



**Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes
Regular Meeting
November 21, 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 6:36 pm
- b. ROLL CALL
 - i. Present
 - 1. Ernest Chambers
 - 2. Wolfgang Keppley
 - 3. Kathryn Laughon
 - 4. Dawn Lawson
 - 5. Suzanne Lynn
 - 6. Jason Melendez
 - 7. Heather Roberson-Gaston
 - ii. Absent
 - 1. Mary Bauer
 - 2. 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 10/17/2024
 - i. Vote
 - 1. In favor: 6
 - 2. Opposed: 0
 - 3. Abstained: 1
 - ii. Motion to approve minutes passes
- b. Review of minutes from 11/07/2024
 - i. Vote
 - 1. In favor: 6

- 2. Opposed: 0
- 3. Abstained: 1
- ii. Motion to approve minutes passes

4. BUSINESS MATTERS

- a. CHAIR UPDATE
 - i. Chair encourages commissioners to attend event hosted by the Blue Ridge Area Coalition for the Homeless on 11/22/24 at 9am in CitySpace
- b. OHR STAFF REPORT
 - i. Fair Housing Assistance Program (FHAP) Update
 - 1. Housing and Urban Development has denied the OHR's application for the FHAP program and requested additional changes to the Charlottesville Human Rights Ordinance (CHRO)
 - 2. Director would like to have a review of the CHRO with revisions on the 12/19/2024 HRC Regular Meeting Agenda
 - ii. HRC Rules and Procedures
 - 1. **Director reminds commissioners to review HRC Rules and Procedures for potential amendments at December Regular Meeting**
 - a. Director shares that per City training, Martha's Rules are intended to be used as guide when needed for decision making, but it is not required that Boards and Commissions follow them
 - iii. OHR and City Budget
 - 1. Commissioner asks about timeline of the City's budget process to determine best time to make recommendations that could impact budget allocations
 - a. **Director will ask this question and follow up**
 - 2. Commissioner asks if OHR's budget includes line item related to HRC Annual Planning Meeting
 - a. Director states that if the HRC would like to hire a facilitator or other professional support for this meeting, that would fall under the "Professional Services" line item in the OHR's budget
- c. OFFICER NOMINATION COMMITTEE UPDATE
 - i. Commissioners will receive an email to determine interest in officer positions

5. WORK SESSION

- a. City-level recommendations
 - i. Commissioner asks if there may be other ways to support the City Manager's proposals related to housing and homelessness
 - 1. Another Commissioner suggests including this in the letter to Council
 - 2. Director encourages establishing communication between Chair and City Manager as appropriate
 - ii. Effective Right to Counsel Letter
 - 1. Director suggests that HRC leadership discuss this with City

- leadership to strategize about presenting to Council
- 2. Commissioner suggests making plan to add regional data and summary of similar programs' impacts to other localities
 - a. Commissioner suggests using cost-benefit analyses from other localities as evidence to support proposal
- 3. Commissioner suggests researching costs and potential funding options prior to presenting to City leadership
 - a. Another commissioner suggests that City Council could ask state legislators to fund a pilot program in Charlottesville
 - i. Commissioner suggests that Senator Deeds may be good point of contact for further conversation on this
- 4. Commissioner asks if implementing effective right to counsel might discourage landlords from filing for evictions
 - a. Another commissioner confirms that a cost-benefit analysis in Pennsylvania indicates that providing legal representation to tenants can decrease the number of evictions filed by landlords
- 5. Commissioner states that providing legal counsel to tenants could reduce systemic harms that disproportionately affect members of several protected classes, including those historically marginalized due to race and gender
 - a. Commissioners discuss that evictions can disproportionately affect Black women, people with disabilities, and families with children
- 6. Commissioners adjust format and wording of letter
- 7. Vote to approve effective right to counsel letter
 - a. In favor: 7
 - b. Opposed: 0
 - c. Abstained: 0
 - d. Motion to approve effective right to counsel recommendation letter passes
- 6. Work Plan Check-in
- 7. Confirmation of next work session on 12/05/24
 - a. HRC will not hold this meeting
 - b. Next meeting on 12/19/2024 at CitySpace

8. MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC

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

9. COMMISSIONER UPDATES

- a. Commissioner shares event happening with Indivisible Charlottesville at the Central Library at 11am on 11/23
- b. Commissioner shares that Culpeper Circuit Court is hosting an event on 12/16 at 3:30pm to honor the victims of three the historic lynchings

10. NEXT STEPS

- a. Todd
 - i. Inquire about City budget process to determine best timing for HRC recommendations that may impact allocations
- b. Ernest and Kathryn
 - i. Officer nominations
- c. Ernest, Wolfgang, Todd, and Lily
 - i. Meet to discuss inviting legislators to upcoming meeting
- d. Wolfgang
 - i. Send planning poll for Annual Planning Meeting

11. ADJOURN

- a. Meeting adjourned at 8:04pm