STATE OF FLORIDA COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS

WILLIAM KLEINSCHMIDT,

HUD Case No. 04-06-0

Petitioner,

OTEEB 6 EMIL: 03 FCHR Case No. 25-91782H

DOAH Case No. 06-2251

THREE HORIZONS NORTH CONDOMINIUM, INC.,

FCHR Order No. 07-013

Respondent.

FINAL ORDER DISMISSING PETITION FOR RELIEF FROM A DISCRIMINATORY HOUSING PRACTICE

Preliminary Matters

Petitioner William Kleinschmidt filed a housing discrimination complaint pursuant to the Fair Housing Act, Sections 760.20 - 760.37, Florida Statutes (2005), alleging that Respondent Three Horizons North Condominium, Inc., committed discriminatory, housing practices on the basis of Petitioner's National Origin (Jewish, German Polish descent) and on the basis of retaliation.

The allegations set forth in the complaint were investigated, and, on May 15, 2006, the Executive Director issued a determination finding that there was no reasonable cause to believe that a discriminatory housing practice had occurred.

Petitioner filed a Petition for Relief from a Discriminatory Housing Practice and the case was transmitted to the Division of Administrative Hearings for the conduct of a see formal proceeding.

An evidentiary hearing was held by video teleconference at sites in Tallahassee and Miami, Florida, on October 9, 2006, before Administrative Law Judge John G. Van Laningham.

Judge Van Laningham issued a Recommended Order of dismissal, dated November 21, 2006.

Pursuant to notice, public deliberations were held on February 13, 2007, by means of Communications Media Technology (namely, telephone) before this panel of Commissioners. The public access point for these telephonic deliberations was the Office of the Florida Commission on Human Relations, 2009 Apalachee Parkway, Suite 100, Tallahassee, Florida, 32301. At these deliberations, the Commission panel determined the action to be taken on the Recommended Order.

Findings of Fact

We find the Administrative Law Judge's findings of fact to be supported by competent substantial evidence.

We adopt the Administrative Law Judge's findings of fact.

Conclusions of Law

We find the Administrative Law Judge's application of the law to the facts to result in a correct disposition of the matter.

Section 760.23(2), <u>Florida Statutes</u> (2005), states, "It is unlawful to discriminate against any person in the terms, conditions, or privileges of sale or rental of a dwelling, or in the provision of services or facilities in connection therewith, because of race, color, national origin, sex, handicap, familial status, or religion."

The Administrative Law Judge concluded that this section does not create a cause of action for a homeowner, but rather it protects persons seeking to purchase or lease a dwelling, and tenants. Recommended Order, ¶ 18.

In our view, this is an error of law, which we correct to reflect that this statutory section does apply to homeowners.

In conclusions of law adopted by a Commission panel, it has been stated, "Race, color, national origin, sex, handicap, familial status, or religion-based harassment that creates a hostile housing environment constitutes a 'discriminatory housing practice' prohibited by Section 760.23(2), Florida Statutes. '[A] [hostile housing environment] claim is actionable when the offensive behavior unreasonably interferes with use and enjoyment of the premises. The harassment must be sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the housing arrangement. It is not sufficient if the harassment is isolated or trivial. Casual or isolated manifestations of a discriminatory environment... may not raise a cause of action.' Honce v. Vigil, 1 F.3d 1085, 1090 (10th Cir. 1993) (citations and internal quotations omitted)." Williams v. Samari Lake East Condominium Association, Inc. et al., FCHR Order No. 03-050 (August 11, 2003).

In our view, this reflects that Section 760.23(2), <u>Florida Statutes</u>, would clearly apply to homeowners, for example, in a condominium setting.

In correcting this conclusion of law of the Administrative Law Judge, we conclude: (1) that the conclusion of law being corrected is a conclusion of law over which the Commission has substantive jurisdiction, namely the substantive interpretation of the Fair Housing Act; (2) that the reason the correction is being made by the Commission is that the conclusion of law as stated runs contrary to a previous Commission decision on the issue; and (3) that in making this correction the conclusions of law being substituted is as or more reasonable than the conclusions of law which have been rejected. See, Section 120.57(1)(1), Florida Statutes (2005).

The correction of this conclusion of law does not affect the outcome of the case, given the Administrative Law Judge's conclusions that all Petitioner's claims be dismissed for other reasons, as well.

With this correction, we adopt the Administrative Law Judge's conclusions of law.

Exceptions

Petitioner filed exceptions to the Administrative Law Judge's Recommended Order in a document entitled, "Petitioner Professor William E. Kleinschmidt's Exceptions to Division of Administrative Hearings ("DOAH") Recommended Order."

The document seems to argue that the Recommended Order is anti-Semitic, and that Petitioner was deprived of both substantive and procedural due process.

With regard to exceptions to Recommended Orders, the Administrative Procedure Act states, "The final order shall include an explicit ruling on each exception, but an agency need not rule on an exception that does not clearly identify the disputed portion of the recommended order by page number or paragraph, that does not identify the legal basis for the exception, or that does not include appropriate and specific citations to the record." Section 120.57(1)(k), Florida Statutes (2006).

A review of Petitioner's exceptions document suggests that the document does not comply with this statutory provision.

The Commission has stated, "It is well settled that it is the Administrative Law Judge's function 'to consider all of the evidence presented and reach ultimate conclusions of fact based on competent substantial evidence by resolving conflicts, judging the credibility of witnesses and drawing permissible inferences therefrom. If the evidence presented supports two inconsistent findings, it is the Administrative Law Judge's role to decide between them.' Beckton v. Department of Children and Family Services, 21 F.A.L.R. 1735, at 1736 (FCHR 1998), citing Maggio v. Martin Marietta Aerospace, 9 F.A.L.R. 2168, at 2171 (FCHR 1986)." Barr v. Columbia Ocala Regional Medical Center, 22 F.A.L.R. 1729, at 1730 (FCHR 1999). Accord, Bowles v. Jackson County Hospital Corporation, FCHR Order No. 05-135 (December 6, 2005).

Petitioner's exceptions are rejected.

Dismissal

The Petition for Relief and Housing Discrimination Complaint are DISMISSED with prejudice.

The parties have the right to seek judicial review of this Order. The Commission and the appropriate District Court of Appeal must receive notice of appeal within 30 days of the date this Order is filed with the Clerk of the Commission. Explanation of the right to appeal is found in Section 120.68, <u>Florida Statutes</u>, and in the Florida Rules of Appellate Procedure 9.110.

DONE AND ORDERED this 15th day of February FOR THE FLORIDA COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS: Commissioner Donna Elam, Panel Chairperson; Commissioner Keith Roberts; and Commissioner Gilbert M. Singer Filed this 15th day of February , 2007, in Tallahassee, Florida. Violet Crawford, Clerk Commission on Human Relations 2009 Apalachee Parkway, Suite 100 Tallahassee, FL 32301 (850) 488-7082 Copies furnished to: William Kleinschmidt 1470 Northeast 125th Terrace, Apt. 206 North Miami, FL 33161 Three Horizons North Condominium, Inc. c/o Krista A. Fowler, Esq. Cole, Scott & Kissane, P.A. 1390 Brickell Avenue, Third Floor Miami, FL 33131 John G. Van Laningham, Administrative Law Judge, DOAH James Mallue, Legal Advisor for Commission Panel I HEREBY CERTIFY that a copy of the foregoing has been mailed to the above listed addressees this 15th day of February , 2007.

Florida Commission on Human Relations

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