



**Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes
Work Session
April 4, 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 6:37 pm
- b. ROLL CALL
 - i. Present
 - 1. Heather Roberson Gaston
 - 2. Jason Melendez
 - 3. Wolfgang Keppley
 - 4. Dawn Lawson (arrived 6:45pm)
 - 5. Suzanne Lynn
 - 6. LD Perry (left 7:42pm)
 - 7. Elizabeth Stark
 - ii. Absent
 - 1. Mariane Doyle
- 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. Freedom of Information Act Training
 - i. On motion by Jason, seconded by Suzanne, the Commission voted 6-0 to convene in closed meeting pursuant to section 2.2-3712 of the Virginia Code, specifically as authorized by Virginia Code section 2.2-3711(A)(8) for consultation with the Commission's legal counsel regarding specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice, specifically, advice regarding compliance with the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (Ayes: 6; Noes: 0).
 - ii. On motion by Jason, seconded by Wolfgang, the Commission certified by a recorded vote of 6-0 that to the best of each Commission member's knowledge, only public business matters lawfully exempted from the open meeting requirements of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act and identified in the motion convening the closed session were heard, discussed, or considered in the closed session (Ayes: 6; Noes: 0).

4. WORK SESSION

- a. 2025 Focus Area Discussion
 - i. Commissioner states that there may not be additional avenues for affordable housing advocacy at the local level, but suggests doing further state-level advocacy around tenant legal protections
 - 1. Commissioner suggests learning about and advocating for the needs of various marginalized populations using a housing lens
 - a. Another Commissioner agrees and adds that this approach may allow the HRC to remain responsive to changing community needs
 - b. Another Commissioner agrees, adding that it may be valuable to look into more specific community needs related to housing rather than general topics like affordability and availability
 - ii. Commissioners discuss proposed low-barrier shelter
 - 1. Commissioner shares that there is ongoing discussion between City Management and other partners to determine which organization might run the shelter
 - a. Commissioner states that there currently appears to be less public opposition to the proposed shelter
 - 2. Director states that the City Manager indicated there is not a need for the HRC to take any action related to the shelter at this time
 - 3. Commissioner suggests inviting experts on low-barrier shelters to a future HRC expert panel
 - iii. Commissioner notes that several ideas relate to expanding outreach to Charlottesville residents to identify and understand needs of particular communities and demographics
 - 1. Outreach Specialist suggests creating an electronic form for Commissioners to share outreach ideas and suggestions with staff
 - a. Commissioner suggests being a guest on a podcast or radio station to discuss human rights topics and raise awareness
 - b. Commissioner suggests that staff make a recommendation for how HRC should prioritize different types of outreach
 - iv. Commissioner asks for more information on proposal to do outreach to large rental property owners
 - 1. Another Commissioner clarifies that the idea was to promote awareness of fair housing law among property owners to prevent discrimination
 - v. Commissioners discuss wording for primary focus area and work on draft 2025 Work Plan
 - 1. Primary Focus Area: Housing Access and Stability Across Protected Classes
- b. Discussion of issue with equitable access to play surfaces in City Parks
 - i. Staff share that there is additional information incoming from Parks and Recreation staff and members of the public
 - ii. Commissioners form ad hoc committee of Wolfgang and Jason to

research this issue

- iii. Commissioners will discuss this issue further at the April Regular Meeting on April 17, 2025

5. NEW BUSINESS

- a. 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. IMPACT Charlottesville is hosting Nehemiah Action on April 8, 2025

8. NEXT STEPS

- a. Lily

- i. Create Microsoft Form for commissioners to compile outreach ideas
 - ii. Invite Delegate Callsen and Senator Deeds to a May meeting
 - iii. Summarize information provided by Jackie Temkin for inclusion in agenda packet for April Regular Meeting

- b. Todd

- i. Summarize conversation with Riaan Anthony for inclusion in agenda packet for April Regular Meeting

- c. Wolfgang & Jason

- i. Research play surface equity & access issue

9. ADJOURN

- a. Meeting adjourned at 8:37pm