



**Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes
Community Engagement Committee – Town Hall
March 24, 2022
Virtual/Electronic Meeting
6:30 pm**

Public link to meeting rebroadcasts on Boxcast: <https://boxcast.tv/channel/vabajtzezuyv3iclkx1a>

Public link to HRC documents on Box: <https://app.box.com/s/xy3wnn2s1tj8h7trkknvd79bipyxezy>

1) WELCOME

- a) CALL TO ORDER
 - i) Chair, Jessica Harris, called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm
- b) ROLL CALL
 - i) Jessica Harris
 - ii) Ernest Chambers
 - iii) Jeanette Abi-Nader
 - iv) Mary Bauer
 - v) Wolfgang Keppley
 - vi) Kathryn Laughon
 - vii) 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) Chair welcomes the public to the Town Hall listening session and explains that each speaker will have 3 minutes to speak and a maximum of 45 minutes dedicated to each topic

2) TOWN HALL TOPIC (PUBLIC COMMENT) – Emergency Housing (45 minutes)

- a) Sage Bowyer
 - i) Most affordable housing in Charlottesville is unaffordable for SSI and SSD individuals
 - ii) These individuals only make about \$841 per month, but most low-income places are about \$800 per month
- b) Rich Gregory
 - i) Requests Chair repeat the mission statement
 - ii) Treasurer of the Alliance for Interfaith Ministry
 - (1) Helps those who are unemployed, on disability, or retired get affordable housing
 - iii) AIM has had to change bylaws to house people in surrounding counties because there is no way to move into affordable housing in Charlottesville without a waitlist
- c) Anna Mendez
 - i) Executive Director of Partner for Mental Health
 - ii) PMH has observed that many community members banned from emergency housing options are disproportionately people who live with mental health diagnoses
 - iii) TJACH has allowed PMH to help some of these individuals who are prohibited

- from using emergency shelters with motel rooms
 - iv) Encourages the City to invest in helping all service providers who are providing emergency shelter to people who are highly likely to have a behavioral health condition
 - v) Investing in professional development skills and values necessary to interact with these people will result in their ability to maintain shelter
- d) Nancy Carpenter
 - i) Emergency housing is right to shelter
 - ii) Some people are unable to access shelter at some of all parts of the year
 - (1) Some people want shelter but cannot get it because they own a pet
 - (2) Some do not want to get split up
 - iii) Says the answer is more housing than emergency shelter; should look for policy options that have deeply affordable housing
 - iv) Emergency housing needs a definition
 - v) Says that the government keeps those who are unable to work in poverty
- e) Gwen Cassady
 - i) managinglove.org
 - ii) Was homeless 10 years ago while attending UVA grad school; yesterday received certificate from Harvard for creating sustainable cities and communities
 - iii) Deemed expert in global homelessness by the UN; presented twice at last intergovernmental dialogue on global homelessness
 - iv) Finland has no homelessness because of the Housing First policy; should focus on this
 - v) Designing first net positive small-home community for the currently homeless veterans in the Charlottesville area
 - vi) Need to focus on many issues, but homelessness and affordable housing should be at the top
- f) Rich Gregory
 - i) UVA's housing policy is charging market rate for students, which drives up the cost for other residents
 - ii) Ideally, UVA would have 100 free rooms at any given time with resources so homeless people could use them, but the University is not doing enough
- g) Ocean Aiello
 - i) Staff member at the Haven Day Shelter downtown
 - ii) Interpreted emergency housing as access to overnight shelter
 - iii) Highlights Anna Mendez's point that those unable to access Salvation Army and PACEM typically need extra support
 - iv) Encourages talking to the people who fall into this group
 - v) Solution to homelessness is housing
 - (1) Need access to housing and more vouchers, as well as increase in supply
- h) Daniela Pretzer
 - i) Executive Director of the Bridgeline (nonprofit organization serving adults with brain injuries)
 - ii) Wants to point out that in the homeless community, at least 53% have a brain injury
 - iii) Problem is that people with brain injuries are often less understood because they have behaviors that are out of the norm
 - iv) It is possible for emergency and affordable housing to be accessible, because accessibility works for everyone
 - v) People in this community typically have no money
 - (1) They often must live in Charlottesville to access health care
- i) Nancy Carpenter
 - i) Think about respite emergency housing for those coming out of UVA who do not have a good housing plan
 - ii) Need to be able to recuperate; there is a need for medical respite beds

- (1) Micah Ministries in Fredericksburg possibly has medical respite beds
 - (2) Creates more time to create a housing plan
 - j) Sage Bowyer
 - i) Women on SSI and disability are more likely to stay in domestic violence situations than those who can afford to leave
 - k) Ang Conn
 - i) Need to think about hotline and outreach in addition to emergency housing
 - ii) There is not a line for people to call on the weekend
 - iii) Many places require intake, presenting at the ER, or going to the police department
 - iv) Must think about the traumas imposed on people who have had negative experiences with the health care system, as well as the effect on the health care system as a whole
 - l) Gwen Cassady
 - i) Recommends implementing a development tax, especially for high rollers developing million-dollar town homes
 - (1) Taxes are allocated for emergency housing services
 - ii) Should emulate what is happening nationally and internationally
 - (1) Should focus on helping agencies like PACEM, the Haven, and Salvation Army
 - (2) Recommends doing more collaboration with these organizations and TJACH
 - m) Moving on to next topic after ~30 minutes
- 3) **TOWN HALL TOPIC (PUBLIC COMMENT) – Quality of Affordable, Public, and Subsidized Housing (45 minutes)**
 - a) Nancy Carpenter
 - i) Rate of rent increase has locked some people out of the City's rental voucher program
 - (1) Vouchers are lower than they should be; are 125% of fair market rent
 - (2) CLHHC has made ask to increase this to 150% of fair market rent
 - (3) But there is question about being able to transition from City rental program into more mainstream housing voucher program
 - ii) City could create policy picking up the money difference between 125% and 150%
 - (1) Could increase voucher amount to 150% for payment standard to fair market rent
 - iii) Another problem is when City takes proffers from developers
 - (1) Instead of 5-8 years, should keep units affordable for 15-20 years
 - (2) Can be reviewed when there is a housing coordinator
 - iv) Collaboration between agencies is a good idea
 - (1) Many of the agencies are scrambling for the same grants
 - (2) Figure out a way locally to level boundaries between agencies
 - (3) Work toward better service delivery together
 - b) John Sales
 - i) Answering Ms. Carpenter's questions about the City Supplemented Rental Assistance Program (CSRAP)
 - ii) Executive Director of the Charlottesville Regional Housing Authority (CRHA)
 - iii) Program goes up to 125% fair market rent
 - (1) Asked for increase to the program last May
 - iv) Families who want to live in the city often have a hard time finding units that qualify for the program

- v) Received request from the City this morning to look into 150% AMI increase
- vi) Has a couple concerns
 - (1) If you do not add additional revenue, the number of vouchers and families you can assist decreases
 - (2) Program was designed to go from CSRAP to the HCV program
 - (a) Created to protect families as they transition to the next program
- vii) Going to 150% would guarantee that the family would not be able to stay in the house once they receive voucher for the federal program, since the federal program only goes up to 110%
 - (1) Moving can be costly
 - (2) Program does not have a term limit, so individuals have been in the program since its creation in 2018
- viii) The HCV program is up to 110% now
 - (1) Not on pace with the market, but they are not planning on funding at the level it should be
- ix) Families are moving further away from the city or using a full term to find a unit (120 days for most voucher holders; 150 days for other voucher holders)
- c) Sage Bowyer
 - i) Expands upon Mr. Sales' point that people are moving out of the city by saying the places people are moving to are privately owned, cash-only, and often have mold and broken appliances
- d) Ang Conn
 - i) Affordable does not necessarily mean accessible
 - ii) Landlords create many barriers
 - iii) Focus on how to institute rent caps and other solutions—there are huge increases month to month
 - (1) People's leases are not being renewed because they have not made six consecutive payments
 - (2) Landlords have so much power and are not treating the community correctly
- e) Daniela Pretzer
 - i) Passion is affordable housing
 - ii) Bridgeline owns two homes
 - iii) One of their programs is a residential program—staff is present all day in one; they check in on the other
 - (1) Also have an empty lot
 - iv) Goal is to build a house in the empty lot—4-6 apartments and common area
 - v) Talked to someone from the City about zoning, but ran into issues
 - (1) If anyone knows anyone willing to help build, let Ms. Pretzer know
 - vi) People with a myriad of experiences are looking for a home
- f) Alex Ikefuna
 - i) Responding to Ms. Conn about rent cap/rent freezes
 - ii) City would like to do this, but the authority to do that must come from the state
 - (1) Must authorize the City to develop an Ordinance that would make landlords freeze rents
 - (2) Is difficult to get state to authorize
- g) Sage Bowyer
 - i) Would like to see apartments built that are suitable for children, allow at least one small pet, and are based on income no matter what it is
- h) Nancy Carpenter
 - i) The Crossings is working well
 - (1) A mix of market rate and project-based vouchers
 - ii) Hopes Premier Circle will be similar
 - iii) Thinks social contract with governance is broken; feels government has pushed so much on public-private partnerships that it is hard to keep up
 - iv) Budget Act during 2008 recession constricted lots of money in public housing for

upkeep

- (1) Have opportunity now to get money back to levels pre-pandemic and pre-2008
 - v) Individuals and families are going to need assistance
 - vi) City should look into increasing public housing and creating longer periods of time for proffer departments
- i) Gwen Cassady
 - i) Canvassed the 10th and Page neighborhood for AHIP and LEAP
 - (1) Found that home ownership is the only true pathway to wealth and building equity
 - ii) There must be a way for individuals having their homes upfitted by taxpayer dollars to remain in the family
- j) Rich Gregory
 - i) Must consider the most energy-efficient construction methods
 - ii) Try to help the highest number of people possible and give them the support to stay in the neighborhood
- k) Daniela Pretzer
 - i) Responding to Mr. Gregory
 - ii) Worked with UVA's Architectural School, but government inhibited them from moving forward
 - iii) Bridgeline's project is good not only because someone has a permanent home, but there is also always someone there to help
 - (1) Welcomes feedback
 - (2) Bridgeline serves those with brain injuries, but a brain injury could be a stroke, trauma, tumor, infection, etc.

4) FINAL THOUGHTS

- a) Rich Gregory
 - i) Asks for record of Town Hall/contact information for speakers
 - ii) Commissioner suggests sharing contact information in the chat
 - iii) Chair says that notes from this meeting will be published
- b) Vice-Chair
 - i) Asks Ms. Pretzer for Bridgeline's injury designation of Alzheimer's
 - (1) She responds that by definition, it is not
 - (2) Main injuries are trauma, tumor, encephalitis, and stroke
 - (3) Bridgeline's definitions encompass more than some other organizations, but it is complicated
 - (4) Invites anyone to contact Bridgeline with questions
- c) Sage Bowyer
 - i) City could allocate a patch of land dedicated to building tiny homes from old school buses, shipping containers, etc.
- d) Chair
 - i) Thanks attendees and says the Commission will take the ideas from this meeting into their retreat next month
 - ii) Also thanks Commissioners, Communications team, and OHR staff

5) ADJOURN

- a) Meeting adjourned at 7:40 pm