

FAIR HOUSING HEARING

May 8, 2006 – 6:00 p.m.

Mr. Scot Taylor with Portsmouth Inter City Development Corporation along with Patrick Harris explained that they work with for the agency that has the fair housing contract for Highland County. They came to explain that any time there are CDBG monies given to a specific area of the county, township or other jurisdiction; they have to give a fair housing awareness seminar.

They handed out material to help everyone understand the fair housing regulations. Mr. Taylor said that their agency was established for the purpose of assisting rural counties, cities, villages and townships located within the state of Ohio. He explained that the funding for the fair housing program was made available through Community Development Block Grant through the Highland County commissioners and those funds are made available to the commissioner's office through the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

He said the goals of their program are to assure full opportunities for all home seekers in the area in which they have fair housing contracts. He gave their new toll free number of 1-866-901-7432. He said if anyone knew of an individual that needed to contact them, they could give them that number.

The Fair Housing Act was enacted in 1968 by the United States Congress. It prohibits discrimination in housing because of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status or handicapped. He said that this covers most housing except owner-occupied building with no more than four units; single-family housing sold or rented without the use of a broker or housing designated for persons over the age of 55 where 80% of the units meet this requirement.

He explained that it is illegal to threaten, coerce, intimidate or interfere with any individual exercising or assisting an individual in exercising their fair housing rights. He said this one covered him because if somebody in local government thought there was an issue in Hillsboro and asked him to come up and do an investigation; if somebody interferes in the process of the investigation; they can be in violation of the Civil Rights Act.

He said that new buildings built after March 13, 1991; that's when the American's Disability Act was passed; they must have an elevator for four or more units and public and common areas must be accessible to all persons with disabilities. He stated that you cannot discriminate against a family that has one or more children under the age of eighteen that lives with the parents or person who has legal custody of the child or children. He said that familial status also applied to pregnant women.

Mr. Taylor said that this area is covered by the Chicago Regional Office. The people from Hillsboro can contact either Columbus or Cincinnati if they have a problem since

there are HUD offices in both locales. He explained some of the process that is set in motion when someone files a complaint.

He had also included a booklet entitled “Landlord/Tenant Laws” that covered the state of Ohio. Mr. Holt asked for some additional booklets saying that he had used those during the previous year. Mr. Taylor said that in the state of Ohio the landlords had rights and responsibilities and the tenants had rights and responsibilities.

He advised everyone to have written lease agreements because it is much easier to settle a dispute when there is a written lease agreement saying who is responsible for what. He also gave some advice on the best way to handle an eviction if you are a landlord. Mr. Taylor encouraged anyone with a question to contact their office and said that he looked forward to seeing them again next year.

Beverly Brown, Clerk of Council