

City of Valdosta Fair Housing Committee

Monthly Meeting - Minutes

Wednesday, August 29, 2012 – 10 a.m. – 12 noon

City of Valdosta -City Hall Annex, Multi-Purpose Room

Members Present:

Pastor David Adams, Rachel Bradley, Dr. Cynthia Scurry-Brooklin, Clay Haddock, Robert Jefferson, Will Kemp, Bill Love, Yolanda Robinson, Dr. Penelope Schmidt, Kelly Strozier, Rebecca Taylor, Herbert Williams

City Staff Present: Mara Register and Vanessa Flucas

The meeting was called to order by Mara Register at 10:09 a.m.

Ms. Register introduced Larry Hanson and Mayor John Gayle to the committee, who were present to welcome the committee members at this first meeting of the Fair Housing Committee. Mr. Hanson thanked the members for their willingness to serve on this committee and stated the importance of each member's contribution to this committee and the community. Mayor Gayle echoed Mr. Hanson's welcome to the committee members and mentioned that their qualifications will be of great use to the committee to make fair housing better. The Mayor asked each member to introduce themselves. After each member around the table gave their names, Mr. Hanson and Mayor Gayle left the meeting.

Ms. Register started the meeting by having each member re-introduce themselves to the committee by adding the agency or organization they represent. After this was completed, Ms. Register gave an example of how she encountered a phone conversation, just this morning, which may be a fair housing complaint. The complaint concerned a single mom who was being put out of her home she had just recently moved into. This example resonated why the committee was created in the first place, to eliminate opportunities such as this. Ms. Register also formally welcomed the committee, and stated we had a large amount of material to cover in a short time, and started reviewing the meeting materials presented to members in the committee binders.

Ms. Register gave the background information on how the City of Valdosta became a new Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) in 2003, which led to becoming a HUD Entitlement Community in 2004, and the reporting requirements followed being denoted as such. One of the reporting requirements mentioned is the completion of an Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing (AI), which must be completed every six years by entitlement communities, and is a comprehensive plan that impacts fair housing to identify barriers. The City of Valdosta completed their second AI during the final quarter of fiscal year 2011 through a consultant, Mr. James Gilleylan with J-Quad Consulting out of Dallas, Texas. Mr. Gilleylan and his team came to Valdosta in July, 2011 and completed a series of public forums with the citizens, business and civic leaders, and elected officials of Valdosta, in various positions and backgrounds to gather data. The final report was presented to Mayor and Council in April, 2012 for approval before final submission to HUD.

Mayor and Council felt that there were some very strong issues presented in the AI with regards to the impediments in our community that a Fair Housing Committee needed to be established. Through the appointment recommendations of the Mayor and each councilmember, the committee was formed in July, 2012.

Ms. Register presented the mission of the committee, but clarified that this committee was self-directed, not controlled or guided by the City, and should think “outside of the box” when it comes to addressing the issues presented. The committee reviewed and commented on Section 6 of the 2012 AI. After completing the review of the reported impediments, the committee stated they were limited in some area due to mandated federal reform acts. Although, acts such as the Dodd/Frank Banking Reform Act are limiting, this committee’s actions could be formed as strong suggestions to our state and federal representatives in the form of formal regulatory recommendation regarding these local impediments. The committee made the assertion that communication with citizens will be key in addressing the impediments presented.

As the discussion concluded, Ms. Register outlined the agenda for the next meeting, which included discussions on how the committee will open opportunities for public participation, dates and times for future meetings and the election of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of this committee. Committee members agreed to meeting on a monthly basis and set the next meeting for Thursday, September 13th from 1:30 – 3:30, in the City Hall Annex Multi-purpose Room. Before the meeting was concluded, committee members asked for a copy of the 2006 AI completed by the City of Valdosta for comparison purposes to the current report.

Without any further discussion among the committee members, the meeting was adjourned at 11:45 a.m.