



## OBSERVER REPORT

**FAIR HOUSING COMMITTEE (FHC)** – May 8, 2023 (Hybrid Meeting- Not Recorded)  
LWVM Observer – Bonnie Grenier

Members Present -Thatcher Kezer, Becky Cutting, Erin Noonan, Debra Larkin, Mimi Hollister, Teri McDonough

**Mission Statement:** A discussion of the mission statement as it now appears on the website was first on the agenda. The current mission statement reads as follows:

“The mission of the Fair Housing Committee includes helping the public and town officials to understand and support fair and affordable housing through education, advocacy and awareness of opportunities; continually developing the committee's expertise and acting as a resource to the public officials and the public at large; and developing and implementing programs that expand, enhance or rehabilitate the fair and affordable housing stock in Marblehead.”

After some discussion members agreed that the statement is well written and reflects the mission of the FHC. No changes were recommended at this time. Missing from the meeting was Dirk Isbrandtsen who had submitted suggestions for “guiding principles” that might be relevant to the mission statement. This matter will be taken up again at the next meeting when Dirk is present.

### **Website Update Discussion/Review:**

Members reviewed the FHC website and discussed what updates/changes could be made. Some suggestions included:

- Additional Quick Links that would help answer general questions people might have. However, too much information/too many links could be overwhelming for those conducting searches.
- A Link to HUD guidelines would help people determine if they might qualify for affordable housing.
- Provide information that would walk those interested in affordable housing through the steps required.
- Highlight the resources available for help finding affordable housing including the Marblehead Housing Authority, the Council on Aging, the Marblehead Counseling Center. CHAPA (Citizens Housing & Planning Association), and Mass Housing.

- Add existing affordable housing opportunities to the home page so they would be immediately visible.
- Identify rental vs. home ownership opportunities.
- Is information about dealing with evictions diversion measures or fuel assistance appropriate for the FHC website that is meant to focus on affordable housing?
- Have a place to sign up for email notification when new affordable housing opportunities become available.
- A section entitled “Why Worry About Affordable Housing” would provide information on the need for and benefits of affordable housing in Marblehead.

For homework, members were asked to review the website and send their suggestions for changes/improvements to Debbie Larkin who will bring that information to the next meeting.

It was suggested that a press release explaining what’s going on with local affordable housing efforts in town would be a good idea. In the not-too-distant future, affordable units will be available at Vinnin Square and in Marblehead at the Sailmaker Place development. In addition, the town just voted in new zoning bylaws to allow Accessory Dwelling Units in town. More information about the Housing Production Plan would also help educate the community on the efforts being made to increase affordable housing in Marblehead.

Mimi mentioned that the School Committee had met and discussed the Coffin School property. No decisions will be made on the school until after the June election, however, amongst current members there is a reluctance to turn the property over to the town. Thatcher reminded members that once a school property is declared surplus, it must be released to the town. He also reminded people that if a former school property is sold, the benefit to the schools would be the revenue generated by the new growth.

Debbie Larkin announced that Katie Farrell will be stepping down from the Fair Housing Committee. The Disabilities Commission will nominate someone to fill the vacancy.

In addition, Teri McDonough announced that she has taken a new position with the Salem Housing Authority and will have to step down from the FHC as well. She will be replaced by someone from the Marblehead Housing Authority.

The next meeting will be June 12, 2023, at 1:00 at Abbot Hall.