



**Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes
Regular Meeting
January 18, 2024
City Space, 100 5th Street NE, Charlottesville, VA 22902
6:30 pm**

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1. WELCOME

- a. CALL TO ORDER
 - i. Vice Chair Ernest Chambers called the meeting to order at 6:36 pm
- b. ROLL CALL
 - i. Ernest Chambers
 - ii. Jeanette Abi-Nader
 - iii. Charley Burton (virtual)
 - iv. Wolfgang Keppley
 - v. Kathryn Laughon
 - vi. Suzanne Lynn
- 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. OFFICER ELECTIONS

- a. Chaired by the HRC Director during the officer election process
- b. Nominating Committee presents the slate of nominees:
 - i. Ernest Chambers: Chair
 - ii. Wolfgang Keppley: Vice Chair
- c. Chair election
 - i. Jeanette makes a motion to nominate Ernest as Chair
 - ii. Kathryn seconds
 - iii. Ernest accepts nomination
 - iv. No additional nominations from the floor
 - v. Vote:
 - 1. In favor: 5
 - 2. Opposed: 0
 - 3. Abstained: 1
 - vi. Ernest Chambers becomes the new Chair of the Commission
- d. Vice Chair election
 - i. Jeanette makes a motion to nominate Wolfgang as Vice Chair
 - ii. Suzanne seconds
 - iii. Wolfgang accepts nomination
 - iv. No additional nominations from the floor
 - v. Vote:
 - 1. In favor: 6

2. Opposed: 0
3. Abstained: 0
- vi. Wolfgang Keppley becomes the new Vice Chair of the Commission
- e. Ernest resumes leading meeting as new HRC Chair

3. MINUTES

- a. Review of Regular Meeting minutes from 12/7/23
 - i. Vote
 1. In favor: 5
 2. Opposed: 0
 3. Abstained: 1
 - ii. Motion to approve minutes passes
- b. Review of Work Session minutes from 1/4/24
 - i. Vote
 1. In favor: 5
 2. Opposed: 0
 3. Abstained: 1
 - ii. Motion to approve minutes passes

4. BUSINESS MATTERS

- a. CHAIR UPDATE
 - i. No updates
- b. OHR STAFF REPORT
 - i. Outreach Specialist
 1. Community Walk in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr. occurred this past weekend and was a success; one Commissioner attended
 2. Upcoming events included in the agenda packet
 3. December outreach report is up to date
 4. Still conducting one-on-ones; reach out if able to meet
 5. Rolled out a newsletter today for the Office
 - a. Subscriptions to future publications will be possible soon
 - ii. Director
 1. Report is attached
 2. HRC Annual Retreat and Annual Planning meeting is upcoming
 - a. Going to interview three potential facilitators; will review them with the Chair and Vice Chair
 - b. Will likely in March, likely on a Saturday (3-4hrs)
 - c. Will be sending a poll out to the Commission and the public asking what issues are most important; can review the results of the poll at the retreat
 - i. Commission poll could also include dates for the retreat after facilitators add their availability
 - d. Probably will have a single larger meeting in March instead of having a regular meeting and work session
 3. Commissioners should let Todd know if they would like a personal email to be added to the group email list for the Commission
 - a. City emails must stay for FOIA purposes
 4. Commissioner says she is generally opposed to facilitators

because they seem like an unnecessary expense, and sometimes their facilitations include unneeded activities

- a. Chair says it will be a challenge to find a facilitator who does the same things the Commission does
- b. He would like a history lesson during the retreat
 - i. Would take about an hour, so the rest of the time can be spent making plans for the year
- c. Chair says he and OHR staff will continue to talk about facilitators and ensure the meeting is focused

5. COMMISSIONER UPDATES

- a. Jeanette
 - i. Enjoyed attending the MLK Community Walk; says the organizers are planning to do a walk every month as a collaboration between the Albemarle and Charlottesville Equity Offices
 1. Commends the Office's outreach efforts
 2. Read notes from previous work session; **has been speaking with people at Piedmont Housing Alliance about the Virginia Housing Coalition's list of legislative priorities—will circulate**
 3. Joy Johnson and Sunshine Mathon have offered to speak to the Commission at some point, maybe closer to when the Commission submits new legislative recommendations

6. WORK SESSION

- a. ADA Transition Plan Information Session: Charlie Szold and Matthew Shapiro
 - i. Paul Rudacille could not attend tonight's meeting
 - ii. Matthew Shapiro presents relevant background information pertaining to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and types of disabilities
- b. Charlie Szold presents the logistical information about ADA Transition Plan requirements, schedule, public engagement, and survey
 - i. Confirms Commissioner question that process is occurring under the purview of Deputy City Manager Ashley Reynolds Marshall
 - ii. City Councilor how many residential street miles there are in Charlottesville
 1. Mr. Szold responds that the team analyzes every public right-of-way mile
 2. Is unsure what percentage of residential streets are sidewalked; the team only analyzes sidewalks
 - a. Will speak with Mr. Rudacille and the Public Works Department to see if they have a GIS layer
 3. Commissioner says this is a critical issue, as there are many streets with disappearing sidewalks
 4. Finding where sidewalks suddenly end was part of the project
 - iii. Commissioner confirms there is a systematic equity assessment when deciding on priorities
- c. Mr. Szold presents types of assessments and their findings
 - i. There are numerous findings, but this is normal for an older city like Charlottesville
 - ii. Commissioner asks about obstructions
 1. Obstructions that are not directly on the path (such as overhanging trees) count as obstructions

- d. Mr. Szold presents how the City is going to prioritize addressing deficiencies, taking into account deficiencies per mile, equity considerations, how trafficked the street is, etc.
 - i. Commissioner asks whether Mr. Szold believes there is enough money in the ADA budget
 - 1. Responds that no ADA Office has enough in their budget; is unsure how Charlottesville's budget compares to other cities
 - 2. Offers to look into this
 - 3. Says Charlottesville has its ADA Coordinator budget, but it can get complicated in that the budget could be under a different department, so it is difficult to find out how much money is being budgeted in a given city
 - 4. However, the fact that Charlottesville has an ADA Coordinator is a good sign
 - ii. Commissioner asks what is the best way to go about prioritizing sidewalks
 - 1. From an ADA perspective, he is unsure; it comes down to a City/community priority and will vary (ex. Increasing sidewalk access may be more important than fixing existing sidewalk access)
 - iii. Commissioner describes issue with snow not being cleared on sidewalks; asks whether this could be addressed from an ADA perspective
 - 1. Mr. Szold responds that this is the kind of feedback the team is looking to solicit in these types of venues and could get into report as a recommendation
 - 2. However, the report only carries the importance it is given by the City
 - 3. Mr. Shapiro adds that it could be possible to get community members to speak on issues like this issue
 - 4. Commissioner says the City did have people out clearing some sidewalks, though another relevant issue is clearing bike lanes
 - a. Another Commissioner responds it is very inconsistent
 - iv. Mr. Szold says the survey is still available
 - v. Commissioner asks whether City ADA team can do anything for CAT bus stops in the County
 - 1. Mr. Szold says probably not, though he is not entirely sure where money flows from
 - 2. Deputy City Manager for Social Equity Ashley Reynolds Marshall says if a bus stop is in the County, it is not necessarily VDOT (VDOT controls roads); CAT must get permission from the County to place any bus stop
 - a. If there is an issue in the County, it would be under the purview of the County Board of Supervisors and County Administrator
 - b. If it is UVA property, it is under the purview of the University
 - c. Each of these have their own ADA Coordinator who would need to create a plan for fixes

3. Director of Transit Garland Williams has asked them to do additional assessments on County bus stops for a more holistic perspective (but these assessments have not been done yet)
- vi. Commissioner confirms that facilities self-assessment includes schools and public buildings
- vii. Commissioner asks about Charlottesville census zones
 1. There are 11 zones, so it is the most granular level of data they have access to
- e. Mr. Szold introduces Dr. Jana Burke (not present), whose firm will provide low-cost recommendations for reaching ADA compliance in programs, services, and website
 - i. Commissioner asks for example of a program
 - ii. Something that is offered by the City, like a knitting club or Parks and Rec
- f. ADA Transition Plan Town Hall Discussion
 - i. Commissioner asks whether evacuation guidelines and emergency preparedness that were mentioned in the 2013 Transition Plan will be included
 1. This is something Dr. Burke will be revealing and providing recommendations on
 - ii. Commissioner talks about "inclusion beyond compliance" piece
 1. This is not necessarily included at the moment, but Mr. Szold encourages the Commission to forward along recommendations to include in the plan
 - iii. Mr. Shapiro encourages the Commission to consider an accessibility/disability lens whenever they take any actions or start any conversations, as there are likely challenges
 - iv. Commissioner asks about percentage of residents in Charlottesville with a disability that this plan would address
 1. The data should be easily accessible
 - v. Commissioner asks how this plan would impact invisible disabilities, including ones related to mental health
 1. Mr. Szold says programs and services would be the main relevant part, but there are also things like signage
 2. Commissioner asks about the inclusion of police interaction with individuals with mental health challenges
 - a. Not in this scope, though the Transition Plan is a living document, and it could be added to over time
 - b. Could scope and budget for this in future years
 - vi. Commissioner asks whether the team looked in all public transit besides CAT and the amount of Jaunt rides that are on time
 1. Mr. Szold says this is not the focus in this particular project, but there are opportunities to add to this report
 2. Mr. Shapiro adds that this report is like a starting point---there are many more ways to add to it
 - vii. Mr. Szold explains that this is a huge, multi-year project, so the team would like to prepare a specific road map to find the most useful areas to spend money
 1. Should produce the Right of Way Prioritization Plan in 1-2

months

- viii. Mr. Shapiro encourages the Commission to hold the government accountable for moving the plan forward in coming years
- ix. Commissioner asks about non-ADA compliant utility poles
 - 1. Mr. Szold says he is unsure why poles were placed where they are; explains how the relationship between Charlottesville and Dominion has already been discussed (ex. Wires sometimes hang down in the right of way), but this problem is between Charlottesville and Dominion
 - 2. Another Commissioner asks how other localities have addressed these kinds of issues
 - a. There are always competing priorities, and City regulations commonly go against ADA regulations
 - b. Requires constant vigilance from the community to hold the City accountable; requires constant advocacy and communication
 - 3. Mr. Szold adds that they are not non-compliant simply by being installed; if the sidewalk were extended by a foot or two, they would be fine
 - a. If something is non-compliant, must make sure that this was a conscious decision and there was a valid reason
- x. Mr. Shapiro asks the Commission whether there are any more areas that they, as Charlottesville residents, notice in the community that are not represented in the current plan
 - 1. Commissioner asks for more information on how to advocate for "inclusion beyond compliance"
 - a. Part of continued conversations with the City; Mr. Shapiro will continue to talk about how to incorporate true inclusion in Charlottesville
 - b. Will point out in the report that accessibility and compliance are not necessarily the same
 - 2. Commissioner asks whether facilities like churches that turn into winter homeless shelters also have to be compliant
 - a. It would partially fall under programs rather than facilities, but there would not be a full facility assessment for the church
 - b. Space for places like the Salvation Army will not be examined under this scope
 - c. Deputy City Manager confirms that the team would cover a City program run in a non-City space, but not a non-profit program
 - d. Mr. Shapiro says it is still possible to enter these non-City spaces to ask them to do an assessment; could be a good Commission role
 - 3. Commissioner mentions lack of lighting in the City
 - 4. Commissioner asks about where the funds come from for the ADA budget
 - a. Deputy City Manager says for the first time ADA Coordinator has control of a specific line item in the City

capital improvement plan (CIP)

- i. ADA sidewalks and curb cuts fund is controlled by Mr. Rudacille
 - ii. Another change made was moving ADA to the Office of Social Equity to foster more collaboration in other departments
 - b. Deputy City Manager recognizes that the funds allocated in the budget will only be enough to fix a few of the things from the plan, but the City Manager would still like to see the new Transition Plan to know how best to spend the money over the coming years
 - i. Prioritizing based on equity is already a must
 - ii. Since they are still waiting on the report, the line item for the ADA has not been significantly increased this year
 - g. Public Comment related to the ADA Transition Plan
 - i. None
 - h. Commission Response to Matters by the Public
 - i. None
 - i. Commissioners decide there will be no work session on 2/1/24
- 7. NEXT STEPS**
- a. Jeanette
 - i. Send out VA Housing Coalition Legislative Priorities
 - b. Next meeting: Regular meeting on 2/15/24
 - i. Todd will be virtual
- 8. ADJOURN**
- a. Meeting adjourned at 8:11 pm