

City's fair housing officer heads state organization

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NORWALK — Educating renters and landlords about their rights and responsibilities is central to Margaret K. Suib's job as Norwalk's fair housing officer.

For that and other work, Suib was recently elected chairwoman of the board

of directors of the Fair Housing Association of Connecticut, Inc., a state-wide nonprofit membership organization created in 1978 to educate and enforce fair housing laws in Connecticut.

Her election comes as the FHACT prepares to launch a training program aimed at educating other fair housing officers in

Connecticut. Unlike Suib, not all fair-housing officers in Connecticut are trained attorneys nor do all work full-time in the communities which they serve.

"One of the main projects FHACT is embarking on in 2011-2012 is in response to requests by the membership for more training in Fair Housing

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matters, especially the handling and investigation of housing discrimination complaints," Suib said. "FHACT intends to offer such trainings, likely in the spring of 2012, at three to four locations around the state, furthering FHACT's mission to educate and enforce."

Suib said the association hopes that the training program will result in a more seamless process for cases to be investigated and then referred to FHACT's pro-bono attorney program.

"People who have been discriminated against in housing may find an attorney to help them file a housing discrimination complaint and seek redress for the violation of their civil rights, all at no

cost to either the municipalities out of which the cases arise, or the victims of housing discrimination," Suib said.

Suib, a member of the FHACT for 15 years, was elected to chair its board of directors during the association's annual meeting in Hartford on Oct. 20.

"I'm delighted that's she chair(woman). She's very clear on fair housing. She understand it backwards and forward. She understand what constitutes discrimination, or what could constitute discrimination," said Judith Johannsen, FHACT board vice chairwoman and assistant counsel with the Connecticut Association of Realtors, Inc. "She's authoritative in a nice way and she gets things done."

Suib's position was cre-

ated as the result of an agreement between the city and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and court-ordered consent decree. The decree resolved a lawsuit brought against the city alleging that it was not providing adequate affordable housing.

"She reports to us. We're very happy that she has expanded the scope of what she does to a statewide level," said Jeffrey Ingraham, Chairman, Fair Housing Advisory Commission chairman, in response to Suib's election to head the FHACT. "I think it gives credibility to her as a fair housing officer. We stand in support of her involvement."