

# ST. LAWRENCE COUNTY FAIR HOUSING TASK FORCE

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## Meeting Minutes

May 21, 2024

1. **Call to Order and Determination of a Quorum.** PJ Herne called the meeting to order at 10:06 AM.

**Members Present:** Bob Santamoor; Katie Geidel; Mike McQuade; Maureen Rickett (Designee for Andrea Montgomery); James Galasinski; PJ Herne. **A quorum was not established.**

**Others Present:** Pamela Weed-Nichols, NYS Attorney General's Office; Chelsea Bain, CDP Housing Choice Voucher Program; Brianna Soper, Housing Choice Voucher Program tenant based specialist.

2. **Adoption of the Agenda.** Herne offered a correction to the agenda. The meeting date is set for 2023, it should be changed to 2024. The modified agenda was unanimously accepted.
3. **Approval of February 27<sup>th</sup> Meeting Minutes.** The minutes for the previous meeting were unanimously accepted.
4. **New Business.**

- a. Public Hearing for Draft Fair Housing Assessment

1. Santimaw formally opened the public hearing at 10:11 am and delivered a presentation on the contents of the Draft Fair Housing Assessment. Task Force members commented:

- Herne: Regarding Goal #7, there is a new law allowing tenants to pursue their own cause of action for code violations, Legal Aid can be a partner agency
- Herne: Legal Aid will provide information to the Planning Office on resources for those transitioning from renters to homeowners.
- Galasinski: What was the most surprising statistic during the Planning Office's research? How much does the Amish population skew these statistics?

- Santimaw: The poverty statistics were most surprising, that is why the zoning code analysis is the top priority; Amish populations affect some of the data tables and maps. The Planning Office can add in a figure showing the Amish population in the County.
  - Herne: Are people aged 65 and older experiencing higher rates of poverty? Would like to see a new figure showing the poverty rate for the population aged 65 and older in the County.
2. The public hearing formally closed at 10:34 am. Santimaw informed everyone in attendance that the public comment period will be open until Friday, May 24<sup>th</sup>.

## **5. Old Business.**

- a. Overview of Jefferson County Fair Housing Roundtable Discussion on Tuesday, April 16<sup>th</sup>.
  1. Santimaw gave an overview of the roundtable discussion starting with the first speaker, Jillian Redder, Director of Housing and Special Initiatives at the Jefferson County Department of Social Services. Redder gave an update on homelessness in Jefferson County and new initiatives to combat it. This includes pallet homes: small, time home-like structures that act as short-notice emergency housing to combat homelessness. She detailed their design and expected location.
  2. Sally Santangelo, Executive Director of CNY Fair Housing spoke about affirmatively furthering fair housing, as well as goals and problems facing this issue. She initiated a discussion in which many people from different organizations shared their experiences.
  3. Herne, who also attended the roundtable discussion, stated that he thought pallet homes would get more attention in St. Lawrence County, however, NIMBY elements need to be considered.

## **6. Reports.**

- a. Agency Updates
  - Bob Santamoor said that they are moving forward with the Potsdam Housing Authority expansion; they plan to meet with the Village Planning and Zoning boards soon in regards to easements.
  - Herne asked if the SUNY Potsdam Local Government Conference is planned for this year. Santimaw replied that it will be in October and it is back to a full-day schedule.
- b. CNY Fair Housing Tester Applications – Become a Housing Tester!
  - Santimaw stated that CNY Fair Housing is looking for housing testers and that an application is up on their website. While they typically look for protected classes that can effectively test whether or not landlords will discriminate against them, he stated they may need non-protected classes as controls, so all should feel welcome to apply.
- c. Santimaw stated that a land use training will be held on Tuesday, May 28<sup>th</sup> from 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm in the Second Floor Conference Room of the HSC at 80 State Highway 310, Canton. While this is primarily a land use training session, there will be a topic on

- pro-housing communities. Task Force members are welcome to attend if they would like.
- d. Santimaw stated that the Planning Office will continue with work on their zoning analysis GIS Story Map as scheduled despite their potential intern from SLU not receiving his fellowship. Staff will look to have a preliminary deliverable for the Fair Housing Task Force meeting on August 27<sup>th</sup>.
  - b. The next Fair Housing Task Force meeting will be Tuesday, August 27<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 am at the One Stop Career Center Classroom A at 80 State Highway 310, Canton.

**7. Adjourn.** The meeting adjourned by consensus at 10:50 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

*Preston Santimaw*

Planner I