



**Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes
Regular Meeting
September 21, 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 6:35 pm
- b. ROLL CALL
 - i. Jessica Harris
 - ii. Ernest Chambers
 - iii. Jeanette Abi-Nader
 - iv. Mary Bauer
 - v. Kathryn Laughon
 - vi. Suzanne Lynn
 - vii. Andrew Orban
 - viii. Lyndelee 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 08/17/2023
 - i. Vote
 - 1. In favor: 5
 - 2. Opposed: 0
 - 3. Abstained: 3
 - ii. Motion to approve minutes passes

4. BUSINESS MATTERS

- a. CHAIR UPDATE
 - i. Decided with HRC Director that meeting norms will be written on the back of Commissioner nametags instead of formalized in a resolution
- b. Lyndelee announces she is stepping down from her position as a Commissioner to allow for more diversity within the HRC
 - i. Is still willing to do work on a volunteer basis
 - ii. Commissioner asks how the Commission may ensure diversity with the

- next new Commissioner
 - iii. Members of the Commission have often been recruited via word-of-mouth
 - iv. Director confirms that this is a valid method to recruit, though Council does official appointments; also says there is merit to being an ally on the Commission
- c. OHR STAFF REPORT -- Director
 - i. Acknowledges Outreach and Administrative Specialist's final HRC meeting and essential role in the Office of Human Rights
 - 1. Outreach Specialist has been attending numerous events in the past month in behalf of the HRC and OHR
 - ii. ADA Transition Plan is currently being revised and changes in the City are being worked on
 - iii. Requests that the Commission use December or January's work session for an additional town hall for the ADA Transition Plan so that the plan can receive more public attention
 - 1. Outreach Specialist explains that the City is working with a consultant who will be facilitating the meeting, and he will more likely be able to attend the January meeting
 - 2. Director will strongly encourage ADA team to take the 01/04/24 work session
 - iv. Commissioner asks about ADA Coordinator position listing
 - 1. Is likely an assistant position
 - v. Asks about Commissioners' availability on 12/21/23 for regular meeting
 - 1. Commissioners decide to hold the regular meeting on the usual work session December date on 12/07/23
 - a. This is also when nominations for officers will occur for the election in January
 - 2. No meeting will be held on 12/21/23
 - vi. Asks Chair if she is planning on doing public comment at the Council meeting on 10/02/23 to bring attention to the HRC's legislative recommendations
 - 1. She plans to be there
 - vii. Usual monthly report is in the agenda packet
 - viii. Commissioner asks about the date of the end of her term
 - 1. Several Commissioners' terms will end on 02/28/24
 - 2. All terms will now end at the end of February of a given year

5. WORK SESSION

- a. Legislative agenda recommendations
 - i. Opportunity for clarifying questions
 - 1. Commissioner asks if taking other organizations' recommendations is how the HRC usually submits its legislative recommendations
 - a. This is not how the Commission has always done it; this year, the Chair, Vice-Chair, and HRC Director met to organize the points made during the panel discussion
 - 2. Commissioner has concern whether there should be more specificity by asking for amendments for laws rather than asking general requests

- a. For example, provision to prohibit mid-lease increases—it is not specifically prohibited by the VA Residential Landlord and Tenant Act, but it is clearly prohibited by contract law
 - b. Asks whether this should say “*Amend* the VA Residential Landlord and Tenant Act to prohibit mid-lease rent increases”
 - c. Chair says they have considered this issue, but they were not able to find several references
 - d. **Will amend recommendations to specify that the VA Residential Landlord & Tenant Act should be amended to what is stated in 1.c.**
 - ii. Those in favor of the proposed legislative recommendations
 1. Commissioner approves of the recommendations and of the proposed amendment
 - iii. Those opposed to the proposed legislative recommendations
 1. None
 - iv. Vote
 1. In favor: 8
 2. Can live with: 0
 3. Opposed: 0
 - v. Motion to approved proposed legislative recommendations with amendment passes
 - vi. Director expresses gratitude to all Commissioners’ and staff members’ collaborative effort in creating the recommendations
- b. Action updates
- i. Commissioner says that CRHA presented at the 09/18/23 Council meeting about an analysis of their properties and expansion; offers to share notes from presentation
 1. Sounded positive for the future sustainability of CRHA
 2. Director asks whether CRHA is still discussing food cooperatives within their development plan
 - a. The Urban Agricultural Collective is expanding its farm site footprints to put a farm in Crescent Hall; also, there is property on the Downtown Mall that will be set aside for a food co-op
 - b. Cultivate Charlottesville will be collaborating in these projects
 - ii. Commissioner says that zoning code is still up for discussion with the Planning Commission and Council; CLIHC has some specific requests regarding supporting the zoning code and asks that Council add to it to prevent further displacement in historically Black neighborhoods, allow for more density in historic exclusionary neighborhoods, and expand affordability (including tax abatements for affordable units)
 1. **Kathryn will resend email about this topic**
 2. CLIHC sent out coalition letter, Livable Cville has a statement, as well as an FAQ for those looking to support
 3. Would like to see the Commission take action in some form, but also encourages Commissioners as individuals to support a

more equitable zoning code

- a. This could take the form of a letter and statement during a Council meeting
- b. Once email from Kathryn is received, Jessica, Kathryn, and Jeanette will work on a draft letter to Council at the 10/05/23 work session
- 4. Another Commissioner asks about an addition being added to the zoning that would limit small food equity entrepreneurs, creating the extra step acquiring the special use permit
 - a. Will look into this further
- c. Confirmation of next work session on 10/05/23
 - i. Time will be used to draft letter to Council regarding CLIHC's recommendations for a more equitable zoning code
- d. New business
 - i. Commissioner asks whether the HRC/OHR has within its budget to purchase its own tent; raises concern from Sabroso festival that the OHR tent was under the Police and Civilian Oversight Board's tent and thereby being associated with the police
 - ii. Director explains that the OHR has two unmarked tents, a large OHR sign, and a marked tablecloth
 - iii. Commissioner suggests that OHR either have its own marked tent or not be under the same tent as the PCOB
 - 1. Another Commissioner explains that the OHR's table was clearly marked, though agrees there is a point to have a completely separate setup

6. MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC

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

7. COMMISSIONER UPDATES

- a. Jeanette
 - i. At the 09/18/23 Council meeting, Cultivate Charlottesville presented on their Food Equity Initiative Report to Council, a partnership with Council on the Power to Grow campaign which is an effort to bring an urban garden and farm site to Booker T. Washington park
 - ii. There was a robust community engagement process gathering the public's knowledge about Booker T. Washington park
 - iii. Commissioners interested to learn more

8. NEXT STEPS

- a. Todd/Jessica
 - i. Amend legislative recommendations with more specific language about VA Residential Landlord and Tenant Act law
 - ii. Send to Council
 - iii. Speak during public comment at 10/02/23 City Council meeting (Jessica)
- b. Next work session 10/05/23
 - i. Draft letter to Council about equity in zoning process
- c. Jeanette

- i. Send out more information about CRHA's development plan and Cultivate Charlottesville's Food Equity Initiative Report
 - d. Kathryn
 - i. Resend email about zoning code
- 9. **ADJOURN**
 - a. Meeting adjourned at 7:18 pm