



**Human Rights Commission  
Meeting Minutes  
Regular Meeting  
May 21, 2026  
City Space, 100 5<sup>th</sup> Street NE, Charlottesville, VA 22902  
6:00 pm**

**1. WELCOME**

- a. CALL TO ORDER
  - i. Chair, Heather Roberson Gaston, called the meeting to order at 6:03 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. Mariane Asad Doyle
  - ii. Absent
    1. Jayson Whitehead
    2. Jessica Cocciolone
    3. Suzanne Lynn
- c. MISSION (recited by all): Act as a strong advocate for 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. No public comment was received at the beginning of the meeting.
- b. COMMISSION RESPONSE TO MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC
  - i. No Commission response was required.

**3. MINUTES**

- a. Review of minutes from April 16, 2026.
  - i. Motion: Heather Roberson Gaston moved to approve the April 16, 2026, meeting minutes.
    1. Second: Elizabeth Stark seconded the motion.
    2. Vote:
      - a. In favor: 6
      - b. Opposed: 0
      - c. Abstained: 0
    3. Motion to approve minutes passed.
  - ii. Key Decision
    1. The April 16, 2026, regular meeting minutes were approved by a vote of 6 in favor, 0 opposed, and 0 abstained.

**4. BUSINESS MATTERS**

- a. CHAIR UPDATE

- i. Commission Recommendation Process and City-Level Follow-Up
  1. The chair noted that much of the update would be addressed during the later agenda items on legislator dialogue planning and stakeholder meeting planning.
  2. The Commission discussed the need to better understand how Commission recommendations are received and used at the City level.
  3. The Commission noted that the process for state legislative recommendations is clearer than the process for City-level recommendations.
- ii. Small Stakeholder Meeting Format
  1. The Commission discussed the value of smaller stakeholder meetings.
  2. Meetings with two commissioners can occur without triggering formal public meeting requirements.
  3. Larger participation would require notice, minutes, and other formalities.
  4. Smaller meetings were described as useful for conversations with stakeholders representing vulnerable or marginalized communities.
- b. OHR STAFF REPORT
  - i. Internship Support and Policy Interest
    1. Staff reported that the Office of Human Rights is exploring internship support with students interested in policy work.
    2. A prospective intern introduced themselves and described interest in policy, environmental justice, and learning how human rights policy work translates into community impact.
  - ii. June 15 City Council Items and Annual Report
    1. Staff reported that the Commission and Office of Human Rights are scheduled to be before City Council on June 15, 2026, for an ordinance work session and the annual report presentation.
    2. The annual report will be presented during the City Manager's report portion of the meeting.
    3. The annual report presentation will emphasize community engagement as a two-way process of sharing information with the community and receiving information that informs Commission and office work.
  - iii. June 18 Legislator Dialogue Date
    1. Staff reported that the legislator dialogue is scheduled for June 18, 2026.
    2. The work plan needs to be updated to reflect the June 18, 2026, date.
  - iv. Hiring Update
    1. Staff reported that hiring remains underway.
    2. Candidate review will continue now that the annual report and ordinance work are complete.

## **5. WORK SESSION**

- a. Legislator dialogue planning for 06/18/2026 HRC Regular Meeting
  - i. Dialogue Structure and Advance Materials
    1. The Commission discussed structuring the upcoming dialogue with Delegate Callsen and Senator Deeds around focused, community-grounded questions.
    2. The Commission preferred a structured format over a broad open-ended discussion.
    3. Commissioners supported sending background materials in advance.
    4. Proposed advance materials included the Commission's purpose, prior legislative recommendations, stakeholders consulted last year, and stakeholders planned for consultation this year.
  - ii. Issue Education, Advocacy, and Lobbying Boundaries
    1. Staff clarified the boundary between issue education, advocacy, and lobbying.
    2. The Commission may ask questions, share community concerns, and make

- recommendations to City Council.
- 3. City Council is the body that formally speaks for the City in legislative advocacy.
- iii. Potential Legislator Question Areas
  - 1. Housing-related topics included housing stability, eviction timelines, pay-or-quit periods, and permanent supportive housing.
  - 2. Workplace and access-to-justice topics included collective bargaining, courthouse access, and immigration enforcement impacts.
  - 3. Disability-related topics included disability access, transportation, disability benefits, and benefits cliffs.
  - 4. Safety-net and cost-of-living topics included Medicaid, SNAP, TANF, inflation, utility and grocery costs, and rising energy prices.
  - 5. Additional topics included mental health, trauma, job loss, cost-of-living pressures, LGBTQIA+ community concerns, and federal or state funding changes affecting local service obligations.
- iv. Legislative Information Needed
  - 1. Commissioners discussed asking what happened with specific bills during the most recent legislative session.
  - 2. Useful information would include which bills passed, failed, or were vetoed.
  - 3. Commissioners also discussed asking which issues are likely to return next session and which bills have sponsors or momentum.
  - 4. Commissioners identified a need to ask what state-level legislation could address specific community needs.
- v. Key Decision
  - 1. The Commission will develop structured questions and issue groupings to send in advance of the June 18, 2026, legislator dialogue.
- b. 1:1 Stakeholder meeting planning (June - July)
  - i. Stakeholder Poll Results and Priority Organizations
    - 1. The Commission reviewed stakeholder poll results and discussed organizations that received the highest interest for outreach.
    - 2. Highest-interest organizations included Alexandria ARISE, Virginia Poverty Law Center, and Legal Aid Justice Center.
    - 3. Other organizations discussed included legal aid, public housing, housing, homelessness, benefits, disability access, and community service organizations.
  - ii. Combined Stakeholder Panel and Smaller Meeting Approach
    - 1. Commissioners discussed using a combined approach for stakeholder engagement.
    - 2. The approach would include a larger stakeholder panel at the July meeting and smaller one-on-one or two-commissioner meetings with selected organizations.
    - 3. Smaller meetings may be preferable for organizations that need more time, prefer privacy, or are located farther away and would likely meet virtually.
  - iii. Housing and Broader Economic Stability Focus
    - 1. The Commission discussed keeping housing as a continuing priority within the broader focus area of economic stability across protected classes.
    - 2. Commissioners noted that economic stability also includes benefits, disability access, employment, health care, transportation, and cost-of-living pressures.
  - iv. Disability Access and Benefits Resources
    - 1. The Commission discussed adding disability-related organizations and/or city disability-access resources to the stakeholder list.
    - 2. Staff noted that the City has an ADA coordinator who may be a useful internal resource.
    - 3. The Commission also discussed whether Department of Social Services benefits

staff could provide information about what they are seeing from residents applying for benefits.

- v. Key Decisions
  - 1. The Commission will pursue smaller stakeholder meetings where appropriate, in addition to planning a July stakeholder panel.
  - 2. Disability-related organizations and/or city disability-access resources should be added to the stakeholder outreach list.
- c. Expert panel planning for upcoming HRC Regular Meeting
  - i. July Stakeholder Panel Timing
    - 1. The July stakeholder panel was discussed for July 16, 2026.
    - 2. Commissioners expressed interest in beginning stakeholder conversations before the July panel if scheduling permits.
    - 3. Early conversations may be useful with organizations that can provide legislative or city-policy context.
  - ii. Year-Round Stakeholder Engagement
    - 1. The Commission considered whether stakeholder voices could be included more regularly at meetings throughout the year.
    - 2. The legislative recommendations timeline creates pressure to gather input by late summer.
    - 3. City-level policy recommendations can be made to City Council throughout the year.
  - iii. Low-Barrier Shelter and Encampment Issues
    - 1. The Commission discussed low-barrier shelter and encampment-related issues.
    - 2. The topic was described as highly local, with several providers and city processes already involved.
    - 3. The Commission considered whether its role should be to gather information now, participate later in the fall, or focus on related state-level issues.
    - 4. Related state-level issues included permanent supportive housing, Medicaid, and mental health services.
  - iv. Key Decision
    - 1. The Commission will continue planning a July 16, 2026, stakeholder panel and will also consider smaller meetings with selected stakeholders.
- d. Public administrative appeal hearing planning
  - i. Hearing Notice and Meeting Type
    - 1. Staff explained that the parties need 14 days' notice before the public administrative appeal hearing.
    - 2. The Commission discussed whether to use a regular meeting, a work session, or a special meeting.
    - 3. The Commission concluded that a separate special meeting would be more appropriate.
  - ii. Tentative Hearing Date and Scheduling
    - 1. Commissioners discussed availability for the hearing.
    - 2. Monday, July 6, 2026, at 6:00 pm was tentatively identified.
    - 3. Staff indicated that a calendar hold would be placed and follow-up planning details would be provided by email.
  - iii. Hearing Chair and Pre-Hearing Discussion Guidance
    - 1. The chair designated the vice chair to chair the appeal hearing panel.
    - 2. Staff advised commissioners to avoid substantive discussion of the appeal case outside the properly noticed hearing.
    - 3. This guidance is particularly important where more than two commissioners are involved.

- iv. Key Decisions
  - 1. The public administrative appeal hearing was tentatively scheduled for Monday, July 6, 2026, at 6:00 pm, pending calendar hold, notice, and follow-up.
  - 2. Elizabeth was designated to chair the appeal hearing panel.
- e. HRC Rules & Procedures amendments\*
  - i. Proposed Rules and Procedures Amendments
    - 1. Staff presented proposed amendments to the Commission's Rules and Procedures.
    - 2. The proposed changes remove language that the City Attorney's Office indicated should also be removed from the Charlottesville Human Rights Ordinance.
    - 3. The proposed changes eliminate duplicative language already contained in the Ordinance.
    - 4. The proposed changes also remove a section that staff could not locate in the Ordinance or general code provisions for boards and commissions.
  - ii. Purpose of Rules and Procedures Amendments
    - 1. The amendments are intended to align the Rules and Procedures with the ordinance.
    - 2. The amendments are also intended to avoid duplicative or unsupported procedural language.
  - iii. Motion: Mariane Asad Doyle moved to approve the HRC Rules & Procedures amendments.
    - 1. Second: Callum McCain von Schill seconded the motion.
    - 2. Vote:
      - a. In favor: 6
      - b. Opposed: 0
      - c. Abstained: 0
    - 3. Motion to approve the HRC Rules & Procedures amendments passed.
  - iv. Key Decision
    - 1. The HRC Rules & Procedures amendments were approved by a vote of 6 in favor, 0 opposed, and 0 abstained.
- f. Work Plan check in
  - i. June and July Work Plan Updates
    - 1. Staff reviewed work plan updates for June and July.
    - 2. The work plan was adjusted to show the June regular meeting as the legislator dialogue and the July regular meeting as the stakeholder panel.
    - 3. The plan also added two-on-one stakeholder meetings and legislator-question preparation as actions between meetings.
  - ii. Stakeholder Outreach Timing and Coordination
    - 1. The Commission discussed contacting potential stakeholder panelists soon.
    - 2. The preferred timing would allow the Commission to report to Council that stakeholder outreach is underway.
    - 3. Commissioners discussed coordinating by email where possible to reduce the need for extra meetings.
  - iii. Key Decision
    - 1. Staff will update the work plan to reflect the June legislator dialogue, July stakeholder panel, stakeholder outreach between meetings, legislator-question preparation, the June 10 leadership meeting, and cancellation of the June 4 work session.
- g. New business
  - i. No new business was raised. The chair noted that updates from city-level meetings may be provided at a future meeting, depending on timing and relevance.

h. Decision regarding next Work Session on 06/04/2026\*

i. Key Decision

1. The June 4, 2026, work session was cancelled by consensus.

**6. MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC**

a. PUBLIC COMMENT

i. No public comment was received at the end of the meeting.

b. COMMISSION RESPONSE TO MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC

i. No Commission response was required.

**7. COMMISSIONER UPDATES**

a. No commissioner updates were provided.

**8. NEXT STEPS**

a. Key Decisions

1. The April 16, 2026, regular meeting minutes were approved by a vote of 6 in favor, 0 opposed, and 0 abstained.

2. The June 18, 2026, legislator dialogue will be structured around specific questions and issue groupings prepared in advance.

3. The Commission will continue planning a July 16, 2026, stakeholder panel and will also pursue smaller stakeholder meetings where appropriate.

4. Disability-related organizations and/or city disability-access resources should be added to the stakeholder outreach list.

5. The public administrative appeal hearing was tentatively scheduled for Monday, July 6, 2026, at 6:00 pm, pending calendar hold, notice, and follow-up.

6. Elizabeth was designated to chair the appeal hearing panel.

7. The HRC Rules & Procedures amendments were approved by a vote of 6 in favor, 0 opposed, and 0 abstained.

8. The work plan will be updated to reflect the June legislator dialogue, July stakeholder panel, stakeholder outreach between meetings, legislator-question preparation, the June 10 leadership meeting, and cancellation of the June 4 work session.

9. The June 4, 2026, work session was cancelled by consensus.

b. Action items

1. Prepare and synthesize structured issue groupings and questions for the June 18, 2026, legislator dialogue using meeting notes and official notes.

a. Owner: Heather and Elizabeth

b. Deadline/timing: Beginning of June; before questions are sent to legislative staff.

2. Send any additional legislator dialogue questions or issue ideas to be incorporated into the shared question set.

a. Owner: All commissioners

b. Deadline/timing: Beginning of June.

3. Send finalized questions or topic areas to the invited legislators' staffers in advance.

a. Owner: Todd / staff

b. Deadline/timing: Early June; before June 18.

4. Research bill numbers, sponsors, local sponsors, and bill status for issues the Commission may recommend to Council, as needed.

a. Owner: Todd / staff; possible intern support

b. Deadline/timing: Before legislative recommendations are finalized.

5. Update the work plan to show the June 18, 2026, legislator dialogue, July stakeholder panel, between-meeting stakeholder meetings, legislator-question preparation, June 10 leadership meeting, and June 4 work session cancellation.

- a. Owner: Todd / staff
  - b. Deadline/timing: After the meeting.
- 6. Create or circulate a shared document for collecting legislator questions and topic groupings.
  - a. Owner: Heather and Elizabeth, with Todd / staff support as needed
  - b. Deadline/timing: Beginning of June.
- 7. Re-send the stakeholder poll.
  - a. Owner: Elizabeth
  - b. Deadline/timing: Completed during meeting.
- 8. Complete or update the stakeholder poll and add missing organizations or stakeholder categories.
  - a. Owner: Any commissioners who have not completed it
  - b. Deadline/timing: As soon as possible; before outreach is finalized.
- 9. Coordinate stakeholder outreach language and send invitations to potential panelists.
  - a. Owner: Heather and Todd / staff
  - b. Deadline/timing: Soon; preferably before the June 15 Council presentation if feasible.
- 10. Determine which stakeholders should be invited to the July panel versus smaller or virtual meetings.
  - a. Owner: Heather and Elizabeth, with Todd / staff support
  - b. Deadline/timing: Before stakeholder invitations are finalized.
- 11. Participate in stakeholder meetings, including possible meetings with housing-focused organizations and other high-priority community groups.
  - a. Owner: Cal
  - b. Deadline/timing: June after the 4th and/or early July, subject to scheduling.
- 12. Support virtual stakeholder meetings with Thrive Virginia and Alexandria ARISE if scheduled.
  - a. Owner: Emily and Elizabeth
  - b. Deadline/timing: Before or around the July stakeholder panel, subject to availability.
- 13. Add Disability Law Center of Virginia and possibly other disability-access resources to the stakeholder list.
  - a. Owner: Heather and Elizabeth, with Todd / staff support
  - b. Deadline/timing: Before stakeholder invitations are finalized.
- 14. Consider inviting or consulting the City ADA coordinator and/or Social Services benefits staff for disability, access, and benefits-cliff information.
  - a. Owner: Todd / staff and Commission leadership
  - b. Deadline/timing: No fixed deadline; before recommendations if pursued.
- 15. Place a calendar hold for the public administrative appeal hearing and follow up with planning details.
  - a. Owner: Todd / staff
  - b. Deadline/timing: Promptly after meeting.
- 16. Provide the required 14-day notice to the parties for the appeal hearing.
  - a. Owner: Todd / staff
  - b. Deadline/timing: At least 14 days before the hearing; by approximately June 22 if July 6 is confirmed.
- 17. Chair the public administrative appeal hearing panel.
  - a. Owner: Elizabeth
  - b. Deadline/timing: July 6, 2026, if confirmed.
- 18. Avoid substantive discussion of the appeal case outside the properly

noticed hearing, especially with more than two commissioners involved.

- a. Owner: Appeal panel / commissioners
  - b. Deadline/timing: Ongoing until the hearing.
19. Update and post the approved Rules & Procedures amendments.
- a. Owner: Todd / staff
  - b. Deadline/timing: After the meeting.
20. Provide commissioners with a more precise time window for the June 15 Council meeting if available.
- a. Owner: Todd / staff
  - b. Deadline/timing: Before June 15.
21. Continue reviewing hiring candidates and keep the Commission updated.
- a. Owner: Todd / staff
  - b. Deadline/timing: Ongoing.
22. Provide updates from city-level meetings at a future Commission meeting if timing and relevance allow.
- a. Owner: Heather
  - b. Deadline/timing: Next meeting or later; timing to be determined.

**9. ADJOURN**

- a. Meeting adjourned at 7:47 pm.