

# Affordable housing order rescinded

## Christie move drew court challenge

By **LISA FLEISHER**  
STATE HOUSE BUREAU

Governor Christie on Friday rescinded a contested executive order halting the work of the state Council on Affordable Housing, saying the task force he set up to review housing policies had finished its work and submitted its report weeks ahead of schedule.

The task force, which finished its work long before the May 10 deadline, met with more than a dozen groups to come up with a set of recommendations on affordable housing policies and practices, task force chairwoman Marcia Karrow said.

The Governor's Office declined to immediately release the report.

On Feb. 9, Christie signed Executive Order 12, which created the task force and ordered the Council on Affordable Housing to stop approving municipalities' housing plans.

That prompted a court challenge from the Fair Share Housing Center, a housing advocacy group that said the governor did not have the authority to meddle with the work of a body created by the Legislature.

Oral arguments in a state ap-

peals court, which had been scheduled for Monday, were adjourned after Christie on Friday signed an executive order, rescinding the initial one.

"He was afraid of what the courts were going to do," said Kevin Walsh, associate director of the housing center. "Why else would he do it right before oral argument? ... There was no reason for him to rescind their executive order."

A governor's spokesman said rescinding the initial order was a "housecleaning matter" and was not in response to the court schedule.

"We reject that view," spokesman Michael Drewniak said.

Karrow said her group was confident it had "exhausted the investigation," holding three-hour policy meetings with groups representing all stakeholders.

"I have task force members that have scheduled vacations, and it's tax season," she said. "We all decided we wanted to hunker down and just do it and get it off our plates."

---

Lisa Fleisher is a reporter for The Star-Ledger. E-mail: [lfleisher@starledger.com](mailto:lfleisher@starledger.com).

# Christie panel recommends ending COAH

By **LISA FLEISHER**

STATE HOUSE BUREAU

Calling New Jersey's current approach to providing affordable housing "irrevocably broken," a group appointed by Governor Christie recommended counties, not the state, oversee municipal development plans and require that 10 percent of all new housing be within reach.

Under the task force recommendations, municipalities would submit plans to county planning boards, showing the level of residential development they can handle.

The Governor's Office did not give the report a clear endorsement.

"We are carefully considering the recommendations, but we agree with the findings that the Council on Affordable Housing is irrevocably flawed and should be eliminated and replaced with a system that is sustainable, fair, simple and predictable for municipalities," a spokesman Michael Drewniak said in a statement.

Towns now are required to submit plans to COAH, which says how many affordable-housing units municipalities must allow to be built. The system has sparked countless court challenges and criticism of its data and methods.

The report called the 1975 state Supreme Court decision and 1985 Fair Housing Act that have guided the state's policy "the product of a different time."

---

Lisa Fleisher is a reporter for The Star-Ledger.