



**Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes
Annual Planning Meeting
March 5, 2026**

**Parks and Recreation Conference Room, 501 E Main Street, Charlottesville, VA 22902
5:30 pm**

1. WELCOME

- a. CALL TO ORDER
 - i. Chair, Heather Roberson Gaston, called the meeting to order at 5:34 pm
- b. ROLL CALL
 - i. Present
 - 1. Heather Roberson Gaston
 - 2. Elizabeth Stark
 - 3. Callum McCain von Schill
 - 4. Dawn Lawson
 - 5. Emily Currier
 - 6. Jayson Whitehead
 - 7. Jessica Cocciolone
 - 8. Suzanne Lynn
 - ii. Absent
 - 1. Mariane Asad 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

3. MINUTES

- a. Review of minutes from 02/19/2026
 - i. Vote
 - 1. In favor: 6
 - 2. Opposed: 0
 - 3. Abstained: 2
 - ii. Motion to approve minutes passes

4. BUSINESS MATTERS

- a. CHAIR UPDATE
 - i. Chair notes importance of establishing more consistent dialogue with City Council and City Management to better understand how Commission policy and legislative recommendations are being received.
 - ii. Chair initiates a round of Commissioner and staff introductions for the benefit of new Commissioners
- b. OHR STAFF REPORT
 - i. Director reviews the contents of the OHR staff report.
 - 1. Notes that the HRC & OHR CY2025 annual report is scheduled

for presentation to City Council on June 15, 2026, during the City Manager's report.

2. Notes that amendments to the Charlottesville Human Rights Ordinance may also be presented to City Council during the 4:00pm work session on June 15, 2026, pending the Commission's review and adoption.

5. WORK SESSION

- a. Overview of work in 2025
 - i. Director reviews the summary of CY2025 work done by the HRC and OHR (agenda packet attachment IV.)
- b. Focus area discussion and selection & work plan development
 - i. Policy & Impact Analyst presents an overview of the Commission's 2026 focus area public poll responses (agenda packet attachment V.)
 - ii. Policy & Impact Analyst shares common themes heard during stakeholder meetings that may not be reflected in the public poll including the following:
 1. Childcare accessibility and availability
 2. Transportation barriers to access crucial services
 3. Lack of accessible and affordable mental health services
 4. Food insecurity
 5. Lack of collaboration between service providers
 - iii. Commissioners discuss survey results and information from stakeholder meetings and consider topics including the following:
 1. UVA's role and impact on the community
 - a. Use of land without taxation
 - b. Contracting low wage workers
 - c. Internal human rights protections
 - d. Lack of collective bargaining
 - e. Gender affirming care
 - iv. Chair notes the value of having a focused work plan but also the ability to take smaller actions on emerging issues
 - v. Commissioner notes that the survey points to the importance of expanding outreach to community members who identify as LGBTQ+ and people with disabilities
 1. Attending existing events
 2. Connecting with community members
 - vi. Commissioner raises concerns about the benefits gap for lower income community members.
 - vii. Commissioners discuss potential opportunities for dialogue with the following individuals:
 1. Economic Mobility Officer
 - a. Regarding the benefits cliff and other barriers to economic mobility
 2. Virginia Poverty Law Center
 - a. Regarding state-level legislation that may impact people living in poverty
 3. Housing Advisory Committee
 - a. Regarding the landlord incentive program
 4. UVA student

- a. Research the Charlottesville non-profit sector and the ways in which collaboration happens between organizations
- viii. Commissioners discuss racism as an ongoing issue affecting residents and share the example of West Main development above Westhaven
- ix. Commissioners discuss the big differences between residents in wealth and access to opportunity in Charlottesville
 - 1. Example shared of delayed snow removal and limited school bus access forcing children to walk on uncleared sidewalks and roads to get to school
 - 2. Potential opportunity to engage the Regional Transit Board

6. COMMISSION RECESS: 7:24 pm to 7:33 pm

7. WORK SESSION (continued after recess)

- i. Chair asks about the process of inviting state legislators to an upcoming meeting
 - 1. Policy & Impact Analyst states that we generally send them a recap of the legislative recommendations that Commission made to Council the previous year and request any updates they may want to share
- ii. Chair asks about inviting the Economic Mobility Officer and Assistant to the City Manager to the next HRC regular meeting on 4/16/26
- iii. Commissioner asks about the next steps in the appeal hearing for Case 2025-2
 - 1. Director informs Commissioners that notice has been sent to both parties sharing the names of the Commissioners on the panel to assess conflict of interest
 - 2. After confirming there is no conflict between either party and members of the panel the Director will share the redacted Investigative Report
- iv. Commission discusses then decides to change the start time of future meetings to 6:00 pm
- v. Chair makes a motion to adopt “Economic mobility across protected classes” as the focus area for the Commission’s 2026 work plan – Vice Chair seconds
 - 1. Vote
 - a. In favor: 8
 - b. Opposed: 0
 - c. Abstained: 0
- b. Commissioner communications
 - i. Vice Chair reminds Commissioners of the importance of checking their City email accounts at least twice per week to stay current on Commission work
 - ii. Commissioner asks about being excluded from the “all employee” emails that do not apply to Commissioners
- c. New business
 - i. None
- d. Confirmation of next Work Session on April 2, 2026
 - i. Commissioners decide not to schedule this Work Session

8. MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC

- a. PUBLIC COMMENT
 - i. None
 - b. COMMISSION RESPONSE TO MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC
 - i. None
9. **COMMISSIONER UPDATES**
- a. Commissioners thank Lily Gates for her service to the Human Rights Commission
 - b. Director asks if Commission would like him to contact state legislators to invite them to the May regular meeting
 - i. Chair confirms this
10. **NEXT STEPS**
- a. Elizabeth
 - i. Contact Virginia Poverty Law Center
 - b. Todd
 - i. Invite Economic Mobility Officer and Assistant to the City Manager to 4/16/26 meeting
 - ii. Ask IT about removing Commissioners from “all employee” emails
 - iii. Invite state legislators to May regular meeting
 - iv. Change CitySpace reservations from 6:30 pm to 6:00 pm
11. **ADJOURN**
- a. Meeting adjourned at 8:13 pm