher Program along with Lease Lengths - Debra explained that the next steps will be to form workgroups to meet and create a website for FAQ;s, - Six trainings have been scheduled, that pair Home Forward staff with a landlord to reduce anxiety about this program. Home Forward is sharing their training template with other housing authorities. - Home Forward will be working with Housing Authorities all over the state doing training and will be working more closely with landlords. - Mary Rain asked if the law pertained to all housing other than the Home Forward and affordable housing. - Debra answered that it did. - There was a conversation regarding deposits and screening fees. Screening fees can be cost prohibitive. Are there solutions such as paying one application fee for multiple buildings and simplifying the application itself? Is anyone asking for fees to be put on a waiting list? This is probably not legal and it is not the same practice as a holding deposit. Home Forward could pay fees, but chooses to not pay fees, except in the case of veterans or particularly high barrier groups. - Landlords will prefer month to month leases.	

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	• The language: normal and customary market practices is vague. For example, requiring an income of 3x the market rent may be customary but it could have a disparate impact. And what if a person is zero income? • Debra announced that the first meeting of the Landlord/Tenant Coalition will be held on September 3rd. John Landing will make a joint FAQ that will be posted online.	
Special Announcement	• Elisa Harrigan introduced Meyer Memorial Trust's 11 million dollar Affordable Housing Initiative. Recently a request for proposals was sent out for resources in tenant and landlord education, July 23rd is the due date. Up to \$150,000 will be awarded in amounts ranging from \$5,000 to \$75,000.	
A Fair Chance for All-campaign	• Mike Alexander and Midge Purcell from the Urban League announced that the League, and almost 20 other community based coalition groups are promoting the already widely used housing and employment campaign, "A Fair Chance for All, Ban the Box." • The "A Fair Chance for All" campaign is focused on people going thru re-entry, or some criminal background history that are pursuing employment, housing, or services. • The goal is to not make exclusionary information put at the beginning of a housing or employment applications. This can be done by moving the typical question "Have you recently, or ever, been arrested or convicted of a crime." PCRI and others already use low barrier screening techniques and they say that it is working. • This change to applications could also prevent self-exclusion.	FHAC can consider an endorsement of the proposed Fair Chance for All ordinance. http://www.fairchanceforall.com/ http://www.fairchanceforall.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Fair-Chance-Endorsement-Form.pdf

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A Fair Chance for All-campaign (continued)	• Midge spoke about the study they did over several summers, asking; what were the highest barriers that were faced finding employment, and housing, and lifting one selves out of poverty? Screening was an identified barrier. • The questions of past convictions and background can still happen, but just not at the beginning of a housing or work related pursuit. This gives an applicant the opportunity to discuss their past, and changes since then. • A draft ordinance has been proposed to change the application that results in blanket exclusions of people with convictions. Many organization are already working in support. Multnomah County and the City of Portland have already made changes to their employment applications. • Lynne spoke of her concerns regarding the liability and safety of other tenants. • Midge assured the committee that the necessary tools that a landlord needs to insure successful tenancy will still be used, it's just a way for people with criminal barriers to make their case when confronted with these issues. • John spoke of how the Oregon Opportunity Network has suggested something similar in their Fair Housing "Best Practices" document. • Debra did a study of criminal charge definitions to see how some charges can be misunderstood in terms of their seriousness, resulting in screening criteria that screen out people with technically low level offenses. • Maxine stated that not giving ex-criminals a second chance is a disservice. • Justin wanted to look in the area of what kind of crime was committed and strive for safety for neighbors.	

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A Fair Chance for All-campaign (continued)	• Midge explained that they were still in the first step portion of the project, starting with the draft ordinance and will also be looking at “Best Practices.” This campaign is not the solution it is an awareness builder. • On July 15, the Urban League will be holding a community meeting about the campaign. • Debra speculated that “screening” will become the next fair housing issue because of the disparate impact screening can have on some protected classes. Multifamily Housing NW is being proactive by looking at the categories of convictions and their impact on screening decisions.	
Fair Housing Contracts Draft Fair Housing Action Plan • FY 14/15 FH Action Plan	• Kim passed out the Summary of Fair Housing programs and projects and shows how it relates to the FHAC Fair Housing plan.	The Fair Housing Plan is part of the Annual Action Plan submitted to HUD. A progress report will be made in the fall.
Public Comment	• None	Jason adjourned the meeting