



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

Click [HERE](#) to access rebroadcasts of past Human Rights Commission meetings on YouTube.

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1. WELCOME

- a. CALL TO ORDER
 - i. Chair, Ernest Chambers, called the meeting to order at 6:34 pm
- b. ROLL CALL
 - i. Ernest Chambers
 - ii. Wolfgang Keppley
 - iii. Charley Burton
 - iv. Kathryn Laughon
 - v. Suzanne Lynn
 - vi. Heather Roberson-Gaston
- 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. Unidentified virtual participant
 - 1. Comment made with perceived intention to disrupt the meeting
- b. COMMISSION RESPONSE TO MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC
 - i. Chair and Commissioners recognize that comment is offensive and inappropriate

3. MINUTES

- a. Review of Regular Meeting minutes from 2/15/24
 - i. Vote
 - 1. In favor: 6
 - 2. Opposed: 0
 - 3. Abstained: 0
 - ii. Motion to approve minutes passes
- b. Review of Annual Meeting minutes from 3/9/24
 - i. Vote
 - 1. In favor: 6
 - 2. Opposed: 0
 - 3. Abstained: 0
 - ii. Motion to approve minutes passes

4. BUSINESS MATTERS

- a. Chair update

- i. Expresses gratitude for OHR's Outreach Specialist sending out upcoming events
 - ii. Fridays After 5 are returning; suggests the OHR/HRC could set up a table outside the Office
- b. OHR Staff report
 - i. Outreach Specialist
 - 1. The Office has the permits/permissions needed to table during Fridays After 5
 - a. Would prefer there be a Commissioner present
 - 2. One-on-one meetings are still available
 - 3. Friday, 4/19/24 at 10am: panel discussion on conversations during conflict
 - 4. Sunday, 4/21/24 at 1pm in the Central Library: culminating panel discussion or the Community Read
 - 5. Thursday, 4/25 at 6pm in CitySpace (and Zoom): Fair Housing Know Your Rights presentation and Q&A session
 - a. Commissioners' presence could be valuable to share to the public how to engage with the HRC
 - 6. Reach out to Lily if interested in becoming more involved with planning
 - 7. Chair adds that the Haven is holding a program on 4/24/24 at 7pm: "Housing First: Homelessness & Program Access"
 - ii. Director
 - 1. HRC/OHR must send quarterly reports to Council, so the Director simply sends the monthly report from the agenda as the quarterly report

5. WORK SESSION

- a. COIA/FOIA/VPRA presentation
 - i. Rob Hubbard (Deputy City Attorney of Charlottesville) and Brittaney Nelson (FOIA Officer) present information related to FOIA mandates, FOIA requests, and how they relate to Commissioners' management of their public records
 - ii. Slides will be available for Commissioners
- b. Planning for homelessness expert panel
 - i. Work plan originally said panel would be about "housing, homelessness, and wraparound services"; Director asks if Commission would like to focus on one of those areas
 - ii. Previous panel featured, PACEM, the Haven, LAJC, and Livable Cville
 - 1. For new panel, Director recommends the Commission think about what information it is trying to gather, like compiling state-level and local-level recommendations for Council
 - 2. Commissioner suggests addressing systemic barriers in accessing housing
 - iii. Brainstorming for potential panelists
 - 1. James Freas, Deputy City Manager (previous Director of Neighborhood Development Services) has talked about housing before
 - 2. Matthew Murphy, Housing Navigator from Piedmont Housing Alliance

3. George Dillard, Jr., Chair of Albemarle-Charlottesville NAACP Housing Committee
4. Democratic Socialists of America also work on housing
- iv. Potential focus areas
 1. Commissioner attended event about barriers to re-entry in housing
 - a. Home to Hope is a good resource
 2. Commissioner asks about if there is a locality with similar structure that have used innovative solutions to help people struggling with housing
 - a. Another Commissioner adds that he would like to see solutions and success stories in addition to barriers to housing
 - b. Director says Commission could ask the Chairs/staff members of other HRCs in Virginia about what they are doing regarding housing in their communities/what legislative recommendations they have submitted
 - c. Commissioner says there is someone trying to compile a database of rental stock and how much it costs
 - i. The OHR did a big project with Code for Charlottesville in the past to index rental properties, primarily to assist housing navigators
 1. Difficult to upkeep because it requires constant updates
 - ii. Commissioner adds that data could be useful for things other than just rental prices
 - d. Commissioner asks about things with HUC
 - i. Units being too expensive to qualify for vouchers?
 - ii. Not keeping upkeeping units well enough to meet HUD standards?
- v. Director suggests drafting a list of questions to ask panelists, then sending them to the Chair and sending out invitations
 1. Commissioners decide from following list of invitees: Central Virginia Legal Aid Society (CVLAS), Salvation Army, LAJC, PACEM, CRHA, the Haven, Livable Cville, Staff working in housing from Region 10, Public Housing Association of Residents (PHAR), Piedmont Housing Authority (PHA), staff working in housing from UVA, Housing Opportunities Made Equal, Blue Ridge Area Coalition for the Homeless (BRACH), Charlottesville Low-Income Housing Coalition (CLIHC), James Freas, NAACP housing committee, DSA housing committee, organizations/staff working in re-entry space, including Home to Hope, the Fountain Fund, and representatives from other localities/commissions
 - a. Home to Hope is a group of three navigators who help people do what is needed when they re-enter the community, and housing is a big priority for them

- b. The Fountain Fund is primarily a small loan program, though it does do some mentoring and housing navigation
- c. UVA has the President's Council on UVA-Community Partnerships Advisory Committee

2. Final list:

- a. Region 10
- b. NAACP housing committee
- c. DSA housing committee
- d. Home to Hope
- e. PHA
- f. BRACH

3. Outreach Specialist suggests that the HRC can tell invitees that they will accept the first four respondents for the panel, and organizations who cannot attend may send in recommendations in writing

- a. Could also invite them to a different expert panel (July panel's focus is legislative recommendations)
- b. Commissioners discuss eviction focus with DSA and tenant rights

vi. Panel will occur June 6 at Carver Rec

vii. OHR Outreach Specialist will work on reaching out to potential panelist organizations

c. Annual work plan check-in

- i. Actions between meetings include June expert panel outreach and preparing draft Ordinance for review

d. Commission decides to not hold next work session on 5/2/24

- i. Director has been speaking with Erik Steinecker from HUD about Ordinance revisions
- ii. Revisions include housing section amendments to pursue application to a FHAP, structural changes to clarify Commission roles, and changes to the Commission public hearing process
- iii. Will discuss these revisions at the regular meeting on 5/16/24 instead

e. New business

- i. None

6. MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC

a. PUBLIC COMMENT

- i. None

b. COMMISSION RESPONSE TO MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC

- i. None

7. COMMISSIONER UPDATES

- a. None

8. NEXT STEPS

a. All Commissioners

- i. Attend outreach events

b. Lily & OHR staff/Commissioners

- i. Reach out to the final list of panel invitees to coordinate June 6 panel discussion
- ii. Research organizations/housing topics

- c. Next meeting: regular meeting 5/16/24
 - i. Discuss Ordinance revisions

9. ADJOURN

- a. Meeting adjourned at 8:24 pm