



**Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes
Annual Retreat and Strategic Planning Meeting
March 16, 2023
Carver Recreation Center Main Room, 233 4th St. NW, Charlottesville, VA 22902
5:30 pm**

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1. WELCOME

- a. CALL TO ORDER
 - i. Chair, Jessica Harris, called the hybrid meeting to order at 5:55 pm
- b. ROLL CALL
 - i. Jessica Harris
 - ii. Ernest Chambers
 - iii. Jeanette Abi-Nader
 - iv. Mary Bauer
 - v. Wolfgang Keppley
 - vi. Kathryn Laughon
 - vii. Suzanne Lynn
 - viii. Andrew Orban
 - ix. Lyndele Von Schill
- c. MISSION (recited by all): *Act as a strong advocate to justice and equal opportunity by providing citywide leadership and guidance in the area of civil rights.*
- d. Icebreaker
 - i. Vice-Chair directs Commissioners and OHR staff in an icebreaker activity about their preferences to allow them to get to know each other
- e. Privilege Bead Activity
 - i. Chair leads Commissioners and OHR staff in activity to allow them to think about what kinds of privilege they have (including race, religion, class, cisgender, citizenship, ability, and sexuality) in their lives by creating beaded bracelets
 - ii. Group further discusses the questions for ability, class, citizenship, and race privilege, as well as privilege in general; also discusses how personal privilege may impact or inform roles as Commissioners

2. WORK SESSION

- a. 2022 Annual Report overview (HRC Director)
 - i. Explains structure of pages from the 2022 Annual Report depicting 2022 HRC key actions and takeaways, including how HRC actions aligned with responsibilities outlined in the Charlottesville Human Rights Ordinance
 - ii. Reviews annual focus topics chosen during the 2022 Annual Retreat and summarizes HRC's actions related to them

1. Sec. 2-443. (a) Commission has historically not had to do much, as many OHR cases do not reach hearing step; however, Commission should still be prepared should a case reach this stage
 - a. Suggests organizing a moot hearing
2. Sec. 2-433 (b) Commission held public polls, public discussions, and a community tabling event to interact with the public during 2022
3. Sec. 2-433 (c) HRC engaged in six actions aligned with this section, including two Council recommendations, two passed resolutions, and two discussions surrounding City policy
4. Sec. 2-433 (d) HRC Director did amendments to the Charlottesville Human Rights Ordinance which will bring the OHR into substantial equivalence with federal fair housing law
 - a. Will still be working with HUD for the FHAP agreement rather than beginning to pursue the FEPA agreement
 - b. Commission will be approving amendments to the Ordinance as they arise
5. Sec. 2-433 (e) HRC made recommendations to Council concerning housing equity, transportation equity and accessibility, health and food equity, and equity in law enforcement
6. Sec. 2-433 (f) Commission reviewed and amended its own Rules & Procedures to adjust the definition of a quorum, as well as adopted Ordinance amendments to pursue FHAP and generally improve procedures
- iii. Advises Commissioners use these responsibilities outlined in the Ordinance to think about the coming year's focuses
- iv. Added key takeaways and trends of OHR service provision during 2022
- v. Will later add in key takeaways for the OHR's community outreach work
- vi. Added in estimates for how much time is required per month to be a Commissioner
- vii. Added in a draft of an annual calendar to have general idea of when things should happen during the year
- viii. Commissioner asks about what Council said about legislative requirements for the Commission
 1. Director explains the structure of the Ordinance and what HRC responsibilities align with which part of the Ordinance
 - a. HRC's main responsibility is to advise Council
- ix. Full Annual Report is not attached, as it is not yet completed and contains mostly reporting from only the OHR
- x. Commissioner suggests having Commissioner work in a format that can be edited by Commissioners over the course of the year
 1. Director says it would be possible to give Commissioners direct access the HRC Actions spreadsheet
- b. 2023 Strategic Planning
 - i. Commissioner asks about number of annual focuses
 1. Chair says that last year, having four focuses spread the Commission a little thin, so this year, it may be better to pick two

- focuses
 - 2. Commissioner adds that goals should also be specific and action-oriented
- ii. Commission takes five minutes to brainstorm annual focuses
 - 1. Commissioner asks about signing of Language Access Plan document
 - a. Signing got lost during transition into new year
 - 2. Commissioner asks about Martha's Rules
 - a. This could be an ad-hoc committee that meets once to review the draft document and have on the agenda for the next regular meeting
 - i. Next committee meetings on 4/6 will be virtual
- iii. Commissioner shares previous suggestions for annual focuses
 - 1. Investigate feasibility of a city-wide voucher program under current flexibility of CSRAP
 - a. Would supplement or operate separately from the housing choice voucher program
 - 2. Identify creative policy solutions to incentivize deeply affordable housing in the city
 - a. Hotel conversions, rezoning, commercial property, etc.
 - 3. Write more letters to Council
 - 4. Have Commissioners regularly attending Planning Commission and Housing Advisory Committee meeting
 - 5. Support City through rezoning process
 - 6. Discuss values orientation around housing and its status as a human right
 - 7. Commissioner says that City's problem more seems to be availability of housing to use vouchers for, not the vouchers themselves
 - a. Commissioner would like to make use of its role in advising Council by getting Councilors to champion certain initiatives of the HRC and repeatedly bringing pressing issues to Council's attention
- iv. Other Commissioners share suggestions for annual focuses
 - 1. Housing generally, targeting community engagement to neighborhoods most in need, and developing truly equitable City policies
 - a. Supports idea of there being Commissioners as liaisons to different organizations and bodies
 - 2. Housing, Dillon Rule (gets in the way of equitable practices), survey of housing resources (could host summit of organizations and individuals and have role as connectors)
 - a. Talked to Steven Johnson from Livable Cville about factors that go into housing in the city
 - 3. Echoes previous Commissioner's priorities, holding City Council accountable
 - 4. Echoes previous priorities, suggestion of local issues suggested by the community that are amplified to Council (zoning rewrite, density bonuses, etc.)

5. Zoning rewrite, amplifying community's priorities to Council, and pushing City Council
6. More community engagement (hosting more town halls or summit, participating in more events in relevant communities)
7. Keep housing and community engagement priorities, and continue making legislative recommendations to Council
 - a. Supports ideas of town halls or a summit; feels that being at tabling events with OHR staff was not the best use of time in the past
 - b. OHR Community Outreach Specialist adds that she can help facilitate the Commission reaching out to other service providers and even participate in events if needed
8. Zoning rewrite, thinking about how the Commission is sending messages and holding Council accountable if they do not follow through, drafting legislative priorities earlier in the year
 - a. Specifically incorporating a human rights angle
 - b. Emphasis on following up
- v. Director responds to Commissioners' ideas
 1. Housing Advisory Committee is still meeting
 - a. Is listed on the calendar in different ways ("HAC," "Housing Advisory Committee," etc.)
 - b. Next meeting is 3/21 at 12pm for the zoning subcommittee
 2. OHR can provide some information regarding housing information gathering
- vi. Commissioner adds that she would like to add a specific statement about the loss of home ownership by Black Charlottesville residents
- vii. Chair summarizes that the Commission wants to prioritize housing and community engagement related to housing
 1. Zoning
 2. Acknowledging loss of housing by Black homeowners
 - a. Do information gathering
 3. Bringing issues forth to Council consistently
 - a. Meet consistently with them to talk about housing issues
 - b. Commissioner adds that HRC should be specific and ensure they are accurately repeating what other specialized organizations have been saying
- viii. Commissioner brings up recent gun violence in the city that he would like the Commission to address and help the community any way they can
 1. Part of the issue may be housing
 2. Another Commissioner adds that there was a community forum about this topic with the Police Chief
- ix. Chair says she is able to write letters with support from the Commission
- x. Commissioner asks Director about his previous comments about the HRC playing a connector role in the City
 1. HRC as an amplifier for voices Commission wants to endorse in

Council and having OHR help Commission talk to different agency Directors, etc.

- xi. Commissioner says that current committee structure does not seem to be working and suggests either making sure committees have adequate membership to get work done or just doing the required work in main Commission meetings

- 1. Chair suggests using ad-hoc committees for specific action items

- c. Chair suggests sub-focuses (with housing as main overall focus):

- i. General information gathering from individuals who work with housing in the city

- ii. Information gathering about rezoning

- 1. Commissioner asks whether there is any consensus on a rezoning model by the community

- a. There is general agreement about what an equitable model of rezoning would look like, but there is some disagreement within this sphere for specifics

- iii. Address loss of ownership by Black homeowners in the city

- d. Specific action items are to make specific recommendations to Council based around the specific sub-focuses

- i. Commissioners would like to further discuss these priorities, so they will discuss more details at the next committee meeting

- e. Chair suggests dissolving current committees and only having a Housing committee

- i. Commissioners decide to have ad-hoc committees that arise temporarily as needed which will be chaired (ex. Summit Chair, etc.)

3. MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC

- a. PUBLIC COMMENT

- i. None

- b. COMMISSION RESPONSE TO MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC

- i. None

4. COMMISSIONER UPDATES

- a. Chair expresses gratitude to Commission for their work

5. NEXT STEPS

- a. All Commissioners

- i. Think about specific next steps and committee structure for the sub-focuses before the virtual committee on 4/6

- b. Annual focuses for 2023 (housing):

- i. Gather information from experts in the City about housing issues

- ii. Gather information from experts about rezoning

- iii. Address loss of ownership by Black homeowners in Charlottesville

6. ADJOURN

- a. Meeting adjourned at 7:59 pm