

**ORANGE COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

ACTION AGENDA ITEM ABSTRACT

Meeting Date: April 21, 2009

**Action Agenda
Item No.** 4-9

SUBJECT: Fair Housing Month

DEPARTMENT: Human Rights and Relations

PUBLIC HEARING: (Y/N)

ATTACHMENT(S):
Proclamation

INFORMATION CONTACT:
Shoshannah Sayers, 960-3877

PURPOSE: To recognize and celebrate Fair Housing Month.

BACKGROUND: April 2009 marks the 41st anniversary of the Federal Fair Housing Act of 1968 and the 25th anniversary of the North Carolina Fair Housing Act, which provide for equal opportunity in the sale, rental, and financing of housing. Human Rights and Relations is charged with investigating housing discrimination complaints and has been investigating complaints under a cooperative agreement with HUD since 1999. Over the past two years the Department has witnessed a significant increase in the number of cases received and resolved.

Human Rights and Relations will celebrate Fair Housing Month by conducting the following activities:

- Human Rights and Relations will organize the Fifth Annual Orange County Housing Fair that will include representatives from all sectors of the community who provide housing or housing related services. The Fair is intended to provide information to Orange County residents on the myriad of fair and affordable housing services the County provides. This event is co-sponsored by the Housing and Community Development Department.
- Human Rights and Relations will continue its campaign to educate the community about fair housing rights. To this end, the Department has collaborated with the Southern Coalition for Social Justice to release a report on Heirs' Property issues in Orange County. Heirs' Property is a rarely discussed Fair Housing issue leading to the loss of family property by African American families – frequently property that the families have owned since the late 1800s. The report sheds light on the fact that, even in Orange County, this phenomenon is still alive and well. This is the first step in a Black Land Loss Prevention effort designed to educate minority families about their property rights.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: None

RECOMMENDATION(S): The Manager recommends the Board approve the proposed proclamation and authorize the Chair to sign it.

ORANGE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

A PROCLAMATION

FAIR HOUSING MONTH

WHEREAS, April, 2009 marks the forty-first anniversary of the Federal Fair Housing Act of 1964 and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the North Carolina Fair Housing Act prohibiting discrimination in housing on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, handicap and familial status; and

WHEREAS, the Orange County Board of Commissioners enacted the Orange County Civil Rights Ordinance on June 6, 1994, which affords to the residents of Orange County the protections guaranteed by the Federal Fair Housing Act and additionally encompasses the protected classes of veteran status and age; and

WHEREAS, The Human Relations Commission and the Affordable Housing Advisory Board actively work to increase housing affordability and availability in Orange County and promote housing choice and inclusive neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS, despite the protections afforded by the Orange County Civil Rights Ordinance and the Fair Housing Act as amended, illegal housing discrimination and housing segregation still occur in our nation and in Orange County; and

WHEREAS, supporting and promoting housing affordability, choice and equal opportunity are fundamental to achieving social justice;

NOW, THEREFORE, we, the Orange County Board of Commissioners, do hereby proclaim April 2009 as FAIR HOUSING MONTH and commend this observance to all Orange County residents.

This the 21st day of April, 2009.

Valerie Foushee, Chair
Orange County Board of Commissioners