



**Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes
Regular Meeting
May 15, 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 6:32 pm
- b. ROLL CALL
 - i. Present
 - 1. Heather Roberson Gaston
 - 2. Jason Melendez
 - 3. Mariane Asad Doyle
 - 4. Wolfgang Keppley
 - 5. Dawn Lawson
 - 6. Suzanne Lynn
 - 7. LD Perry
 - 8. 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 4/3/2025
 - i. Vote
 - 1. In favor: 8
 - 2. Opposed: 0
 - 3. Abstained: 0
 - ii. Motion to approve minutes passes
- b. Review of minutes from 4/17/2025
 - i. Vote
 - 1. In favor: 6
 - 2. Opposed: 1
 - 3. Abstained: 1
 - ii. Motion to approve minutes passes

4. BUSINESS MATTERS

- a. CHAIR UPDATE

- i. Chair states that she held a meeting with staff from Parks and Recreation and the OHR regarding the issue with play surface allocation processes
 - 1. Parks and Recreation is aware of this issue and has identified it in the Master Plan as an area for further action
 - 2. Parks and Recreation has agreed to share a new draft allocation process with the HRC when it is available in Fall 2025 for the HRC to review and make recommendations if needed
 - 3. Chair will share a copy of her letter to the Director of Parks and Recreation with the HRC prior to sending it
- b. OHR STAFF REPORT
 - i. Outreach updates
 - 1. OHR staff are reducing the number of events tabled going forward
 - a. If Commissioners are aware of an event and would like to table it, please contact staff to arrange this
 - 2. The Human Rights Newsletter will be paused
 - 3. Staff will be devoting more time towards conducting presentations on the services of the OHR and HRC
 - a. Commissioners are welcome to participate in these presentations
 - ii. Administrative Updates
 - 1. OHR staff are working on a proposal to modify scope of OHR services to meet community needs and City Management's directives
 - 2. No further updates on the Fair Housing Assistance Program
 - a. Currently, the City is waiting for the Department of Housing and Urban Development to provide the contract to enter into the interim agreement
 - iii. Service Updates
 - 1. The OHR has received 59 inquiries so far this year (note: this is a correction to what was stated in the meeting)
 - 2. The OHR currently has 11 cases in investigation

5. WORK SESSION

- a. Delegate Katrina Callsen reports on 2025 General Assembly Session and shares which topics and bills saw progress during this session and which do not have significant political traction at this time, particularly related to affordable housing and criminal justice reform
 - i. Commissioner states that the absence of a right for tenants to renew their leases is a high priority because landlords are legally able to retaliate against tenants by not renewing leases
 - ii. Commissioner requests progress update on legislation related to individuals returning to work after exiting the criminal justice system
 - iii. Commissioner states that youth education is generally prioritized, but it is critical to simultaneously prioritize adult education as well
 - iv. Staff member requests update on legislation to reduce barriers for people with criminal convictions to apply for state-sponsored Peer Recovery Support Specialist programs
 - v. Commissioner requests progress update on legislation related to raising

the required notice for Pay or Quit Notices from 5 days to 14 days

- b. Senator Creigh Deeds reports on 2025 General Assembly Session and shares which topics and bills saw progress during this session and which do not have significant political traction at this time, particularly related to Medicaid, labor laws, and the State budget
 - i. Commissioner asks about possibility to repeal Right-to-work laws
 - 1. Senator states that it is difficult to predict the outcome of future legislative sessions
 - ii. Commissioner asks what the Senator's highest priorities for the future are
 - 1. Senator states that he would like to increase discharge planning at all regional jails, increase workforce in psychiatric hospitals, increase funding for education, and modernize public transportation across the state
 - iii. Commissioner requests progress update on legislation that allows localities to collect progressive taxes on consumer services
 - iv. Commissioner asks how proposed federal Medicaid cuts can be addressed at the state and local levels
 - 1. Senator states that there is not currently funding available in the state budget to reduce impacts of these proposed cuts

6. MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC

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

7. COMMISSIONER UPDATES

8. NEXT STEPS

- a. Heather
 - i. Share draft letter to Parks and Recreation

9. ADJOURN

- a. Meeting adjourned at 7:51pm