

AHAC Fair Housing committee meeting

February 6, 2023

Notes/ marypaden

Present Mary Paden, chair; Marline Blum, Cookie Blitz, Molly Bensinger-Lacy, AHAC members; Steve Cerny, expert member; Regina Coyle, HCD staff.

Regina noted that Barksdale Higgins of OHREP will be the staff support person as of the next meeting. Mary said she has requested senior staff from both OHREP and HCD to help members with information.

Mary went over **purpose of AHAC Fair Housing Committee:**

Advise the BOS on ways it could “promote fair housing choice, eliminate disparities in housing, and foster inclusive communities.” [from Fair Housing Act.]

And the **specifics on what currently needs review:**

- Based on the HUD analysis of data and local information, provide advice on:
 - Regional fair housing goals
 - Fairfax County plans to achieve the regional goals
- Advise the county on outreach for public review of the COG Fair Housing report and subsequent progress reports. Conduct outreach to relevant groups through AHAC and other organizations.
- Monitor and review Fairfax County’s annual progress reports on its equity plan. This report is submitted annually to HUD.

Mary noted the Federal Affirmatively Affirming Fair Housing requirements, a parallel federal effort to enact new regulations on fair housing reporting. These regulations were originally proposed by the Obama Administration in 2015, but stopped by the Trump administration. Last week a revised version of the Obama regulations was posted in the Federal Register for comment. We expect some form of them to take effect. Meanwhile, COG Report authors said they generally followed the 2015 guidelines for Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing in compiling their report, so that it will likely fit the new regulations without much adjustment.

Committee members commented on the Draft Metropolitan Washington Regional Fair Housing Plan: Fairfax County, which they had been sent last week (with Cliff Notes to the 250 page report). Following are major points made in discussion of sections of report

III. Assessments of past goals: These are the goals from the 2017 Impediments to Fair Housing report with staff reporting on how they have been addressed. It was probably written fairly recently, given the information contained. Still hard to tell if some items were actually underway.

IV. Fair Housing Analysis: Lots of good data, but no analysis.

No connection made between data and regional goals and Fairfax Actions. Analytics is missing. What problems do the data indicate and how can they be solved? These answers should become the goals and actions. A recommendation would be to more clearly tie the data to the recommendations.

Trend is toward greater segregation in Fairfax county since 1990. Does that mean the none of the efforts to date have been working?

Goals and actions need to be measured against changes to this trend.

No metrics included in goals or actions to determine whether they are effective. No target numbers set for increasing integration, decreasing segregation and negative effects based on changes in data.

Evaluations usually measure outputs and outcomes (long and short term). Outputs are numbers of workshops held, housing vouchers distributed, affordable housing units built. Short-term outcomes are, for example, whether a certain project increased the diversity of an area, whether land use policy plans or zoning ordinances were adopted to improve inclusivity. Long-term outcomes could be increased housing integration, increased health indicators among minority communities, Increased access to jobs and education etc.

The Fairfax completed ctions (section III Assessment of Past Goals) and proposed actions (section VI. Fair Housing Goals and Priorities) don't seem to address **land use and zoning changes** as some other jurisdictions are doing. For example, Arlington is deciding whether to allow missing middle housing in single family areas.

Need to track locations of neighborhoods that are easy for mobility impaired people to navigate and make this info available to residents.

Good tool to promote integration is allowing a **tiered rent approach for housing vouchers**. Voucher holder can use the voucher in a higher rent area. This is mentioned as a Fairfax County possibility but not clear what is being done.

Several members questioned **who was in charge of accomplishing Fair Housing plans in Fairfax County**. The Metro goals require involvement of a number of agencies: Human Rights, Housing, Land use Planning Department, Transportation. Is anyone driving the Fair Housing goals through all these agencies? In Fairfax, OHREP is the lead agency for Fair Housing, but it does not deal with affordable housing, land use, or transportation. Each agency reports to different deputy county executive, so the silos and pretty tall. Yet all cities and counties are supposed to make and report on fair housing plans, so there may be some best practices in institutional arrangements.

An example was given of Fairfax proposed program "Parking Reimagined" which should benefit the ability to locate affordable housing developments by reducing the amount of parking needed has not been presented to AHAC.

VI. Fair Housing Goals and Priorities: Fairfax has proposed only two actions: one to increase the percentage of WDUs for sale, following on last year's lowering of the AMI level for rental WDUs and the other to adopt tiered levels of payments for vouchers enabling holders to rent in higher income neighborhoods. This section is unfinished. Some of the unfinished plans from section III could be moved here. The Fairfax plans should be connected to the regional goals: that is, plans proposed to accomplish each goal.

Perhaps AHAC can recommend some Fairfax County plan ideas that are tied to the goals. The BOS will be asked to approve the COG plan, probably in April, so we can make recommendations directly to them regarding how to fill out the unfinished section on Fairfax County plans.

Public Review: AHAC should also help distribute the COG document for public review which is due March 31. It is problematic that the document is 250 pages long, and parts are highly technical, thus few individuals are likely to make it all the way through. The actual recommendations for Metro goals start on page 160 and the Fairfax proposals are on page 167. Those are the main elements that need review, though the data and maps are really interesting if you get into them and should form the basis of the goals and plans. Also informative are the comments from numerous targeted focus groups on problems and solutions.

It was suggested that we find out to whom the county intends to distribute the review document (check with OHREP and Karla Bruce); ask Neighborhood and Community Services for their list of organizations and select those with related missions; and distribute the links with a letter to AHAC members asking them to review and send it to members of their organizations. The cover letter should explain why these goals and actions are important (not just to fulfill a HUD reporting obligation), and how the reviewer can get to the meat of the report for comment. **Mary will draft a letter and send it to the committee for review.**

Next Meetings. Given the deadline of March 31 for public review of the COG document, the group agreed to meet twice more by mid-March. Polls will be sent around to select meeting dates.