



**Human Rights Commission
Work Session
January 4, 2024
Hybrid Meeting
City Space, 100 5th Street NE, Charlottesville, VA 22902
6:30pm**

Agenda Packet Attachments

1. Agenda
2. 2024 HRC Legislative Agenda Recommendations to City Council
3. 2024 City Council Legislative Position Statement

Attachment 1



**Human Rights Commission
AGENDA
Regular Meeting
January 4, 2024
Hybrid Meeting
City Space, 100 5th Street NE, Charlottesville, VA 22902
6:30pm**

Please take Notice that this hybrid meeting of the Human Rights Commission is for the purposes of planning, developing, and drafting management and administration documents for the Human Rights Commission. This hybrid meeting will be a limited public forum to discuss the agenda items presented below and to ensure the continuity of services provided by the Commission. The Commission Chair may limit public comments or discussion points that are unrelated to agenda items or that pertain to topics outside the scope of this Agenda. This will be a hybrid meeting open to the public, and registration information for remote participation is available at www.charlottesville.gov/zoom.

Members of the public who attend in person are welcome to provide public comment during the "matters by the public" sections of the agenda. The Commission is currently not receiving virtual public comment. The Commission welcomes comments and questions and commits to listening carefully and thoughtfully to what is presented. A maximum of sixteen public comment time slots are allotted per meeting. Each speaker will have three minutes to speak. The Commission requests that members of the public refrain from engaging in personal attacks against Commissioners and staff members and asks that comments and questions focus on matters related to human rights within the City.

1. WELCOME

- a. CALL TO ORDER
- b. ROLL CALL
- 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. Notice: For members of the public participating virtually, if you experience technical difficulties, you may call 434-970-3115, and a staff person will assist you.

2. WORK SESSION

- a. 2024 Legislative Agenda updates and discussion

3. MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC

- a. PUBLIC COMMENT (Webinar attendees use the "raise hand" function, phone attendees use *9)
- b. COMMISSION RESPONSE TO MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC

4. NEXT STEPS & ADJOURN

*** ACTION NEEDED**

Individuals with disabilities who require assistance or special arrangements to participate in the public meeting may call the ADA Coordinator at (434) 987-1267 or submit a request via email to ada@charlottesville.gov. The City of Charlottesville requests that you provide a 48-hour notice so that proper arrangements may be made.

Attachment 2

CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE

"To be one community filled with opportunity"

Human Rights Commission
P.O. Box 911 · Charlottesville, Virginia 22902
Telephone 434-970-3023
humanrights@charlottesville.gov
www.charlottesville.gov/665/Human-Rights



September 22, 2023

Dear Mayor Snook and City Councilors,

Pursuant to Sec. 2-433.(e) of the Charlottesville Human Rights Ordinance, it is the role of the Human Rights Commission to “make recommendations regarding the City’s annual legislative programs and policies that will address discrimination.” During their annual planning meeting on March 16, 2023, Commissioners identified housing as the primary focus of their work in 2023. Commissioners sought feedback from community members and subject matter experts regarding specific, state-level legislation that may have both local and regional impacts on housing. At its regular meeting on September 21, 2023, the Commission voted to recommend the following housing-related legislative priorities for your consideration as Council prepares its legislative recommendations for the Thomas Jefferson Area Planning District for referral to the General Assembly. The Commission recommends that Council support enabling legislation related to the following key areas.

1. Affordable Housing Accessibility:

- a. Allow individuals to use Medicaid and Medicare funds towards rent payments.
- b. Implement a progressive income tax and taxes for consumer services. The resultant increase in the tax base should produce a subsequent increase in funding available for affordable housing.
- c. Amend the Virginia Residential Landlord and Tenant Act to allow tenants to raise unsafe or unsanitary conditions as an affirmative defense to non-payment of rent.
- d. Allow indigent tenants to waive their appeal bond. This would grant indigent tenants the same rights that exist for indigent people in other types of civil cases.
- e. Require landlords to disclose to rental applicants a complete list of additional fees involved in renting as a separate document prior to the signing of a lease.
- f. Include provisions in the VA Residential Landlord and Tenant Act and the Manufactured Home Lot Rental Act to prohibit mid-lease rent increases except in cases where the renter has agreed in writing that the proposed mid-lease rent increase is permissible.
- g. Authorize localities to pass rent stabilization ordinances for residential rent in mobile home lots and multi-family dwellings.
- h. Grant localities rent control power, thereby removing the inhibiting effects of the Dillon Rule on the ability of localities to enact rent controls.
- i. Begin a state-sponsored voucher program to increase the accessibility of rental subsidies.

- j. Grant residents of mobile homes the right of first refusal, thereby giving residents the option to buy their communities when an owner wants to sell.
2. Equity for People Experiencing Homelessness:
 - a. Recognize homelessness as a protected class in the Virginia Human Rights Act and Virginia Fair Housing Law to prohibit discrimination based upon an individual's housing status.
 - b. Require that each county and city in Virginia maintain a public shelter for individuals or fund a private equivalent, equal to VA Code 3.2-6546 requiring the existence of a public animal shelter in every locality.
 - c. Amend the Virginia Residential Landlord and Tenant Act to increase the required period for a pay or quit notice to 14 days.
3. Mental Health Care Accessibility:
 - a. Increase public mental health care funding to compensate for the loss of mental health services resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Commission welcomes questions, feedback, and dialogue with City Council about these recommendations. The Commission also requests that Council communicate regarding the recommendations included in its proposal to the Thomas Jefferson Area Planning District. Commissioners look forward to planning with Council in advance of submitting legislative recommendations in 2024. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me or the Office of Human Rights should you have any questions prior to making your recommendations or if you wish to schedule a time to meet.

Sincerely,

Jessica Harris
Chair
Human Rights Commission

Human Rights Commissioners:

- Jessica Harris (Chair)
- Ernest Chambers (Vice-Chair)
- Jeanette Abi-Nader
- Mary Bauer
- Wolfgang Keppley
- Kathryn Laughon
- Suzanne Lynn
- Andrew Orban
- Lyndele von Schill

Attachment 3

**CHARLOTTESVILLE CITY COUNCIL
STATEMENT OF LEGISLATIVE POSITIONS
FOR THE 2024 REGULAR GENERAL ASSEMBLY SESSION**

A. Expand the Option for a One-Cent Local Sales Tax Increase for Construction and Renovation of Public-School Facilities to All Localities

Our most important legislative priority is legislation to allow all localities the option of enacting a one-cent sales tax increase to provide local revenue for the construction or renovation of public-school facilities. Currently, only a few localities have been designated as “qualifying localities” under the provisions of Va. Code §§ 58.1-602, 58.1-605.1, and 58.1-606.1 to raise revenue in this manner, yet the need for this additional revenue source extends beyond those few localities that have it. If legislation allowing all localities this option is not successful, we would support legislation giving Charlottesville this option.

B. Continue Funding of Virginia’s Home Visiting Programs

We support funding Virginia’s home visiting programs with general funds to the extent necessary to prevent any reduction in funding due to the Commonwealth’s declining TANF balance.

Funding for Virginia’s Home Visiting Programs is at risk because of a decline in the Commonwealth’s TANF balance which is projected to decline from over \$46 million at the end of the last fiscal year to approximately \$4 million in the current fiscal year. This decline will adversely impact funding for home visiting programs which connect pregnant and parenting families to trained family support professionals. Those programs include the Comprehensive Health Investment Project (CHIP), Healthy Families, Resource Mothers and Early Impact Virginia.

C. Salaries for Members of Local Governing Bodies

We support legislation to amend Code of Virginia § 15.2-1414.6 to remove the limitation on annual salaries for city councils. City councils in Virginia should be permitted to establish the annual salaries for councilors at the local level. Each locality’s needs are unique and maximum compensation should be a local decision, based on the will of the electorate and the financial resources of the locality.

D. Funding for Regional Transit Authorities

We support legislation which would permit localities to impose an optional one cent local sales tax increase to fund regional transit authorities. This legislation would permit Charlottesville to partner with neighboring jurisdictions to address transportation needs on a regional basis.

E. Amend Land Use Ordinance Advertisement Laws Which Unduly Restrict Council's Ability to Deliberate

We support an amendment of Code of Virginia § 15.2-2204 and other similar provisions in the Virginia Code which require advertisement of land use ordinances within 14 days of intended adoption. This provision constrains the City Council because it may wish to consider whether to adopt a land use ordinance not only at the meeting at which it is first advertised, but at a subsequent meeting. This is particularly true when the issue is complex. In addition, in those cases in which the City Council and the Planning Commission conduct a joint public hearing, this provision may require Council to act on an ordinance before it has received a recommendation from the Planning Commission.

F. Allow Greater Flexibility for Certain Boards and Commissions to Conduct All-Virtual Meetings

We support enactment of legislation that would allow certain boards and commissions to expand the use of all virtual meetings under policies adopted by those boards or commissions.

Currently, all City boards and commissions, like many other public bodies in the Commonwealth, are limited in the number of all-virtual meetings they may conduct to two times per calendar year or 25% of their meetings in any calendar year. This can sometimes present challenges to assembling a quorum in a physical location. Adding flexibility to the number of all-virtual meetings City boards and commissions may conduct pursuant to policies those bodies adopt at least annually would help address this issue and potentially expand the number of individuals who would be willing to serve on municipal boards and commissions.

This change would not affect current limits on all-virtual meetings for local governing bodies including the City Council, local school boards, planning commissions, architectural review boards, zoning appeals boards or boards with the authority to deny, revoke or suspend a professional or occupational license.

G. Increasing Affordable Housing Accessibility by Enhancing Tenant Rights

We support legislation which would increase affordable housing accessibility by enhancing the rights of tenants, including: 1. amending the Virginia Residential Landlord and Tenant Act to allow tenants to raise unsafe or unsanitary conditions as an affirmative defense to non-payment of rent; 2. allowing indigent tenants to waive their appeal bond in landlord-tenant disputes; 3. requiring landlords to disclose a complete list of additional fees in a separate document prior to the signing of a lease; and 4. authorizing localities to pass rent stabilization ordinances for residential rent in mobile home lots and multi-family dwellings.