



**Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes
Regular Meeting
October 17, 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 6:35 pm
- b. ROLL CALL
 - i. Ernest Chambers
 - ii. Mary Bauer
 - iii. Kathryn Laughon
 - iv. Suzanne Lynn
 - v. Heather Roberson-Gaston
 - vi. Elizabeth Stark
- 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 09/19/2024
 - i. Vote
 - 1. In favor: 6
 - 2. Opposed: 0
 - 3. Abstained: 0
 - ii. Motion to approve minutes passes
- b. Review of minutes from 10/03/2024
 - 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. Chair discusses community events, including updates to redevelopment projects for Charlottesville Redevelopment and Housing Authority

properties throughout the city

b. OHR STAFF REPORT

- i. Staff highlight upcoming events and invites Commissioners to attend
- ii. Director is awaiting an update on the Fair Housing Assistance Program Workshare Agreement with Housing and Urban Development and hopes to have an update for the HRC by November
- iii. Director provides update on Case 2020-2
 1. Director provides overview of Investigative Report for Case 2020-2 and suggests that Commissioners read Investigative Report and Attachment 11
 - a. Commissioners can contact Director with questions or bring them to Special Meeting on 11/07/2024
 2. Commissioners ask about the process for cases to reach the Commission for public hearing votes
 - a. Director provides overview of process outlined in section 2-437 of the Charlottesville Human Rights Ordinance
 3. Commissioner asks if the public hearing will disclose identities of parties to complaint
 - a. Director explains that confidentiality is protected up until the point that it can no longer be ensured, such as in the event of a public hearing
 4. Commissioner asks if the HRC will be voting on whether or not the Charlottesville Human Rights Ordinance allows for the rendering of a finding on an issue that was not filed in the original complaint
 - a. Director says that the Commission is not responsible for making this procedural decision
 - b. Director clarifies that if the Commission votes to hold a public hearing for this case, the HRC's role is to either uphold or overturn the determination for the case
 5. Commissioner asks if both parties have legal representation
 - a. Director says that if the Commission votes to hold a public hearing, each party can bring legal representation if they choose to do so
 - b. Director states that it is the Commission's role in a public hearing is to create an equitable process for both parties whether they retain legal counsel or not
 6. Director states that there will be time constraints for both parties' statements if a public hearing takes place
 7. If Commissioners have questions about the case file or the public hearing process, they can be sent via email to the whole Commission
- iv. Staff and Commissioners discuss revising work plan and schedule of upcoming meetings
- v. Staff introduce new Office of Human Rights Intake Specialist

5. WORK SESSION

- a. Commissioners discuss draft City policy recommendation letter
 - i. Commissioner requests discussion regarding recommendation related

to homelessness outreach position

1. Staff explains that a former City Manager allocated funding for a full-time Homelessness Services Coordinator, but this was intended to be an internal City position and was not necessarily specifically related to conducting outreach
 - a. Commissioner suggests a recommendation to spend an amount of money equivalent to that allocated for the Homelessness Services Coordinator position on a strategy to address homelessness and requests a subsequent report of what those funds were used for
 - b. Commissioner suggests that the Commission still consider recommending that the City fund homelessness outreach
2. Director suggests that the Commission consider recommending that Council prioritize funding requests from community organizations that include providing homelessness outreach
3. Commissioner suggests a recommendation that the City prioritize filling the Homelessness Services Coordinator position and providing other support to address homelessness as needed
 - a. Commissioner is concerned that there may be legitimate reasons that position has not been filled that Commissioners are not aware of
 - b. Some Commissioners would like to request more information about reasoning behind unfilled position and other potential uses related to homelessness for those funds
4. Commissioner states that more transparency around the City's work on homelessness would be helpful as winter approaches
5. Commissioner asks that other Commissioners revisit draft letter and provide feedback on wording
- ii. Commissioner asks if recommendation of providing effective right to counsel will be included in the letter or if that recommendation will be made in a separate letter
 1. Commissioner clarifies that there will be two letters, one entirely dedicated to the recommendation for providing funding for counsel for people facing eviction
- b. Commissioners form nominating committee for Chair and Vice Chair
- c. Commissioners revisit secondary focus areas in Annual Work Plan that need to be revisited
 - i. Ally/Safe Space training work can be reconsidered at the 2025 Annual Planning Meeting
 - ii. Reparations for Vinegar Hill dialogue can be revisited at December meeting
 1. Commissioner will reach out to staff at The Jefferson School African American Heritage Center to discuss

6. MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC

- a. PUBLIC COMMENT
 - i. None

b. COMMISSION RESPONSE TO MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC

- i. None

7. **COMMISSIONER UPDATES**

- a. Suzanne reports that she attended Charlottesville Area Justice Coalition meeting focused on transitional housing, and biggest barriers highlighted by panelists were availability of housing and employment
- i. Suzanne requests that if anyone is aware of employers that will hire individuals with criminal convictions, it would be helpful to share them with Charlottesville Area Justice Coalition leadership
- b. Kathryn expresses gratitude for City's response to pedestrian safety issues in recent weeks
- i. Commissioner suggests sending thank you to City leadership and City Council

8. **NEXT STEPS**

- a. Ernest and Kathryn
- i. Solicit nominations from Commissioners
- b. Ernest
- i. Draft thank you note for City's response to pedestrian safety issues
- c. Elizabeth and Mary
- i. Continue drafting effective right to counsel letter

9. **ADJOURN**

- a. Meeting adjourned at 8:12pm