



**Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes
Regular Meeting
July 20, 2023
City Space, 100 5th Street NE, Charlottesville, VA 22902
6:30 pm**

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1. WELCOME

- a. CALL TO ORDER
 - i. Chair, Jessica Harris, called the meeting to order at 6:37 pm
- b. ROLL CALL
 - i. Jessica Harris
 - ii. Ernest Chambers
 - iii. Mary Bauer
 - iv. Wolfgang Keppley
 - v. Kathryn Laughon
 - vi. Suzanne Lynn
 - 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.*

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 Regular Meeting minutes from 06/15/2023
 - i. Vote
 - 1. In favor: 5
 - 2. Opposed: 0
 - 3. Abstained: 2
 - ii. Motion to approve minutes passes

4. BUSINESS MATTERS

- a. Presentation and Q&A with Capt. Mark Van Meter: Charlottesville Salvation Army Expansion
 - i. The Salvation Army is working on a building campaign to expand its Ridge St. location
 - ii. The Salvation Army provides services in the form of emergency assistance with utilities, food baskets, meals, clothing, etc.
 - 1. Food kitchen on Ridge St. served about 60,000 meals last year
 - iii. A Salvation Army needs survey concluded that the current building does

- not have enough capacity to address current need in the community
- iv. The Salvation Army has launched a \$22 million community capital fundraising project with the intent to become a primary provider of social services in the community
- v. Capt. Van Meter presents proposed building plans for the new facility
 - 1. Current residents will stay in place until the new primary facility is constructed, at which point residents will move to the new facility and the old building will be demolished
 - 2. Black Oak tree currently on the property will be preserved
- vi. Building information
 - 1. Chapel capacity will remain the same
 - 2. Emergency shelter will go from 58 beds to 114 beds
 - 3. Soup kitchen will go from 80 seats to 120 seats
 - 4. Transitional housing will go from 9 to 7 units, but no change in number of beds
 - 5. Additional increase in multi-purpose room space and classroom/meeting room capacity
- vii. Goal to break ground by early summer 2024, then complete the entire project in about 20 months
- viii. Q&A
 - 1. Commissioner asks about Salvation Army's commitment to equitable access to services, especially for LGBTQIA-identifying individuals
 - a. Mission statement says that the Salvation Army does not refuse service based on sexual orientation, gender, religious background, etc.
 - b. There is a room in the current shelter dedicated to LGBTQ+ individuals, and there are already plans to have that room in the new project, as well
 - c. Another Commissioner asks whether the Salvation Army is committed to allowing gay families to stay together as other families are permitted to do
 - i. Capt. Van Meter says the Salvation Army will provide opportunities for families of any sexual orientation to stay together
 - d. Another Commissioner asks for clarification about the room for LGBTQ+ families
 - i. LGBTQ+ families would be provided a traditional apartment if they are in the traditional program; if there is an individual who identifies as transgender, staff will discuss their security with them
 - 1. Transitional apartments, if available, will still be useable by LGBTQ+ individuals
 - 2. Commissioner asks what people need to do to access services and remain in good standing, and which policies are imposed by the organization versus local, changeable policies
 - a. All policies are filtered through Social Services

- departments in the divisional level in DC and territorial level in Atlanta; the Salvation Army tries to adhere to national policies in their state programs
- b. One variation in the current shelter is setting up a more intensive case management system to help individuals set goals and eventually remove the need for staying in the shelter, which has become an issue in the past
 - c. Commissioner asks about front-end screening, requirements, and activities
 - i. Only current requirement is that there is an available bed for incoming individuals
 - ii. Future requirement that will likely not be implemented until construction is completed is that individuals will arrive on a 21- or 28-day emergency shelter status during which they will meet with case workers and show that they are moving forward on their goals
 - iii. There is occasional drug and alcohol testing
 - iv. Individuals are assessed as they come; they are permitted to use substances so long as usage does not interfere with non-disruptive communication with staff and other residents
 - v. The efficacy of casework is shown by Capt. Van Meter's previous 36-bed shelter, during which over 200 individuals gained financial stability in 3 years
3. Commissioner asks about the economic makeup of Capt. Van Meter's previous shelter location
- a. The Panhandle of West Virginia is an area comprised of old coal mining and oil communities, and housing was much cheaper than Charlottesville
 - i. Team recognizes this difference and will help individuals find housing
 - b. Capt. Van Meter clarifies that the team is in charge of implementing the policy's details and may return with different needs for the policy to be successful
 - i. Says that an individual's current financial state may not allow them to live in Charlottesville, so it may be necessary to look into other communities
4. Commissioner encourages Capt. Van Meter to further learn about LGBTQ+ issues, as there have been concerns about the Salvation Army in the past regarding equitable treatment
- a. Capt. Van Meter says there will be a new Social Service Director position who will oversee social services of the Salvation Army; he will make it a priority for them to engage with the LGBTQ+ community
 - b. Another Commissioner asks if an apartment is not available, whether a transgender woman would be

housed with women and allowed to use female restrooms, etc.

- i. The Salvation Army will follow federal and state laws; offers to connect the Commission with headquarters
 - ii. Intends to engage with each individual about their own specific needs
 - c. Commissioner asks Capt. Van Meter for a more detailed answer on the equitable treatment of transgender individuals and says that she personally would not support the expansion of a facility that runs on a discriminatory basis
 - i. Capt. Van Meter will send his response to Victoria or the HRC
5. Commissioner says that language is important, and that Charlottesville has specific needs that Capt. Van Meter and the Salvation Army must be aware of
6. Commissioner asks how the number of beds for the new shelter was decided, and whether there are any limitations imposed by the property is designed for future expansion
 - a. There is a small area for future expansion, but there probably will not be room for beds there; in an emergency situation, the multipurpose room could accommodate more beds, but the apartments will remain largely unchanged once the building is constructed
 - b. Could possibly build upward eventually, if money is available
7. Courtney Brown, staff person of the Office of Equity and Inclusion, asks if there is intent to include other organizations in the 21- or 28-day case management plan
 - a. She frequently works with community members who have previously been unhoused or incarcerated and believes it is important for organizations to work together
 - b. Capt. Van Meter clarifies that the time-capped plan will depend on each individual person's situation, and at the end of the 21 days, case workers will meet with the individual about how they are doing—the 21 days is not meant to be a limit of how long they are allowed to stay
 - c. Offers to meet once he is back in town
 - d. Would also like the new Social Service Director to focus on community organization partnerships
8. Commissioner asks how the Salvation Army will serve non-English speakers and whether they have an immigration status policy
 - a. Capt. Van Meter would like to have staff members who are bilingual in the future; so far, community members have helped serve non-English speaking individuals

- b. The shelter would need to run background checks on individuals for sexual violence and violence, but undocumented individuals are also welcomed and can work with case workers on their chosen goals
- 9. OHR Outreach Specialist acknowledges that the Salvation Army is the only shelter open year-round; asks about opportunities for collaboration so that this is not the only organization providing beds
 - a. There is no project currently in place
 - b. The Salvation Army's Advisory Board is very involved, and acquiring funding for satellite/winter shelters may be a good project to take up with them
 - i. It is all dependent on funding and resource staffing
- 10. Commissioner asks if there is a list of things that individuals must do when they arrive at the shelter
 - a. Capt. Van Meter is not completely sure of the intake process yet
 - i. Will send this information out
 - b. The shelter must do a basic-level sex offense background check
 - c. Another Commissioner asks whether all incoming individuals are given a background check
 - i. The shelter applies background checks and substance tests to every individual; they are not targeted
- 11. HRC Director asks how many of the 114 beds are congregate shelter versus individual rooms, as some individuals have needs that make congregate shelter difficult
 - a. There are 58 beds currently are divided between male and female
 - b. 56 beds will be added, with no loss of beds in the reduced 7 transitional apartments
 - c. Director asks whether there will still be more bunk beds than single beds
 - i. Congregate housing will like cubicles with three walls and a set of bunks on each side (four beds per cubicle) with storage space
 - ii. Each dorm floor will have multiple cubicles
- 12. Commissioner asks about the capacity of each transitional apartment
 - a. Currently, there are four apartments with one bedroom and two apartments with two bedrooms
 - b. In the new shelter, there will be seven units, each with two bedrooms
- 13. Commissioner asks what the capacity of the shelter will be once construction begins
 - a. The current building will remain with full capacity during construction of the new building

14. Commissioner asks what concerns and needs the public has raised about this project
 - a. Capt. Van Meter expects capacity to be full quickly in the new shelter
 - b. One concern has been the position of the parking lot; the parking lot exit is near the driveways of residents on 4th street, so the Salvation Army is considering options to maintain manageable traffic flow
 - c. Commissioner asks about consideration of the playground
 - i. Capt. Van Meter says the closest playground is in Tonsler Park, so he says it would be important to upgrade this playground for children in the program
 - ii. The Salvation Army cares about security and wants the new facility to be more secure than the previous through a gate and additional security for playgrounds
 - iii. If the project were to receive a grant for a new playground, Capt. Van Meter could write it into the construction plans for the new facility
15. Capt. Van Meter welcomes concerns and recommendations directly to him, which he will relay to his team
 - a. The Commission would like follow-up regarding intake processes and the treatment of LGBTQ+ individuals
 - b. Commissioner asks what would happen if an individual arrived who spoke a language other than English or Spanish
 - i. Currently, the shelter would probably try to use online translation programs like Google
 - ii. Could also reach out to staff at the divisional office in emergency concerns
 - iii. Once there is more case management, there is a need for staff on hand who can provide translation services
- ix. Chair asks Commission for their thoughts on recommending the project to Council
 1. Commissioner asks what the role of the HRC is in ensuring that the Salvation army treat people equitably
 - a. Director says that if someone is pursuing housing there and feels they have been discriminated against, they can file a complaint with the OHR
 - b. If an individual files with the OHR and the OHR's investigation determines there being no reasonable cause, the individual may appeal to the Commission and the Commission can hold an appeal hearing
 - c. Commissioner would like to see the Salvation Army's policies in writing to ensure the Commission agrees with them

- d. Another Commissioner would personally like to see an explicit non-discrimination statement for LGBTQ+ individuals, as well as a Language Access Plan
 - e. Another Commissioner reminds Commission that Capt. Van Meter is new to the area and has yet to determine the community's specific needs
- 2. Chair says that the letter to Council supporting or not supporting the project is a time-sensitive matter
- 3. Commissioner would like to support the project so long as the Salvation Army commits to non-discrimination of LGBTQ+ individuals
 - a. Another Commissioner would like to give Capt. Van Meter a chance to respond to the Commission about their concerns within the next month
- 4. Future Council vote is about a special use permit for the project—the Commission has about two weeks to submit a letter
- 5. Director notes that the Commission could support the expansion while also requesting a clear policy
 - a. Commissioner says she personally would not support housing construction that is discriminatory against LGBTQ+ individuals
 - b. Another Commissioner notes that the proposal has already been met with contention, and asks at what point the Commission would be satisfied with the Salvation Army to support the shelter
 - c. Chair notes that Capt. Van Meter could get back to the Commission soon with more detailed answers; asks the Commission what they now need
 - i. Commissioner says that she would like an explicit non-discrimination statement
 - ii. Another Commissioner says she would be comfortable writing a letter of support for the project while also saying it wants the non-discrimination statement
- 6. Director says the first reading of the special use permit request occurs at the 8/7 Council meeting, and calls attention to the Ordinance Sec. 2-435(d) which states that the Commission can, upon majority vote, request the Director file a complaint of discrimination in situations where there is no named complainant
 - a. Therefore, the Commission can still hold the Salvation Army accountable later on
- 7. Commissioner notes that Salvation Army USA has a non-discrimination statement on their website, which is what the Commission will likely receive as a response
 - a. Another Commissioner notes this will not suffice for her; she would like clear language and proactivity, as well as examples

- b. Director says the HRC can request a standard operating procedure when an individual presenting as a transgender man/woman seeks shelter
 - 8. Commissioner suggests this request be separate from the letter supporting the special use permit
 - 9. Commissioner says it is inappropriate for the Salvation Army to use another resident for translation
 - a. Would support a letter supporting the special use permit that stipulates there also being a statement to equity and language access
 - b. Another Commissioner adds that these statements should be public
 - 10. Outreach Specialist says that there are undocumented individuals currently at the shelter who successfully been able to access services; it is not acceptable to ask residents to translate, but almost no social services in the City have Spanish-speaking staff
 - a. Salvation Army could use an online language service
 - 11. Commissioner says he does not want to give opposers of the project more reason to prevent it from happening; would like to request the information from Capt. Van Meter and be able to send a letter to Council without contingencies
 - 12. Director says the Commission will have a publicly-noticed work session on 8/3 to be able to discuss the letter's contents
 - a. This would allow Capt. Van Meter time to respond beforehand
 - 13. Mary, Kathryn, Lyndele, and Wolfgang will draft message requesting a non-discrimination statement
 - a. Jessica will send this to Capt. Van Meter
- b. CHAIR UPDATE
 - i. Would like to set norms regarding meeting flow
 - 1. Returning to in-person meetings has created difficulties, and it would help to have agreement on how discussions occur to maintain organization and respect
 - 2. Commissioner says that she would personally be fine with the Chair creating norms then showing them to the other Commissioners
 - 3. Commissioners agree to all bring ideas for norms to discuss at the next work session
 - 4. Director suggests codifying these norms as a resolution or addition to Rules and Procedures
- c. OHR STAFF REPORT
 - i. Outreach and Administrative Specialist
 - 1. Office of Equity and Inclusion had open house on 7/7/23, which gave the OHR, Home to Hope, and Downtown Job Center community partners to all interact with one another
 - 2. Animated OHR video is complete and posted on the City's Facebook page; will soon be posted to the OHR website
 - a. Trying to get it posted on other platforms, as well

3. There are events coming up that the OHR will be tabling (see calendar in agenda packet):
 - a. Cville Sabroso
 - b. Chihamba
 - c. Pride
4. On 8/5, the OHR will be tabling at Westhaven Day, though Todd and Victoria will be out of town
 - a. If no Commissioners can attend, Victoria can ask a community partner
 - b. Victoria will send out more information about Westhaven Day, as well as the animated video
5. Asks if it would be useful to schedule times during the month to talk individually to Commissioners about relevant projects and questions
 - a. Commissioner asks if there are plans to invite the new ADA Coordinator to speak
 - i. Outreach Specialist will be helping Paul Rudacille (ADA Coordinator) on ADA outreach, so getting him to speak with the Commission would be a great idea
- ii. Director
 1. Added a number of individuals served section in the monthly data
 2. Says legislative recommendations will occur in September
 - a. General recommendations to Council in October based off work during the year
 - b. Recommends coming up with questions and requesting community members/service providers to answer these questions so that the Commission has a quality product at the end of the year
 - c. Offers the OHR as a way for the HRC to contact other service providers
 3. Will not be present at the next work session

5. WORK SESSION

- a. Reports from Commission liaisons to housing groups
 - i. Wolfgang – Charlottesville DSA
 1. Anti-eviction work is pivoting from trying to connect individuals with existing funds for rent to figuring out how to help tenants facing eviction
 2. VA Equity Center created a tool to visualize landlords by count of eviction (Evictor's Catalogue)
 3. Chair asks for potential actions
 - a. DSA is looking to organize around tenant's rights and organize Know Your Rights session across the City; HRC could potentially try to partner to offer space for them
- b. Confirmation of next work session 08/03/2023
 - i. Will occur at 6:30pm
 - ii. Chair would like to discuss about strategies for creating a product for the

end of the year

- c. NEW BUSINESS: Legislative Agenda Recommendations to Council: Planning for expert panel in August
 - i. Director suggested assembling an expert panel to come up with legislative recommendations
 - 1. There is a list of community partners
 - 2. Asks for ideas of how to create legislative recommendations
 - ii. Director suggests looking at Resolution A23-1 about housing priorities to come up with legislative questions and think of who could answer those questions
 - iii. Commissioner says the Commission could have the option of not submitting any recommendations
 - 1. Would like to ask CLIHC, LAJC, and PHAR what their priorities are
 - iv. Commissioner suggests looking at the recommendations of other organizations and supporting those instead
 - 1. Another Commissioner suggests reaching out to all of the organizations with whom they are currently partnering with liaisons
 - v. Director asks Commissioners to clarify how they would be reaching out to these organizations and whether it would be helpful to invite a Councilor who is working on recommendations to come to a Commission meeting
 - 1. Commissioner suggests simply sending an email
 - 2. Outreach Specialist says Michael Payne used to be very involved in DSA and affordable housing, so he may be a good Councilor to connect with
 - vi. Chair supports idea of inviting expert panel, as well as invite Councilor Payne to a meeting
 - 1. Current list of contacts includes the Charlottesville Public Housing Association of Residents (PHAR), Charlottesville Low-Income Housing Coalition (CLIHC), Livable Cville, the CRHA Board, the Charlottesville Planning Commission, Fifeville Neighborhood Association, the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), and the Piedmont Housing Alliance (PHA)
 - 2. Commissioner suggests adding LAJC
 - a. Mary will send email reminder to Jessica
 - 3. Jessica will draft message to them explaining the HRC's housing goals and requesting their legislative priorities in a panel discussion
 - a. Todd will help draft
 - 4. Commissioner asks format of panel
 - a. Could be in person or on Zoom
 - b. Each panelist could have five to ten minutes to present their legislative agenda, with time for questions
 - c. Logistics will be TBD, but will include opportunity for presenting, questions, and asking what the Commission can do to support them
 - d. Can also invite Councilor Payne to this discussion

- e. Commissioner asks for a time estimate to tell service providers
- f. This panel is for 8/17/23

6. MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC

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

7. COMMISSIONER UPDATES

- a.

8. NEXT STEPS

- a. All Commissioners
 - i. Prepare ideas for norms for how meetings are run for discussion at next work session
- b. Mary, Kathryn, Lyndele, and Wolfgang
 - i. Draft email to Capt. Van Meter requesting explicit statement of commitment to non-discrimination, as well as other relevant information (note that work session will occur 8/3)
- c. Mary
 - i. Send email to Jessica with LAJC info for panel discussion
- d. Jessica
 - i. Send request for information to Capt. Van Meter
 - ii. Draft email/letter with Todd to service providers requesting their legislative priorities in a panel discussion
 - 1. Also invite Michael Payne
- e. Todd
 - i. Help Jessica draft contact with community organizations
- f. Victoria
 - i. Send Commissioners more information about Westhaven Day, the animated OHR video, and offer of individual meetings with Commissioners
- g. Work Session 8/3/23
 - i. Draft letter to Council supporting special use permit to construct Salvation Army Expansion
 - ii. Discuss norms for meetings
 - iii. Prepare plans for 8/17/23 panel discussion

9. ADJOURN

- a. Meeting adjourned at 8:56 pm