

Nov 20 2023 9:00 am



Public Meeting
Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes
Fitchburg, Ma 01420

9/25/23

City of Fitchburg's Legislative Conference Building

In attendance were: Commissioner's Roth, Pridgen, Asfa, Maguy-Stewart, Knight, and Nealon

Absent: Commissioners: Ford-Rhodes, Ashraf-excused, Darcangelo-excused

Guests: Leona Whetzel, Three Pyramids Inc and Susan Christensen, Health Department

Agenda

- Meeting called to order at 5:32pm
- Welcoming and Introductions
- Review of previous meeting minutes for 6/26/23 reviewed acceptance of minutes as written.
- Public Comment Period-*Opportunity for the public to speak during a Commission Meeting*

Chairperson or designee will ask if anyone in the audience wishes to speak on any matter appearing on the agenda. If you wish to address the commission, raise your hand, when recognized, you must stand state your name and address and the reason for your speaking: None

- New Business- presentation Leona Whetzel, President, Three Pyramids Inc
 On October 18, 2023 Three Pyramids Inc will be sponsoring an event on Racial Bias in Home Appraisals. The following information was shared:
 The Appraisal Project Event – Racial Bias in Home Appraisals - Hosted by Three Pyramids and funded by the North Central Ma Community Foundation.
 The organization Eruka who put the study together will be attending to present their report at the event. The main two researchers, are \ Dr. Elizabeth Korver-Glenn and Dr. Junia Howell.
 Eruka – is affiliated Washington University - Arts and Sciences and with Weidenbaum Center on the Economy, Government, and Public Policy at Washington University.
 One of the Professors, Dr. Junia Howell will be joining us and presenting the report. Dr. Howell is formally trained as an urban sociologist and race scholar, she used quantitative (numbers) and qualitative (narrative) tools to identify and dismantle the specific policies, processes, and practices that uphold White supremacy. Her work has been published in over a dozen academic journals and featured in hundreds of news articles, legislative hearings, and conferences. The report was published in the New York Times. A few highlights of the report Appraised:
 The Persistent Evaluation of White Neighborhoods as More Valuable Than Communities of Color.

- Homes in White neighborhoods are appraised at double the value of homes in communities of color.
- Racial inequality in appraised values has increased 75 percent over the last decade.
- Racial inequality is growing fastest in the hottest housing markets
- White communities had access to more capital because of racialized appraising
- The difference between White neighborhoods and communities of color is particularly stark for American Indian, Alaska Native, Southeast Asian, and Pacific Islander communities.

In addition to the presentation of the report, there will be a panel presentation at the end consisting of a Banker, Mortgage, Appraiser and a Homeowner. The goal is for the entire panel to be people of color.

NCM Community Foundation Racial Justice Committee is sponsoring the event along with The Minority Coalition, Heywood Healthcare, The Highlands and Life Care Center, MOC, and we hope the Human Rights Commission will co-sponsor the event with us.

The event is scheduled for October 18 th at 5 pm – 7 pm.

Location Fitchburg Senior Center (TBD)

Light Dinner will be provided. Dinner will start at 4:30 pm

Childcare provided

The event will be covered by FATV, and Fitchburg and Gardner local radio stations.

We expect 100 residents to attend.

Invited: Residents, Mayor and Local and State Elected Officials, Bankers/CRA Coalition, Mortgage Companies, Partner Agencies Non-profits and Health Care, Coalitions, College and University, Homeowners,

The Commissioners unanimously voted to support and help sponsor this event and would plan to have a table at the event and thanked Leona for these efforts.

- Old Business-
Membership update: Commissioner Sandrelli -Mayor's office did not reappoint to the commission due to relocation to another City. Chairperson was informed from the Mayor's Administrative Assistant the George Rodriguez's nomination to the Commission has been submitted to the City Council for consideration.

Other items-future meeting topics , outreach & educational efforts etc

Ongoing advocacy work and Community events participation-10/19/23 Community Health Resource Fair 4-7 Fitchburg Armory.

Susan Christensen, City of Fitchburg Health Department handed out flyers on the event.

This is an event the Commissioner's have enjoyed attending and participating in a table has been reserved for the event for our participation.

Ms. Christensen was thanked by Commission for hosting the event sharing with the community the resources that are available to address the social determinants of health such as food insecurity, housing insecurity, unemployment, homelessness, safety, behavioral health and addiction services to name a few.

Next meeting scheduled for October 23, 2023 at 5:30pm in the Legislative Conference Building

Adjournment 6:11pm

Meeting minutes submitted by,

Barbara Nealon