



**Fair Housing Review Board**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**May 11, 2023 - 6:00 p.m.**  
**Remotely Held Meeting – Via Zoom**

Members Present: Council Member Earl Williams, FHRB Chairperson  
Council Member Carmella Williams, FHRB Member  
Ann Millette, FHRB Member

Staff Present: William M. Ondrey Gruber, Director of Law/Fair Housing Administrator  
Lisa Gold-Scott, Assistant Dir. of Law/Housing Attorney

**I. Preliminary Matters**

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Williams at approximately 6:12 pm and a quorum was established. Members and staff introduced themselves. The minutes of the February 9, 2023 meeting were reviewed. Councilwoman Carmella Williams moved to approve the minutes, and Ms. Millette seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

**II. Report On Fair Housing Program**

• **Financial Report & Budget for 2022**

Mr. Gruber presented an updated report. The 2023 budget has been approved. We have not yet received HUD grants – they have been awarded, but the funds (for complaint processing and administrative costs) have not yet been deposited into the City’s Account. There was a technical glitch with HUD’s payment system that we expect to be resolved soon. Regarding the \$6500 partnership fund – those funds have not yet been paid out as we are waiting on final deliverables from our partner agency. There is an opportunity for a reimbursable, partnership grant up to a possible \$15,000 but any plan for expenditures must be approved by HUD.

Regarding the 2023 budget – there should be approximately \$60,000 available – once the HUD funds are deposited into the City’s special fair housing account fund. There was an expenditure for an ad in Shaker Life Magazine thus far and some miscellaneous expenditures (postage, etc.) as well as a portion of Ms. Gold-Scott’s salary. We typically budget the full amount available and appropriate it even though we may not spend it all. There are funds available for contractual services to assist in case investigation and processing.

• **Complaint Update**

- Ms. Gold-Scott reported that there are still a high number of cases. An online complaint was received through the online portal, but after discussion with the individual, it was apparent that the complaint was not yet “ripe” as the housing provider had not denied the requested accommodation. The person who submitted the complaint will keep our office updated and if appropriate will file in the future with our office.
- At the last meeting, Board members were alerted that hearing dates needed to be scheduled. Although the hope was to have the hearings scheduled this month, that did not occur as staff’s time were devoted elsewhere due to a large criminal jury trial that temporarily diverted staff’s resources.
- As of 4/28/2023 – 15 cases were pending, 2 are at the conciliation stage, 4 with cause need to be scheduled for hearing, 6 need to be written up or closed, and 3 need to be investigated.
- A Board member asked about cases that may go to hearing and proper venue. Staff responded with an explanation on the election process.
- Gold-Scott said that another email will be sent out to Board members to try to schedule hearings. The issue of in person versus hybrid hearings was also discussed. This question can be finalized once a date is selected. Mr.

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Gruber gave a detailed description of hybrid hearings, as that method is currently used by the City's Board of Appeals (which he staffs).

- The City did issue an RFQ seeking individuals/agencies to provide investigative support, similar to what was done a year ago. Unfortunately, no responses were received. Other possible recipients were also discussed. Councilwoman Williams asked whether there is one or more barriers preventing the City from getting qualified candidates. Mr. Gruber responded that the RFQ isn't widely advertised as the work is unique and requires a specific skill set.
- **Education & Outreach Presented or Attended by City Staff**
  - March 15, 2023: NFHTA held a forum on Combating Appraisal Bias. It featured a private non profit fair housing agency from California who discussed one of their cases. This FHIP partnered with the local news station which led to wide media coverage resulting in the discovery of other complainants. There were a few presenters from Texas – including a FHAP and the statewide agency that regulates appraisers and responds to consumer complaints involving appraisals and appraisers. These two groups forged a partnership in order to refer complainants between the two, provide training for each agency, and assist with investigations. Locally here in NE Ohio, a FHIP did receive some money to build the capacity to investigate these kinds of complaints and we have expressed interest in working with them to further explore this issue – through testing, as well as education and outreach efforts.
  - April 18, 2023: HUD hosted a basic presentation on persons with disabilities and reasonable accommodations featuring some local HUD staff including an attorney from HUD's office of general counsel.
- **HUD Partnership Grant (FY 2021):** The City is waiting on the FHC to finish up the deliverables for this grant. This was discussed also during the Financial Report.

### III. New Business

- Hearing dates: staff will send an email to Board members for possible dates.
- Upcoming hearing dates for the remainder of the year were also reviewed.
- The Fair Housing Center for Rights & Research just released their Annual State of Fair Housing report. Staff is just beginning to review the report, paying close attention to any references to the City of Shaker Heights. The Fair Housing Center did a brief summary of the report, and it was clear that the number of complaints received by the FHC as well as by HUD have risen over the last year, similar to what we have seen internally. The most common bases for complaints have been disability, race, and retaliation. Sex/gender followed. The overwhelming number of complaints (95%) involve rental transactions. Anecdotally, we hear discrimination is occurring in other kinds of transactions (i.e. sales, or appraisals) and this is indicative of the need for better education and outreach efforts. Staff will conduct an in-depth review and advised the Board as appropriate.
- Chairman Williams raised some questions about condominiums and fair housing. The most common ones seen locally have involved disability and requests for reasonable accommodations or modifications. He also advocated for further training of both condominium and apartment managers.

### IV. Future Meetings

Next meeting: August 10, 2023.

### V. Adjournment

Hearing no further business, Ms. Millette moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Williams seconded the notion, and the motion was unanimously approved. The meeting was adjourned at 6:53pm.

Approved 8-10-23

Submitted By: William M. Ondrey Gruber  
William M. Ondrey Gruber, Fair Housing Administrator