



**Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes
Regular Meeting
February 20, 2025
City Space, 100 5th Street NE, Charlottesville, VA 22902
6:30 pm**

1. WELCOME

- a. CALL TO ORDER
 - i. Chair, Heather Roberson Gaston, called the meeting to order at 6:38 pm
- b. ROLL CALL
 - i. Present
 - 1. Heather Roberson Gaston
 - 2. Jason Melendez
 - 3. Mary Bauer
 - 4. Ernest Chambers
 - 5. Wolfgang Keppley
 - 6. Kathryn Laughon
 - 7. Dawn Lawson (attending virtually from her residence in Charlottesville, Va due to a personal matter pursuant to City Policy No. 100-02 and Va. Code § 2.2-3708.3.B.)
 - 8. Suzanne Lynn
 - 9. Elizabeth Stark
 - ii. Absent
 - 1. None
- 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 01-16-2025
 - i. Vote
 - 1. In favor: 9
 - 2. Opposed: 0
 - 3. Abstained: 0
 - ii. Motion to approve minutes passes
- b. Review of minutes from 02-06-2025
 - i. Staff member proposes edit to indicate that Elizabeth Stark participated in this meeting virtually due to temporary or permanent disability or other medical condition that prevented the member's physical attendance, pursuant to City Policy No. 100-02 and Va. Code § 2.2-3708.3.B.

- ii. Vote
 - 1. In favor: 7
 - 2. Opposed: 0
 - 3. Abstained: 2
- iii. Motion to approve minutes with above amendment passes

4. BUSINESS MATTER

- a. CHAIR UPDATE
 - i. Chair shares that she, Jason, and Ernest attended the most recent Fifeville Neighborhood Association meeting on the proposed low-barrier shelter on Cherry Avenue
 - 1. Commissioners present at the meeting affirmed that no Commission business was discussed at the Fifeville Neighborhood Association meeting
- b. OHR STAFF REPORT
 - i. Director shares that Mariane Doyle and L.D. Perry have been appointed to the HRC
 - ii. Director shares that staff are working on OHR/HRC Annual Report, and it will be ready for commissioners to review soon

5. WORK SESSION

- a. Snow removal plan updates
 - i. Working on scheduling a meeting to discuss this with Deputy City Manager James Freas
 - ii. The City plans to develop new plan and implement changes to the snow removal practices by Fall 2025
 - 1. Commissioner asks if the City received the Livable Cville letter and if any reflections were shared
 - a. Director shares that staff did receive the letter, and that no additional reflections were shared
 - 2. Commissioner observes that the most recent snow was cleared more quickly than previous snow
 - 3. Another commissioner adds that the City appeared to enforce the snow removal policy more effectively following this snow than they have in the past
 - 4. Commissioner shares observation that Monticello Avenue and 6th Street sidewalks continue to be covered in snow
 - iii. Commissioner shares concern about snow on paths and bus stops that children riding the bus use to get to school
 - iv. Commissioner(s) will meet with James Freas next week
- b. Annual Planning Meeting discussion
 - i. Director shares that staff and HRC Leadership are meeting with Maya Pace next week, a potential facilitator for group dynamics work at the Annual Planning Meeting
 - ii. Commissioner suggests beginning work plan drafting earlier in the day at the Annual Planning Meeting
 - iii. Commissioners discuss public poll and ways to further encourage community members to respond
- c. Commissioners discuss March HRC Work Session and response to the University of Virginia (UVA) Health System decision to pause providing gender-affirming care for minors

- i. Commissioner shares that some community members are uncertain that a town hall would be a helpful addition to organizing efforts that are already taking place
- ii. Another commissioner suggests that the HRC may have a role through an individual complaint process
 1. Director states that the OHR does not have jurisdiction over UVA
- iii. Commissioner states that there may not be a large number of private providers within City limits providing gender-affirming care to minors, making the scope of the HRC's potential impact through individual complaints limited
- iv. Commissioner states that HRC's role may be to think about how to positively impact the protection of human rights
- v. Commissioner Mary Bauer shares that the ACLU is involved in litigation of UVA Health, and while she supports the HRC's advocacy on this topic, due to her employment with the ACLU, she could not participate directly in an HRC listening session on this issue
- vi. Commissioners discuss the scope and goal of this proposed meeting
 1. Commissioners would like to ask individual people if they would be willing to speak on this issue prior to scheduling a meeting to do so
 2. Commissioner states that the HRC has a role to loudly call out human rights violations as they occur
 3. Commissioners discuss the public poll as an alternative to inviting people to attend a public meeting to share their perspectives
 4. Commissioner suggests that the HRC could provide a space for individuals affected by UVA Health's decision regarding gender-affirming care to share their stories
 - a. Another commissioner expresses support for this idea
 - b. Another commissioner suggests sharing anonymous stories with City Council to say this is what is happening in our city
 - c. Commissioner asks how this impacts OHR staff workload
 - i. Director suggests setting up a way to receive these stories that does not require extensive staff time given other obligations, such as emails, polls, or transcribed voice messages
 1. Commissioner suggests that this could be used for other topics and issue areas in the future
 5. Commissioner states that HRC needs to think through confidentiality and privacy concerns for any initiative that asks individuals to participate or share stories
 6. Commissioner states that stories could be used to make legislative recommendations more powerful
 - a. Commissioner agrees with this, and affirms need to protect confidentiality

- b. Director shares that IT may be able to offer an encrypted tool
 - vii. Commissioner asks where complaints that are outside of Charlottesville can be referred
 - 1. Director provides an overview of agencies that receive different types of complaints
 - viii. Commissioner proposes opening a new public poll asking how responding individuals and their families have been impacted by recent federal Executive Orders and if responding individuals have a recommendation for the HRC to consider in how to protect human rights locally
 - 1. Commissioner suggests adding that people can provide contact information if they would like to be contacted and a question about whether the respondent would be interested in attending a listening session hosted by the HRC
 - 2. Another commissioner suggests not including the title of the Executive Order
 - 3. Another commissioner suggests broadening scope to include additional Executive Orders not related to medical services
 - 4. Another commissioner suggests adding additional community resources with permission from those organizations
 - ix. Director shares that if March Work Session is held at Carver, it will start at 6pm
 - d. Commissioners discuss proposed Draft Resolution
 - i. Commissioner suggests removing the full titles of the Executive Order and Attorney General's Memo
 - 1. Another commissioner supports this amendment
 - 2. Another commissioner asks if the resolution could be sent this evening or early tomorrow morning
 - a. Director and Chair will work on finalizing the Resolution this evening
 - 3. Vote
 - a. In favor: 8
 - b. Opposed: 0
 - c. Abstained: 1
 - 4. Motion to amend and approve the Draft Resolution passes
 - e. Commissioners decide not to hold Work Session on March 6, 2025
- 6. MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC**
- a. PUBLIC COMMENT
 - i. None
 - b. COMMISSION RESPONSE TO MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC
 - i. None
- 7. COMMISSIONER UPDATES**
- a. Commissioner shares that \$1.5 million remains in proposed State budget to be used for a shelter in Charlottesville
 - b. Commissioner reminds everyone of the Regional Housing Summit hosted by the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission on March 13th
- 8. NEXT STEPS**
- a. Wolfgang

- i. Meet with James Freas
 - b. Todd
 - i. Ask IT about privacy protection options for poll respondents
 - c. Todd and Heather
 - i. Resolution follow-up
- 9. **ADJOURN**
 - a. Meeting adjourned at 8:06pm