

City of Valdosta Fair Housing Committee

Monthly Meeting – Minutes

Thursday, September 10, 2015 5:30-6:30

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

Members Present:

Pastor David Adams, Seth Brown, Dr. Penelope Schmidt, Kelly Strozier

City Staff Present: Vanassa Flucas and Sarah Lowe

The Meeting was called to order by Kelly Strozier at 5:30 p.m., followed by the invocation given by Pastor David Adams.

Minutes from the previous meetings are being prepared and will be forwarded to the membership for review and approval for the October meeting.

Discussion held to renew the Committee membership and elections of new officers. Ms. Flucas informed she spoke with Mark Barber regarding this. Mr. Barber would like to get a better consensus of the committee and what everyone feels regarding their commitment to the committee. It is going on 3 years so we need to know if you would like to continue in your position. Also, if you would like to be on the lookout for potential candidates, you can send these names directly to Ms. Flucas. Also as an update, Bill Love had recently retired from the School Board and at the same time wished to be discontinued from the committee. For this reason he has been left off of the attendance roll.

Regarding the Focus Group Presentation to the City Council, the official presentation has not happened yet. The report was received from VSU and was shared with Mr. Hanson and Mr. Barber. Mr. Barber and Mr. Hanson have taken all the responses and has formed a task force and presented to all the departments (where issues were raised) and gave them the task of coming up with a plan to resolve the issues presented. Some of these departments have already acted on these issues and have generated new policies. One example given regarding bulk trash through the Public Works dept. For those who have not acted yet, are being address so more feedback will be forthcoming. Ms. Flucas suggested VSU (Dr. LaPlant) present the report in its entirety to this committee. This focus group has already made a big impact and all were happy with its results. Presentation will be set up for next committee meeting in October. (Oct. 8, 2015). This time was believed to be best as after October we start heading into the holidays. Also as a reminder since we are moving into quarterly meetings (instead of monthly) in the upcoming year, this would make for a good transition. We will meet once more in October, and then break until January, where we will meet under the quarterly meeting system.

Strozier asked if all were still interested in the Fellwood Field Trip to Savannah. Ms. Flucas suggested since it is in Savannah it would be best to go on a Saturday, understanding that during the work week, you would have to miss an entire day of work. Ms. Flucas also shared the status as to where we are now and the focus for revitalizing our community. The Public Housing Authority

along with the Mayor and Council have been able to visit and see the work done in Savannah. All were pleased. We are staying in contact with the Woda Group developers of Fellwood to see what steps they took in implementation. For our area we are focusing on Tom Town and Ora Lee West Housing. There is a lot of work to be done and it will not be a speedy process. She informed the type of model HUD is favoring is the mixed income, mixed use model. Some residents will be subsidized and others will be market rate properties, but we need to consider how we will go about attracting these market rate tenants. We have the College right next to this area but none of the students venture over to utilize housing even though there is a need for more college housing. The main thing to do is we want 1. Input from Citizens (how do they want to see their neighborhood) 2. After input, begin working with developers. 3. The mayor, council and housing authority. We need to get these steps into place and we want to be in good standing so we can go for the Choice Neighborhood Grant through HUD (which is highly competitive). We could still operate outside of the grant but the more resources we can tap into the better and more quickly we can complete the project.

A Fair Housing link on the new City website was discussed. The City is undergoing website updates and part of our goal is we want to make sure our site is more user friendly. We want to clean it up and make it so anyone can easily navigate within the pages to find what they need. This will include links to Fair Housing resources. We want individuals to be able to find and locate the link to HUD, so it will take them directly to the page to report any and all fair housing issues directly with our HUD representatives. We are not going to answer any of these inquiries, but to help facilitate reporting them to HUD. If there are any suggestions for the website, please let Ms. Flucas know.

Ms. Flucas shared information about the Windshield Surveys held in April. All of the data has been entered. The hope is that within the next couple of months there will be a report generated that will help us better ascertain housing needs. We will chart houses on a map and use that to pinpoint neighborhoods in need. By doing this, not only is it going to help us, but other City departments. We will have an overall better picture of what we need to do and what we can utilize.

Ms. Strozier mentioned she completed the Home Safe Program certification. She was able to meet and speak with DCA Rep. Cynthia Harrison. Ms. Harrison shared a lot of great information and one being there are untapped resources still available for use. As of August 14th there was \$138 million available. The Home Safe Program is a program set up through U.S. Government to help those individuals who are at risk for losing their home through foreclosure. This program helps the family/individual to keep their home and will continue to help over a 3 year period. Ms. Strozier would like to set up a time for the DCA Rep to come and do a talk in our community. Ms. Flucas asked for any and all info to be forwarded to her and we can get it set up and help promote the event.

There were no additional items up for discussion, Ms. Strozier motioned to adjourn. Seth Brown seconded this motion. Meeting ended by 6:01 p.m.