



**Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes
Work Session
August 7, 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 6:43 pm
- b. ROLL CALL
 - i. Present
 - 1. Heather Roberson Gaston
 - 2. Jason Melendez
 - 3. Suzanne Lynn
 - 4. LD Perry
 - 5. Jayson Whitehead
 - ii. Absent
 - 1. Mariane Asad Doyle
 - 2. Wolfgang Keppley
 - 3. Dawn Lawson
 - 4. 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

3. WORK SESSION

- a. Action updates
 - i. None
- b. Discussion of legislative recommendation selections
 - i. Commissioners begin sharing insights from individual outreach and meetings and raise suggestions for further consideration, including:
 - 1. Supporting the 5000 Families voucher program
 - 2. Amending the Virginia Residential Landlord and Tenant Act (VRLTA) to allow tenants to sue landlords even if they are behind in rental payments
 - 3. Amending the VRLTA to allow localities to bring class action lawsuits against landlords
 - 4. Creating a housing ombudsman at the state level
 - 5. Bolstering rent relief programs
 - 6. Amending the VRLTA to increase the pay or quit period from 5 days to 14 days
 - 7. Supporting Effective Right to Counsel

8. Creating a Tenant Bill of Rights
 9. Supporting legislation to allow for local rent stabilization
 10. Amending the VRLTA to allow tenants who suffer substantial loss of income due to unauthorized governmental actions to terminate leases early
 11. Addressing issues with access to childcare
 - a. Daycare vouchers
 - b. Summer camp access programs
 - c. City-run childcare programs, potentially in partnership with Charlottesville City Schools, Charlottesville Economic Development Authority, or the University of Virginia
 12. Expanding access to supportive housing programs
 13. Exploring participatory budgeting
 14. Supporting legislation to allow localities right of first refusal when mobile home parks are being sold
 15. Amending the VRLTA to allow tenants to raise poor conditions as an affirmative defense for non-payment of rent
 16. Amending the VRLTA to restrict landlords to charging one application fee per unit rather than one application fee per tenant
 17. Supporting state voucher program for veterans
 18. Addressing lack of supports for elderly population
 19. Expanding outreach to landlords to encourage acceptance of vouchers, potentially in collaboration with Charlottesville Redevelopment and Housing Authority
- c. Work Plan check-in
 - i. Commissioners update 2025 Work Plan calendar
 - d. New business
 - i. None
- 4. MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC**
- a. PUBLIC COMMENT
 - i. None
 - b. COMMISSION RESPONSE TO MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC
 - i. None
- 5. COMMISSIONER UPDATES**
- a. Suzanne Lynn shares that The Haven is doing a drive to stock the shelter with supplies
 - b. Jason Melendez shares that due to personal reasons, he will have to step down from the Human Rights Commission
- 6. NEXT STEPS**
- a. Jason
 - i. Draft amendment to rules and procedures regarding vice chair election procedures
- 7. ADJOURN**
- a. Meeting adjourned at 8:03pm