

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2009

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HOUSE BILL 459*
PROPOSED COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE H459-PCS50307-RN-5

Short Title: Rocky Mount/Fair Housing Ordinance.

(Local)

Sponsors:

Referred to:

March 9, 2009

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
2 AN ACT AMENDING THE CHARTER OF THE CITY OF ROCKY MOUNT TO ALLOW
3 THE CITY TO ENACT A FAIR HOUSING ORDINANCE.

4 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

5 **SECTION 1.** The Charter of the City of Rocky Mount, being S.L. 2003-327, is
6 amended by adding a new Article to read as follows:

7 "ARTICLE IX. FAIR HOUSING.

8 "Section 520. Provisions.

9 (a) The City shall have the power to adopt ordinances prohibiting discrimination on the
10 basis of race, color, sex, religion, handicap, familial status, or national origin in the sale, rental,
11 or advertising of dwellings, in the provision of real estate brokerage services, or in the
12 availability of residential real estate related transactions. The ordinances may regulate or
13 prohibit any act, practice, activity, or procedure related, directly or indirectly, to the sale or
14 rental of public or private housing, that affects or may tend to affect the availability or
15 desirability of housing on an equal basis to all persons; may provide that violations constitute a
16 criminal offense; may subject the offender to civil penalties; and may provide that the City may
17 enforce the ordinances by application to the Superior Court Division of the General Court of
18 Justice for appropriate legal and equitable remedies, including mandatory and prohibitory
19 injunctions and orders of abatement, attorneys' fees, and punitive damages, and the court shall
20 have jurisdiction to grant the remedies.

21 (b) The City shall have the power to amend any ordinance adopted pursuant to the
22 provisions contained in subsection (a) of this Article to ensure that the ordinance remains
23 substantially equivalent to the federal Fair Housing Act (42 U.S.C. § 3601, et seq.) and
24 consistent with subsection (a). Any ordinance enacted pursuant to this Article prohibiting
25 discrimination on the basis of familial status shall not apply to housing for older persons, as
26 defined in the federal Fair Housing Act (42 U.S.C. § 3601, et seq.).

27 (c) Any ordinance enacted pursuant to this Article may provide for exemption from its
28 coverage:

29 (1) The rental of a housing accommodation in a building containing
30 accommodations for not more than four families living independently of
31 each other if the lessor or a member of his family resides in one of those
32 accommodations.

33 (2) The rental of a room or rooms in a housing accommodation by an individual
34 if he or a member of his family resides there.



- 1 (3) With respect to discrimination based on sex, the rental or leasing of housing
2 accommodations in single-sex dormitory property.
- 3 (4) With respect to discrimination based on religion to housing accommodations
4 owned and operated for other than a commercial purpose by a religious
5 organization, association, or society, or any nonprofit institution or
6 organization operated, supervised, or controlled by or in conjunction with a
7 religious organization, association, or society, the sale, rental, or occupancy
8 of the housing accommodation being limited or preference being given to
9 persons of the same religion, unless membership in the religion is restricted
10 because of race, color, national origin, or sex.
- 11 (5) Any person, otherwise subject to its provisions, who adopts and carries out a
12 plan to eliminate present effects of past discriminatory practices or to assure
13 equal opportunity in real estate transactions, if the plan is part of a
14 conciliation agreement entered into by that person under the provisions of
15 the ordinance.
- 16 (d) The City may create or designate a committee to assume the duty and responsibility
17 of enforcing ordinances adopted pursuant to this Article. The committee may be granted any
18 authority deemed necessary by the City Council for the proper enforcement of any fair housing
19 ordinance, including the power to:
- 20 (1) Promulgate rules for the receipt, initiation, investigation, and conciliation of
21 complaints of violations of the ordinance.
- 22 (2) Require answers to interrogatories, the production of documents and things,
23 and the entry upon land and premises in the possession of a party to a
24 complaint alleging a violation of the ordinance; compel the attendance of
25 witnesses at hearings; administer oaths; and examine witnesses under oath or
26 affirmation.
- 27 (3) Apply to the Superior Court Division of the General Court of Justice, upon
28 the failure of any person to respond to or comply with a lawful interrogatory,
29 request for production of documents and things, request to enter upon land
30 and premises, or subpoena, for an order requiring the person to respond or
31 comply.
- 32 (4) Upon finding reasonable cause to believe that a violation of the ordinance
33 has occurred, to petition the Superior Court Division of the General Court of
34 Justice for appropriate civil relief on behalf of the aggrieved person or
35 persons.
- 36 (e) The City may provide that neither complaints filed with any committee pursuant to
37 the ordinance nor the results of the committee's investigations, discovery, or attempts at
38 conciliation, in whatever form prepared and preserved, shall be subject to inspection,
39 examination, or copying under the provisions of what is now Chapter 132 of the General
40 Statutes.
- 41 (f) The City may provide that the statutory provisions relating to meetings of
42 governmental bodies, presently embodied in Article 33C of Chapter 143 of the General
43 Statutes, shall not apply to the activity of any committee authorized to enforce the ordinance to
44 the extent that the committee is receiving a complaint or conducting an investigation,
45 discovery, or conciliation pertaining to a complaint filed pursuant to the ordinance."

46 **SECTION 2.** This act is effective when it becomes law.