



**Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes
Regular Meeting
March 17, 2022
Virtual/Electronic Meeting
6:30 pm**

Public link to meeting rebroadcasts on Boxcast: <https://boxcast.tv/channel/vabajtzeuyv3iclkx1a>

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 6:33 pm
- b) ROLL CALL
 - i) Jessica Harris
 - ii) Ernest Chambers
 - iii) Jeanette Abi-Nader
 - iv) Mary Bauer
 - v) Wolfgang Keppley
 - vi) Kathryn Laughon
 - vii) Erika Robinson
 - viii) Andy 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.*

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 2/17/2022 HRC Regular Meeting
 - i) Vote
 - (1) In favor: 7
 - (2) Opposed: 0
 - (3) Abstained: 2
- b) Review of minutes from 2/22/2022 HRC Public and Subsidized Housing Panel Discussion
 - i) Vote
 - (1) In favor: 6
 - (2) Opposed: 0
 - (3) Abstained: 3

4) BUSINESS MATTERS

- a) Chair update
 - i) Welcome to new Commissioner Erika Robinson
 - ii) Idea for holding a monthly gathering downtown where people can talk to the HRC, or some other way to be visible to the public
 - (1) Commissioner expresses support for monthly walk or tabling event; suggests it be outside
 - (2) Commissioner has concerns that a monthly event would not be sustainable
 - (a) Says HRC used to table at many already established events; this may be more sustainable
 - (b) OHR staff says Office used to attend various events around the community and expresses hope to continue once events are safely occurring again
 - (i) There will be an in-person outreach opportunity at Riverside public housing on Friday, March 25 3pm-5pm
 - (ii) Will keep an eye out for future community events
 - (3) Commissioner agrees that event-by-event basis would be more sustainable
 - (4) Chair asks for someone from Community Engagement committee to be in charge of looking for potential events at which to make an appearance
 - iii) Attended Virginia Association of Human Rights meeting 2/28
 - (1) Encouraging to hear about what other Commissions are doing
 - (a) For instance, some are doing work with high schoolers
 - (2) Interested to continue attending these meetings and applying what she has learned to the Charlottesville HRC
 - (3) OHR staff says HRC has received invitation for the next full membership meeting on 3/28
 - (a) Can attend as long as you are not discussing or voting on local HRC business
 - (b) If interested, let Todd know
 - iv) Recap of Councilor Payne meeting with Vice-Chair
 - (1) Will forward email with issues with housing Councilor Payne is aware of
 - (2) Councilor Payne provided a good framework for how to engage with City Council
 - (3) Focus on 3-5 things at the retreat to talk about
 - (a) Will have to have someone from the community (like Councilor Payne) to help the Commission address these key ideas
 - (b) Not just present the problem, but also provide solutions
 - (4) Vice-Chair adds that Councilor Payne said if there is something especially important, the HRC should keep it in front of Council
 - (a) Email, text, etc.; any way to make them recognize its importance
 - v) Todd promoted the HRC and upcoming Town Hall meeting on TV
 - vi) Met with Col. Martin Kumer after the last regular meeting to thank him for

attending the meeting

(1) Chair has plans to visit the ACRJ

vii) Thanks Shelby, Victoria, and Joy for presenting at the housing panel discussion

b) OHR Staff report

i) Report is attached in agenda

ii) Meeting for people currently experiencing homelessness has been rescheduled for 3/29 at 10am in the Swanson Case Room (2nd floor of the Downtown Library)

(1) Hear directly from people currently living on the streets and how they are feeling about the homeless system of care

(2) Goes nicely with talks with Deputy City Manager Ashley Marshall about how to best address homelessness in Charlottesville

iii) Budget meetings are occurring

(1) Does not seem that there are any increases besides 7% increase for staff cost of living

(2) Asked for another position for Investigator, but it is not in the budget

(a) Affects capacity to become a FHAP

(b) Has drafted revised Ordinance with substantial equivalence, but still has questions about technical terms for Eric Steinecker

(c) Must present everything to Council; if you pass an Ordinance without staff to enforce it, there may be significant challenges

(i) Something to think about is how to advocate for staffing

(3) Chair says that during meeting with Councilor Payne, they did mention the need for additional staff and budget

(a) This is something to repeatedly bring to his attention to make sure the additional funding happens

(i) Say what the OHR/HRC needs and why it needs it

(4) Commissioner asks what the overall ask was

(a) Full ask was \$76,759, which includes all employment costs (FICA, retirement, health care, life insurance, etc.)

(5) Chair asks how many more employees are needed

(a) A three-person team of someone to do initial intake, someone to do investigation, and an administrative judge would be the minimum to make the Office effective

(i) Depends on how many cases get redirected from HUD (may find that the Office needs more)

(ii) Research fellow would help FOIA HUD for all cases that would have been in OHR's jurisdiction for the last 5 years; can do the same with the EEOC

(b) This could be something to talk about at the retreat to determine what the OHR needs and make sure City

Council knows

(6) Commissioner asks whether Ordinance needs to be done before pursuing this

(a) OHR staff says the first two positions are mostly filled and all that is left is the Investigator position; thinks it is a conversation with Council and the City Attorney's Office as to when it is the HRC's obligation to start addressing changes to the Ordinance

iv) Ashley Marshall suggested having a panel of experts after the Town Hall to discuss topics; also mentioned that if there are big parking lot ideas that emerge, there is a possibility of a graduate-level research fellow that could help with deeper analysis of how to become a FEPA/FHAP

(1) Can relay questions back to Ashley

5) WORK SESSION

a) HRC Rules & Procedures proposed revisions

i) Chair proposes taking out Martha's Rules and replacing them with Robert's Rules because that is what the Commission actually does

(1) Commissioner wonders whether rules will change when meetings go back to an in-person format, as Martha's Rules would make more sense in person, while Robert's Rules make more sense in an online format

(2) Commissioner says she does not feel strongly about which rules the Commission uses, but did find Martha's Rules to be more liberating in terms of voting logistics

(3) Chair adds Robert's Rules make it easier for someone taking notes to know who voted for what

ii) Commissioner says Commission used to get bogged down in the minutiae of voting logistics and asks if HRC could instead make tweaks to Martha's Rules, like having verbal votes

(1) Prefers Martha's Rules as a matter of equity and moving meetings forward

iii) Commissioner says it is up to the HRC's discretion for which rules to use and suggests taking what the Commission likes out of both sets of rules and creating a simple set of how the HRC conducts business

(1) Another Commissioner agrees and says that there may be a way in Martha's Rules to individually call on members to voice their positions; would be in favor of this or creating combined rules

iv) Chair summarizes that Commission wants to keep Martha's Rules or create new rules from Martha's and Robert's

(1) Commissioner expresses support for amending Martha's Rules instead of re-adopting Robert's Rules

(2) Another Commissioner says amending Martha's Rules may not be necessary and that there is already a way to do a roll-call vote

v) OHR staff adds that Commission has done a hybrid system for a long time, which has worked, so it could make sense to codify a unique set of rules with everything included that is relevant and helpful for the Commission

(1) Jessica and Kathryn can re-draft the rules

- (2) Kathryn will take first look
 - (a) Make sure to include roll-call votes
 - b) Draft CY2020 HRC & OHR Annual Report
 - i) Chair asks Todd if current Chair suffices for formality since some of the report is from before she was a Commissioner
 - (1) This works; Todd can also make note of who was Chair at the time of the report
 - (2) Todd's responsibility to present the Annual Report; no need to vote on it
 - (3) Chair asks Todd to provide a summary page for the Annual Report
 - (a) Todd will work on an executive summary
 - ii) Commissioner asks if there is a way to better share the Annual Report with the general public
 - (1) OHR staff says that all reports, resolutions, letters, etc. are available online currently
 - (2) Lyndele will help ensure the summary is in plain language
 - c) Community Engagement: 3/24/2022 Town Hall Meeting planning
 - i) 185 responses to the survey
 - ii) Based on some of the responses, Chair suggests having some kind of FAQ page on the website about what the Commission can and cannot do
 - (1) OHR staff says FAQ page already exists, and asks for feedback regarding questions that could be added to it
 - iii) Chair would like to practice how the Town Hall will work; asks OHR staff if they can practice with Communications before the Town Hall
 - (1) Todd can ask Communications after this meeting if they can help get the meeting set up before the date
 - iv) Chair asks OHR staff about format of meeting
 - (1) Could do Zoom webinar like this regular meeting with attendees and panelists, or a Zoom meeting in which everyone is a panelist
 - (a) Only Zoom meetings allow for breakout rooms
 - (b) OHR staff can ask Communications about more capabilities once the Commission decides on webinar vs meeting
 - (2) Chair would like to have a Zoom meeting for the breakout rooms, though this would be more difficult in terms of control and keeping track of minutes in breakout rooms
 - v) Chair opens floor to thoughts regarding Town Hall format
 - (1) Commissioner suggests continuing the webinar format because this is the first Town Hall, Communications is comfortable with the format, and it allows for more control
 - (a) Could do 30-minute time slots, and if not everyone gets to speak, that means another Town Hall is necessary
 - (b) Can adjust as needed for next time
 - (2) OHR staff proposes breaking the time down into specific questions—introducing a topic, then having public comment for 30min blocks where people can speak for 3 minutes
 - vi) Chair asks OHR staff if Communications can know how many people

have registered

- (1) Have not yet decided on a meeting format yet, so the link probably has not yet been posted

vii) Chair asks whether there could be main speakers at the event

- (1) John Sales volunteered to partner
- (2) Commissioner suggests asking any stakeholder involved in housing to speak
- (3) Commissioner says that since this is the first meeting, it may be beneficial to have more listening time rather than having many speakers

viii) Once a meeting format is chosen, **Todd and Lachen can write up a release to advertise the Town Hall and its topic**

ix) Commissioner suggests talking about the Town Hall at the next City Council meeting

- (1) Commissioner suggests asking Councilor Michael Payne to announce the Town Hall at the City Council meeting
 - (a) **Jessica will ask him to do this**

x) The Town Hall meeting will be in a webinar format

xi) Number of topics discussed will depend on how people members of the public want to speak

- (1) Top 3 on poll were emergency housing; affordable public/subsidized housing; and accessibility for people with disabilities

xii) The two meeting topics will be emergency housing and quality of affordable public/subsidized housing

- (1) Can build in a little flexibility to allow for additional discussion related to the two topics

xiii) Commissioner suggests having levels of conversation: what is going well, what is going poorly, how to improve

- (1) Commissioner suggests introducing discussion with these three points rather than setting aside specific time for each

xiv) Could set aside ~45min for each topic, then have open time at the end for additional discussion

xv) Can keep discussion more controlled by limiting speakers to 3min

xvi) Commissioner suggests publishing the Town Hall format and questions to the public ahead of time to give them time to formulate responses

xvii) Summary

- (1) Webinar
- (2) 45min for each topic, 3min per speaker
- (3) Send notification of meeting and its format to Councilor Payne to share with public beforehand

d) 4/23/2022 HRC Retreat planning

i) Chair wants to have a training for Commissioners

- (1) Goal is to walk out of retreat with 3-5 topics to focus on with a Councilmember supporting

ii) Commissioner recommends retreat points of discussion

- (1) Asks if budget will be passed by then
 - (a) Probably not, as the Governor must pass state budget in

mid-April

- (2) Suggests deciding what to do with Town Hall during the retreat
- (3) Suggests making a plan for outreach if community event information is available
 - (a) Fridays After 5 may be back
- iii) Commissioner asks if it is too late to get free training from Right to Be (name changed from Hollaback)
 - (1) **Lyndele will contact them**
 - (2) Right to Be bystander training would be useful for the HRC to help build up the group and have a baseline framework for anti-racism work
- iv) OHR staff brings up annual obligation to explain FOIA (Freedom of Information Act), conflicts of interest, VA Public Records Act
 - (1) **Can ask Allyson Davies to talk about these**
- v) Commissioner proposes renting a Charlottesville City picnic shelter to gather in person, weather permitting
 - (1) Would be harder to record meeting and allow the public access
 - (2) Commissioner says in the past, the retreat has not been recorded
 - (3) OHR staff does not think any in-person gatherings are allowed at the moment
 - (a) Also, it is a public meeting, so although it does not need to be broadcasted, there must be minutes
- vi) Commissioner says there are two types of bystander trainings listed on the website: bystander intervention in public spaces and bystander training in the workplace
 - (1) Reads the descriptions for each
 - (2) Chair also had in mind the bystander intervention to stop police-sponsored violence training instead
 - (3) **Lyndele will ask about availability for the police-sponsored violence training**

6) COMMISSIONER UPDATES

a) Lyndele

- i) Her organization, the National Radio Astronomy Observatory, works with the National Society of Black Physicists
 - (1) Organization will sponsor their annual conference in Charlottesville, which will happen 11/6-11/9 in Downtown Charlottesville (Paramount, Jefferson School, etc.)
 - (a) City of Charlottesville and NSBP event
 - (2) There will be about 500 Black physicists, with 300 of them being undergrad and grad students
 - (3) Students would like to work with local schoolchildren, so they are trying to bring schoolchildren to the Paramount to interact with the undergrad and grad students
- ii) NSBP could collaborate with the HRC
 - (1) OHR staff is open to visitors at OHR during the conference
 - (2) Commissioner suggests some kind of letter or welcome statement
 - (3) Commissioner recommends bringing this up to the City Schools Superintendent as soon as possible to coordinate with people in

the city

- (a) Could give them a tour of Charlottesville City Schools facilities

(4) Todd and Jessica could greet them downtown

- iii) **Lyndele will ask them what kind of collaboration is possible**

b) Kathryn

- i) Had sent email about opportunity for civil rights pilgrimage from Charlottesville

(1) May be full at this point

- ii) Lots of opportunity for community engagement with the Swords into Plowshares project (project to transform the Lee statue material)

(1) There are many ambassadors that come to various community groups for feedback

(2) HRC could attend or host a meeting facilitating or giving feedback

(3) They specifically want to hear about public spaces

- iii) Kathryn has contact information

(1) Lyndele's workplace would likely be interested; **Kathryn will forward her the information**

(2) Could invite ambassadors to an HRC meeting

- iv) Chair says that various people have asked about

partnerships/collaboration with the HRC, so she encourages

Commissioners to invite interested people to an HRC meeting to present

7) MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC

a) PUBLIC COMMENT

i) John Sales

(1) Charlottesville Redevelopment and Housing Authority Executive Director

(2) Welcomes communication between the HRC and CRHA to better serve residents of the community

b) COMMISSION RESPONSE TO MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC

i) Jessica

(1) Invites Mr. Sales to the Town Hall next Thursday, 3/24

(2) **Will send him more information via email**

8) NEXT STEPS

a) Jessica

i) **Help Kathryn codify a draft of new HRC rules**

ii) **Write Michael Payne to announce Town Hall meeting and its format during the next City Council meeting**

iii) **Send John Sales more information about the 3/24 Town Hall**

b) Kathryn

i) **Codify a draft of new HRC rules with Jessica**

ii) **Send contact information for Swords into Plowshares project ambassadors to Lyndele and Jessica**

c) Lyndele

i) **Help create plain language version of CY2020 Annual Report executive summary**

ii) **Contact Right to Be about giving a police-sponsored violence training during the HRC Retreat**

- iii) Ask NSBP what kind of collaboration with the HRC would be possible
- d) Todd
 - i) Add names of previous Chairs in CY2020 draft and create draft of an executive summary
 - ii) Talk to Communications about Town Hall setup
 - iii) Work with Lachen to publicize notification about Town Hall to the public
 - iv) Ask Allyson Davies to talk at the retreat

9) ADJOURN

- a) Meeting adjourned at 8:21 pm