



**Human Rights Commission
Regular Meeting
Meeting Minutes
May 16, 2024
Hybrid Meeting
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.

Click [HERE](#) to access an archive of past Human Rights Commission work on the City website.

1. WELCOME

- a. CALL TO ORDER
 - i. Vice Chair, Wolfgang Keppley, called the meeting to order at 6:37 pm
- b. ROLL CALL
 - i. Ernest Chambers (arrived 6:47pm)
 - ii. Wolfgang Keppley
 - iii. Mary Bauer
 - iv. Kathryn Laughon (arrived 6:42pm)
 - 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 – IN-PERSON ATTENDEES ONLY

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

3. BUSINESS MATTERS

- a. OHR STAFF REPORT
 - i. Outreach Specialist
 - 1. Has organized several events including the Groundwater training, Community Read panel, and the Fair Housing presentation
 - 2. Beginning to plan education and awareness events for July about Disability Pride Month---contact Lily if interested in helping
 - 3. Participating in Connected Communities Learning Cohort yearlong program to connect 15 civic leaders across the country working on similar missions to the OHR and HRC
 - ii. Director
 - 1. Investigator-in-Training and Intake Specialist completed the 32-hour EEOC intake counseling course whose material will be incorporated into the Office

2. Investigator-in-Training also completed an investigation training course with Cornell
3. OHR Intern is graduating undergrad and beginning Master's program in the fall
 - a. Completed Honors Thesis defense about human rights commissions (will deliver presentation to HRC in June)
4. Commissioner asks about significant increase in incoming and outgoing contacts in April
 - a. Director says this increase is probably due to increased contact with a single individual

4. MINUTES

- a. Review of work session minutes from 4/4/24
 - i. Suzanne makes motion to approve minutes
 1. Mary seconds
 - ii. Vote
 1. In favor: 6
 2. Opposed: 0
 3. Abstained: 0
 - iii. Motion to approve minutes passes
- b. Review of regular meeting minutes from 4/18/24
 - i. Mary makes motion to approve minutes
 1. Commissioner seconds (inaud.)
 - ii. Vote
 1. In favor: 6
 2. Opposed: 0
 3. Abstained: 0
 - iii. Motion to approve minutes passes

5. BUSINESS MATTERS

- a. CHAIR UPDATE (meeting lead shifts from Vice Chair to Chair)
 - i. Chair, Ernest Chambers, discusses events related to protests at UVA
 1. Trying to information gather before releasing a statement—there seem to be discrepancies between witness accounts and UVA administration
 2. The HRC will release a statement; wants to ensure the HRC is doing work for Charlottesville residents and UVA students
 3. Primary concern is with local police being present setting a perimeter for state police
 - a. Commissioner adds that local police were also making arrests and expresses desire to do more than release a statement
 - ii. Expresses appreciation for OHR staff's work in helping prepare the June 6 panel
- b. Discussion of response to UVA events
 - i. Commissioner supports releasing a statement, as well as potentially holding some kind of special hearing or inviting witnesses
 1. Wants to inquire more deeply
 - ii. Commissioner asks about whether the Commission could help in any ongoing cases featuring protestors
 - iii. Commissioner discusses preserving freedom of speech and listening to

those who may not agree

1. Statement could include how City resources were used to infringe upon individuals' rights
- iv. Commissioner agrees that the Commission should use its power to inquire the City on its decisions and use of resources
 1. Another Commissioner suggests considering using the July panel as an investigative community discussion
 2. Could open virtual participation to allow for attendance of UVA students
 3. May not have to be a single event; keep in mind protecting the privacy and identity of attendees (some cases have not yet been dismissed)
- v. Director has not heard about other ongoing investigations into the City's actions
 1. There was some discussion at the last City Council meeting
 2. Commissioner suggests asking the City directly about actions since the protests
- vi. Commissioner expresses desire for Charlottesville Police Chief to hold a town hall
 1. Another Commissioner suggests inviting the Chief to speak to the Commission
- vii. Commissioners discuss next steps for action
 1. Commissioner asks about legal possibility of holding a special meeting for further action
 - a. Just have to publicly notice the meeting at least three days in advance
 2. Commissioner points out that the OHR and HRC is already on the City Council agenda on 6/3; will have a 30-45 minutes time slot
 3. Commissioners discuss potential question to ask the City
 - a. What equipment did police bring with them/what were they prepared to do upon arrival to the scene?
 - b. What precipitated them going? How much did it cost the City?
 - c. What directive(s) came from the state?
 - d. How and when were certain decisions made?
 4. Commissioners decide to send a letter with questions ahead of the 6/3 City Council meeting to give them time to formulate responses; will follow up on the letter at the Council meeting
 - a. **Commissioners will circulate an email thread to draft questions before 5/27 or 5/28** so that OHR staff can synthesize questions into a single list
 5. Letter could be sent with a press release to garner public attention

6. WORK SESSION

- a. Review of proposed amendments to the Charlottesville Human Rights Ordinance (OHR staff)
 - i. HRC Director presents proposed amendments to the Human Rights Ordinance (presentation slides and full draft are available in the agenda

packet)

- ii. Main changes are related to meeting requirements to enter a Fair Housing Assistance Program (FHAP) workshare, clarifying HRC roles, and updating components of the OHR investigation process
- iii. Commissioner questions
 - 1. Commissioners discuss whether the Commission's research project requirement is a reasonable expectation of the Commission
 - a. Commissioners say that they would like to make the research project a possibility, but not a requirement ("will" to "may")
 - b. Commissioner adds that they would like to add something about information gathering related to the Commission's annual focus areas
 - i. Could be something for the Commission's Rules & Procedures instead of the Ordinance
 - ii. Amendments to the HRC's Rules & Procedures may occur at any point with five days advance notice of the written proposed changes
 - 2. Commissioners discuss the Commission's role in appeals on findings of reasonable cause
 - a. Director asks Commissioners whether they want to do a public hearing or review of record when a respondent appeals a finding of reasonable cause
 - b. Commissioner and Director discuss due process in the current investigation process compared to the proposed changes
 - c. Commissioner asks what other HRCs are doing
 - i. Director says many Commissions have limitations on what can be introduced—they all have something similar to Charlottesville's current Ordinance with varying degrees of scope
 - d. Public hearing allows for introduction of new evidence, witnesses, etc.; review of record would allow the Commission to create its own parameters on what is allowed to be introduced (they could simply review the investigator's report instead of having to manage new evidence)
 - e. The Commission's powers following a public hearing or review of record would remain the same
 - f. Commissioner points out that respondents are more likely to be able to find legal representation during a public hearing
 - g. Commissioners may continue to think about their role in appeals and report back to staff
- b. Planning for the first expert panel
 - i. Outreach Specialist shares that Home to Hope, Blue Ridge Area Coalition for the Homeless (BRACH), the NAACP, and Democratic

Socialists of America (DSA) have confirmed participation

1. Still waiting on confirmation from Region 10
 - a. Director says that Region 10's Director of Housing Programs is unable to attend, but staff can reach out to other wraparound service leaders there (can compile a list of names)
 2. Legal Aid Justice Center (LAJC) will not be attending, but will share legislative recommendations later in the summer
 3. Central Virginia Legal Aid Society (CVLAS) cannot participate
- ii. Will take place at Carver Rec
- c. Planning for July legislative priorities panel
 - i. Need to reach out to Delegate Katrina Callsen and Senator Creigh Deeds
 - ii. Commissioners support HRC Director reaching out to Chairs/Directors of other HRCs in the state for their presence or list of recommendations
 - iii. Commission also decides to reach out to Housing Opportunities Made Equal of Virginia (HOME)
 1. OHR staff are also currently in contact about collaboration on research of source of funds systemic issue
- d. Annual work plan check-in
 - i. Commission reviews actions listed on the work plan
 - ii. Chair has not yet talked to community members about reparations
 - iii. OHR staff are collaborating with Commissioners to compare existing ally training curriculums and update them
 - iv. Commissioner asks about ways to keep track of what the HRC has been doing and which actions are in progress
 1. Director says OHR staff keep track of HRC actions during the year in a spreadsheet, which will appear in the CY2024 Annual Report
 2. Will also integrate current actions into the work plan itself
- e. Confirmation of next work session on 6/6/24
 - i. Will occur on 6/6 at Carver Rec
 - ii. Will tentatively adopt Ordinance amendments at the 6/20/24 Regular Meeting
- f. New business
 - i. None

7. MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC – IN-PERSON AND VIRTUAL ATTENDEES

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

8. COMMISSIONER UPDATES

- a. None

9. NEXT STEPS

- a. OHR staff
 - i. Todd: Create list of potential Region 10 contacts for 6/6/24 panel
 - ii. Planning for July panel: reach out to Del. Katrina Callsen, Sen. Creigh Deeds, Virginia HRC Chairs and Directors, and HOME of Virginia
- b. UVA events next steps

- i. Circulate list of questions for the City via email; respond by 5/28
- c. Upcoming meetings
 - i. City Council meeting on 6/3/24: OHR/HRC Annual Report presentation
 - ii. HRC work session at Carver Rec on 6/6/24: housing expert panel
 - iii. HRC regular meeting at CitySpace on 6/20/24
 - 1. Commissioners should review proposed Ordinance amendments ahead of meeting

10. ADJOURN

- a. Meeting adjourned at 8:14 pm