



**Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes
Annual Planning Meeting
March 31, 2025
City Space, 100 5th Street NE, Charlottesville, VA 22902
6:30 pm**

1. MORNING SESSION

a. WELCOME

- i. Call to Order
 - 1. Chair, Heather Roberson Gaston, called the meeting to order at 11:35am
- ii. Roll Call
 - 1. Present
 - a. Heather Roberson Gaston
 - b. Jason Melendez
 - c. Wolfgang Keppley
 - d. Dawn Lawson (left 3:10pm)
 - e. Suzanne Lynn
 - f. LD Perry (left 3:55pm)
 - g. Elizabeth Stark
 - 2. Absent
 - a. Mariane Doyle
- iii. 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.*
- iv. Commissioner and staff introductions

b. Matters by the Public

- i. Public Comment
 - 1. Jackie Temkin, Albemarle County resident and Charlottesville business owner, spoke about gender equity and potential inequality in access to tennis courts in City parks
 - a. Commissioners request additional details and discuss role of HRC action versus OHR complaint process
 - i. Director explains that this would be a disparate impact issue for the HRC to consider, not grounds for an individual complaint
 - ii. Commissioners discuss their options for potential action on this topic, including forming an ad hoc committee focused on this topic, reaching out to Parks and Recreation staff for additional information, contacting other affected community members, and reviewing documentation of the issue

c. HRC Focus Area Selection

- i. Overview of work in 2024
 1. Director presents overview of highlights of OHR and HRC work in 2024 (slides attached)
- ii. Overview of Public Poll Results
 1. Outreach Specialist provides summary of public survey responses
 - a. Most responses relate to housing affordability and accessibility, but multiple other intersecting categories emerged as well
 2. Commissioner presents statistical analysis of write-in public survey responses
 - a. Primary themes that emerged were housing, especially disability access concerns in housing, economic security and housing, and access to housing regardless of immigration status
 3. Commissioners observe that very few responses identify racial issues as a primary concern
- iii. Commissioner input and discussion
 1. Commissioners discuss reach of survey among different demographics in the community
 2. Commissioner states that the current City budget allots more than twice the amount of money towards tax relief programs as it does towards rent relief programs
 - a. Commissioner adds that this may speak to a lack of awareness of services available, including the Community Resource Line and resources for homeless veterans
 3. Commissioners brainstorm topics for focus areas, including: housing, economic security, LGBTQ+ rights, national origin nondiscrimination, disability access, first amendment rights, racial discrimination, and rights and services for senior citizens
 - a. Commissioners discuss identifying potentially vulnerable populations, such as those who may become housing insecure in the event of cuts to funding for food stamps or other supplemental assistance programs
 4. Commissioners write down ideas on sticky notes, which are copied below:
 - a. Commission Policies
 - i. "Use of ad-hoc committees for accountability for commissioner actions"
 - ii. "Support each other as we do this work (which can be challenging)"
 - b. Legislative Program
 - i. "More policies in practice to protect vulnerable residents/people in community"
 - ii. "Legislative and expert panels as in past years"
 - iii. "Broaden to include more re: disability and senior citizens"
 - iv. "Seek status of seniors in Charlottesville:

- housing, accessibility, economic”
- v. “Tenant protections and panels as needed”
- vi. “Tenant protections legislative packet”
- c. Awareness, Education, and Guidance
 - i. “Educate ourselves: mental health in homeless community, immigration barriers to housing, senior citizen barriers”
 - ii. “Awareness/education in African American low-income communities, same in low-income senior communities”
 - iii. “Perhaps distribute information sheet on services (housing, other economic assistance) that do exist to targeted areas in community”
 - iv. “Protections for community members – key items: economic status, immigration status, race & gender identity”
 - v. “Outreach sharing information on HUD workshare upon approval, engage with large rental property owners”
 - vi. “Targeted outreach to vulnerable communities and specifically African American community”
- d. Systemic Issues, Policies, and Practices
 - i. “Finding out the stats on the actual barrier, trying to find the root of the issue then work up, homelessness, mental health, substance abuse”
 - ii. “LGBTQIA+ protections and support for the trans community”
 - iii. “Mutual aid for vulnerable people, in the form of increased Charlottesville Communities fund”
 - iv. “Support the shelter”
 - v. “Support low-barrier shelter and any other housing opportunities that arise”
 - vi. Address potential equity issue at Parks and Recreation facilities”
 - vii. “Ensure affordable housing for Charlottesville seniors, like Midway Manor, is 1) accessible, 2) safe/sufficient quality, and 3) sufficient supply to meet demand”

2. Afternoon Session

- a. Maya Pace, Director of Curriculum at Trust Labs, presents skills for navigating group dynamics (slides attached)
- b. Commissioners discuss information shared by Maya and option to develop group norms

3. Matters by the Public

- a. Public Comment
 - i. None
- b. Commission response to matters by the public
 - i. None

4. ADJOURN

- a. Meeting adjourned at 4:02pm