



**Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes
Regular Meeting
September 19, 2024
City Space, 100 5th Street NE, Charlottesville, VA 22902
6:30 pm**

Click [HERE](#) to access rebroadcasts of past Human Rights Commission meetings on YouTube.

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1. WELCOME

- a. CALL TO ORDER
 - i. Chair, Ernest Chambers, called the meeting to order at 6:35 pm
- b. ROLL CALL
 - i. Ernest Chambers
 - ii. Wolfgang Keppley
 - iii. Mary Bauer
 - iv. Kathryn Lawn
 - v. Dawn Lawson
 - vi. Suzanne Lynn
 - vii. Jason Melendez
 - viii. Heather Roberson-Gaston
 - ix. Elizabeth Stark
- 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.*

2. MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC

- a. PUBLIC COMMENT
 - i. None
- b. COMMISSION RESPONSE TO MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC
 - i. None

3. MINUTES

- a. Review of minutes from 08-15-2024
 - i. Vote
 - 1. In favor: 5
 - 2. Opposed:
 - 3. Abstained: 4
 - ii. Motion to approve minutes passes
- b. Review of minutes from 09-09-2024
 - i. Vote
 - 1. In favor: 4
 - 2. Opposed:
 - 3. Abstained: 5
 - ii. Motion to approve minutes passes

4. BUSINESS MATTERS

- a. CHAIR UPDATE
 - i. Chair expresses gratitude for staff and commissioners attending outreach events this summer
 - ii. Chair welcomes new commissioners
 - iii. Chair thanks commissioners for work on legislative agenda recommendations
- b. OHR STAFF REPORT
 - i. Outreach Specialist announces translated complaint brochures have arrived and invites commissioners to collaborate on developing plans for outreach in other languages
 - ii. Outreach Specialist is working on brochure and other outreach materials related to employment protections during pregnancy and childbirth; commissioners are welcome to provide input or collaborate
 - iii. Director explains Fair Housing Assistance Program and Fair Employment Practices Agency projects to new commissioners
 - iv. Director announces hire of new Intake Specialist, Lauren Harris
 - v. Director announces that OHR staff will be working with Grace Makin, a graduate student, to continue researching housing discrimination issues
 - vi. Director explains that a case may be moving to the HRC for vote on whether or not to hold a public hearing
 - 1. Commissioner asks about timeline for reviewing investigative report
 - a. Director responds that staff will have to work out details and report back to the HRC
 - b. Per the 2013 Charlottesville Human Rights Ordinance (CRHO), public hearings require notice be provided to the parties of the complaint a minimum of 14 days in advance of the date of the hearing
 - i. All versions of the CRHO are available on the Charlottesville Human Rights Ordinance tab of the Human Rights webpage
 - 2. Chair will work with Director and City Attorney to determine next steps

5. WORK SESSION

- a. Commissioners discuss potential city-level policy recommendations
 - i. Discussion of Salvation Army policies
 - 1. Commissioner asks about status of dialogue with Salvation Army related to policies for inclusion and non-discrimination on the basis of gender identity and sexuality
 - a. Commissioner states that Salvation Army did address these concerns in a prior letter dated August 2023; may be room to continue this conversation and follow up on these concerns
 - 2. Commissioner states that there may be additional concerns to raise about policy requiring guests to produce identification
 - 3. Commissioner expresses additional concerns about language accessibility and disability accessibility in Salvation Army services
 - 4. Director discusses potential plans for new low-barrier shelter

run by Salvation Army and PACEM and suggests recommending that the City require that partners create and enforce non-discriminatory policies to maintain eligibility to receive City funding

- ii. Commissioner states that there may have been potential City-level recommendations from the expert panels this summer
- iii. Commissioner raises issue of units not passing inspections required to attach vouchers
- iv. Commissioner discusses work being done in Richmond around evictions, housing availability, and concerns about language in leases
- v. Commissioner suggests revitalizing past work related to providing legal counsel to people being evicted
 - 1. Commissioners discuss City's past use of pandemic relief funds to provide some legal representation to those being evicted
 - 2. Director asks what new strategies could make a program like this more effective
 - a. Commissioner suggests allocating long term funding to cover the need as defined by data on the number of people in need of eviction representation
 - 3. Commissioner states that it may be important to consult with partners at CVLAS and LAJC to discuss this suggestion and each organization's capacity to provide representation if funding is made available
 - 4. Commissioners agree to review past HRC letters on this topic and draft a follow up letter
- vi. Commissioner suggests modifying laws related to 21-30 eviction proceedings
 - 1. Director suggests bringing this back up ahead of next year's state-level legislative recommendations as a suggested amendment to the Virginia Residential Landlord and Tenant Act
- vii. Commissioner suggests funding and filling a housing outreach specialist position
 - 1. Director states that it may be useful to advocate for long-term funding for this position in collaboration with the Blue Ridge Area Coalition for the Homeless
- viii. Director suggests that commissioners consider recommending a change to City holiday policy
 - 1. Outreach Specialist reminds commissioners of a comment submitted through a public poll suggesting more flexibility in use of paid holidays
- ix. Director suggests considering potential recommendations to address needs of those that are asset-limited, income constrained, and employed (ALICE), which includes a portion of City employees
- x. Commissioner shares that there may be confusion surrounding new zoning code and suggests requesting outreach and education to developers
 - 1. Commissioner volunteers to identify representatives from the City, Livable Cville, and other stakeholder groups

6. MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC

- a. PUBLIC COMMENT
 - i. None
 - b. COMMISSION RESPONSE TO MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC
 - i. None
- 7. **COMMISSIONER UPDATES**
 - a. None
- 8. **NEXT STEPS**
 - a. Mary and Elizabeth
 - i. Take lead on drafting letter related to ensuring legal representation for those facing eviction
 - b. Heather
 - i. Follow up on zoning code education and outreach to developers
 - c. Todd and Ernest
 - i. Follow up about public hearing training options
- 9. **ADJOURN**
 - a. Meeting adjourned at 8:12pm