



Portland Housing Bureau

Fair Housing Advisory Commission
Tuesday, June 11, 2013
 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

Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Abby Ahern, Jerad Goughnour, Lynne Walker, Neisha Saxena, Molly Rogers, Elisa Harrigan, Liora Berry, Raina Smith-Roller, Michael Alexander, John Miller, Marc-Daniel Domond, Deborah Imse.

Members Excused: Kayse Jama, Joe VanderVeer, Greg Brown, Sarah Zahn, Rachel Payton, Jason Trombley.

Staff and Guests: Kate Allen, Jaymee Cuti, Pegge McGuire, Kim McCarty, Traci Manning, David Sheern.

Agenda Item	Discussion Highlights	Outcomes / Next Steps
Welcome and updates	<p>Neisha Saxena, Co-Chair, opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. She introduced two new members – Raina Smith-Roller from Human Solutions representing the City of Gresham and Michael Alexander, President and CEO of the Urban League of Portland and representing Multnomah County.</p> <p>Neisha asked for introductions of the committee members and everyone at the table to familiarize the new members with everyone. Lou Savage, Co-Chair, has left the committee to accept a position in Tunisia. With his leaving, elections will be held next meeting to fill the position of Co-Chair and the Portland seat is open to be filled by Commissioner Saltzman’s Office.</p> <p>Elisa Harrigan asked if the position had to be filled by the Commissioner’s Office because she recommended that it might be nice to fill the position with a tenant. The committee is also light on homeownership and legal background representation.</p>	

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	<p>Traci Manning suggested that recommendations be corralled, to be sent to Commissioner Saltzman's Office.</p>	
<p>Complaint Data</p>	<p>Pegge McGuire, Fair Housing Council of Oregon (FHCO), and Elisa Harrigan provided FHAC with a complaint data presentation.</p> <p>Elisa provided a handout with Community Alliance of Tenants (CAT) data related to hotline phone calls. Each of these 20-40 minute calls are regarding rental problems. The question asked to all callers is if they are being targeted to help screen the calls. Information used in the data cannot be assumed from the callers, but rather based off of the information given. The number of female and senior callers has increased. The workshops held by CAT see a lot of immigrant refugee and Latino people. The workshops have educated over 180 people so far this year. Unfortunately, data has not been collected on workshops like it has for the hotline.</p> <p>Pegge provided FHCO hotline information specific to Portland. Because they are a statewide organization they are contacted by approximately 4,000 people by internet and phone each year. They refer people out based on the type of phone call and their needs. FHCO also sees between 4,000-5,000 people a year in training workshops. Of the thousands of phone calls, 743 hotline calls were specific to Portland and 43 were fair housing specific and sent to the next step – intake. The phone calls broken down by type were discrimination based on disability at 40%, national origin at 22% and familial status at 20%.</p> <p>Michael Alexander – What is the different between a phone call and intake? Do you track referred calls?</p> <p>Pegge – A phone call may not meet specific criteria under fair housing and, if not, we refer out to the best resource possible. In many cases, it would be CAT. With intake, the call is a fair housing concern and rather than refer out we continue looking into the matter.</p> <p>Pegge further dissected the types of 45 Portland specific intake calls received. Two of them were regarding HOA's, one was regarding a home sale, and the other 42 were about rentals. It is harder for someone to recognize discrimination in a home sale because it is a more complex transaction. In the rental specific intakes the refusal to rent was 8% of the primary allegation.</p>	

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	<p>Elisa when on to explain why the number of complaints is low. Most people are spending their time looking for a home than filing a complaint. They offer times wonder what the benefit is for filing a complaint if they do not want to live at the location they were refused renting anyway. In other cases, it is hard for them to identify a fair housing issue because there could be other factors that could cause them to be denied.</p> <p>Raina Smith-Roller asked if a neighbor harasses an individual who is responsible, the neighbor or the landlord.</p> <p>Pegge responded that if the harassment is reported to the landlord and no action is taken than it becomes a fair housing issue. Pegge then went on to describe a short study performed on “No Section 8” Ads in rental ads posted on Craigslist. The picture showed a donut shaped area with a large circle surrounding 82nd Avenue to the East and West with a very small circle showing a concentration smack dab on 82nd that did allow Section 8. This quick study showed that there are still many people out there who refuse Section 8 vouchers.</p> <p>Some more concerns with tracking fair housing issues has to do with people being afraid that a landlord will retaliate if a complaint is made, or they hope for an informal resolution. Also, “no cause” evictions are not tracked or result in FED.</p> <p>Elisa asked how to target these problems when there are limited resources.</p> <p>After looking at the provided data, Abby Ahern mentioned that there is a difference between someone having a criminal record and being incarcerated. When targeting the data point there needs to be a distinction between the two. Only look at the conviction not incarceration.</p> <p>Jerad Goughnour pointed out that there are a lot of nuances in the landlord/tenant realm. There are a lot of different reasons for no cause notices that have nothing to do with the tenant. Sometimes a landlord wants to sell the property or vacate and then raise the rent due to changes in the market.</p> <p>Pegge provided some recommendations for FHAC to consider:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Disparate impact issue – there is a failure to house people with a record of prior incarceration. This needs to be addressed. 	

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	<p>2. High number of ads on unregulated platforms (e.g. Craigslist) with discriminatory provisions. Monitoring should be resourced to provide data and insight.</p> <p>3. Additional resources are needed to support informal resolutions to complaints such as help with letter writing and repair requests. Resident services/counselor functions should be resources.</p> <p>4. Need to invest in broader direct contact options for renter education.</p> <p>Pegge handed out Fair Housing bracelets to FHAC members. These bracelets are used to help spread the word about Fair Housing.</p>	
<p>Legislative Update</p>	<p>David Sheern, PHB, provided a legislative update. The legislative term is wrapping up June 30th. PHB had two bills it was actively promoting – the Single Family LTE (HOLTE) and the Fairfield Bill. The HOLTE passed the Senate today.</p> <p>In addition, the Bill requiring mediation for judicial and non-judicial foreclosures passed.</p> <p>Section 8 Bill is currently in the Joint Committee on Ways and Means. They are still looking for letters of support.</p> <p>The Housing For Veterans Bill is, also, still in the Joint Committee on Ways and Means. It passed, but dropped the sunset portion of bill.</p> <p>The Tax Abatement Bill they are looking into adding an amendment to not limit it to just distressed areas.</p> <p>Elisa mentioned past discussion about FHAC letters of support and how it stalled. She asked if FHAC would be willing to send another letter of support from the entire committee, or a letter from specific FHAC members or organizations if some individuals do not feel they can support a certain bill.</p> <p>Deborah Imse added that she would need to be neutral because her organization Multifamily Northwest is staying neutral on Section 8. She would prefer the second option because she feels she would be giving a mixed message if she signed on.</p>	

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	<p>Kim McCarty, PHB, volunteered to draft the letters – one FHAC statement of position and one more direct letter of support from specific FHAC members.</p> <p>John Miller provided an update on the Inclusionary Zoning Bill. The bill appeared to have support but then was taken off the floor. There will be a committee to review the bill in the interim. He suggested that someone from FHAC should offer to be on the committee.</p>	
<p>Fair Housing Outreach</p>	<p>Deborah provided an update on the efforts of Multifamily Northwest. A member designed the Fairness Matters logo and it will be on display at their September conference tradeshow. A flyer displaying the logo was sent to 25,000 people inviting them to the conference. The conference will contain four breakout sessions specific to Fair Housing. FHCO is on the panel and they are hoping to get Legal Aid to participate, as well. There will be a Fair Housing role play and they are welcome to ideas regarding this performance. The conference tradeshow will be held on September 19th.</p> <p>Jaymee Cuti, PHB, provided a Fair Housing update for PHB. A Fair Housing page was added to the PHB website. Fair Housing awareness is being spread on the web, social media, a display of FHCO information at the Portland Building, and by putting together radio and television ad packages to be played at local movie theaters and on radio stations.</p> <p>Kim updated the committee on her continual work and fair housing discussions with the City of Portland’s and Multnomah County’s counterparts – Washington County and Clackamas County. They are discussing ways to incorporate equity into their contracts.</p> <p>Molly Rogers asked if next meeting they could add discussion of the new ruling around disparate impact to the agenda. Everyone is trying to wrap their heads around it.</p> <p>Elisa suggested a brief update on tenant/landlord bill to next meeting’s agenda, as well.</p> <p>Deborah added to that suggestion by saying they should talk about changes to the screening process.</p> <p>It was agreed that the agenda should also contain a whole legislative update and discussion of the new ruling on retaliation.</p>	

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	<p>Liora Berry asked that Pegge provide more data around disability. They should dig deeper and look at the different types of disabilities. Pegge noted that they can only provide what callers self-disclose and that the information might not be too accurate.</p>	
<p>Public Comment</p>	<p>Lynn Walker asked that the committee take some action related to PRIDE month and next year's preparation and collection of data that they seek out anecdotal data so as not to discriminate against any protected classes.</p> <p>Jerad noted that this was one of the best meetings in a long time. He wanted to impress upon the committee that from his perspective managing properties that things are very nuanced. Tenants are a huge function in housing itself. He must rely on a tenant to report any concerns or problems because they are there 24/7 unlike him. Also, sometimes a complaint filed against a landlord could coincide with a tenant having financial trouble. We all need to play our part.</p>	
<p>Meeting Wrap Up</p>	<p>The next meeting is set for Tuesday, September 10, 2013 from 3 p.m-5 p.m.</p> <p>Meeting adjourned.</p>	