



**Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes
Regular Meeting
June 18, 2026
City Space, 100 5th 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, Chair
 - 2. Elizabeth Stark, Vice Chair
 - 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 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. Public comment was received from representatives of the Fifeville Neighborhood Association regarding proposed development in the Fifeville neighborhood.
 - ii. Community Vision, Small Area Planning, and Development Concerns
 - 1. Speakers described Fifeville as a historically Black neighborhood with a long-standing community vision focused on anti-displacement, affordability, and centering Black and brown residents.
 - 2. The Commission heard that the Cherry Avenue small area planning process included substantial neighborhood engagement and that the resulting community vision was incorporated into the City comprehensive plan.
 - 3. Speakers expressed concern that a different area of the neighborhood was rezoned in a way that allowed a proposed seven-story, approximately 750-bed student-oriented development without comparable neighborhood notice or engagement.
 - 4. Speakers stated that the proposed development would be located near 7th Street, behind First Baptist Church on West Main Street, in the historic Black area of Fifeville.

- iii. Displacement, Construction, Traffic, and Accessibility Concerns
 - 1. Speakers raised concerns about displacement pressure, property value impacts, construction disruption, noise, light, traffic, parking, and effects on neighborhood character.
 - 2. Speakers noted that the area has narrow streets and existing cut-through traffic, including trucks and buses, and that construction and added traffic could worsen existing safety and environmental concerns.
 - 3. In response to a question from the Commission, speakers described potential impacts on older residents and residents with mobility needs, including parking availability and access to designated accessible parking spaces.
 - iv. Process, Remaining Advocacy Tools, and Community Meetings
 - 1. Speakers described the Board of Architectural Review process, City Council action, the limited remaining formal opportunities for community input, and concerns that community benefits negotiations may occur with little leverage after approvals have advanced.
 - 2. Speakers stated that a Fifeville community meeting was scheduled for Monday at 6:30 pm at First Baptist Church on West Main Street.
 - 3. Speakers stated that a meeting with the developer was scheduled for Wednesday at 6:00 pm at the Jefferson School auditorium.
 - b. COMMISSION RESPONSE TO MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC
 - i. Commissioners asked questions about the project location, the approval process, remaining advocacy tools, the number of units or beds, potential discriminatory or displacement impacts, traffic, parking, disability access, and upcoming community meetings.
 - ii. The chair indicated that the Commission would continue to monitor the matter and would request additional information about the timeline, community meetings, and City engagement process.

3. MINUTES

- a. Review of minutes from May 21, 2026.
 - i. Motion: Jessica Cocciolone moved to approve the May 21, 2026, meeting minutes with corrections to the attendance list.
 - 1. Second: Heather Roberson Gaston seconded the motion.
 - 2. Vote:
 - a. In favor: 4
 - b. Opposed: 0
 - c. Abstained: 3
 - 3. Motion to approve minutes passed.

4. BUSINESS MATTERS

- a. CHAIR UPDATE
 - i. Stakeholder Outreach and Additional Stakeholder Meeting
 - 1. The chair reported that invitations had been sent for the July 16, 2026, stakeholder meeting, which will support the Commission's state-level and local recommendation process.
 - 2. The Commission discussed adding a second stakeholder meeting later in the year so that community input can be received more regularly and can also support local policy recommendations.
 - 3. The chair reported that the Commission will begin scheduling one-

on-one or two-on-one stakeholder meetings after hearing back from invited organizations.

- ii. Fifeville Neighborhood Association Outreach
 - 1. The chair reported receiving outreach from the Fifeville Neighborhood Association regarding a proposed development and potential unintended consequences of development activity in Charlottesville.
 - 2. The chair moved to public comment so that representatives of the neighborhood association could address the Commission.
- b. OHR STAFF REPORT
 - i. Hiring and Staffing
 - 1. Staff reported that the hiring process for the policy and impact position is moving forward and that interviews are expected the following week.
 - ii. Ordinance Amendments
 - 1. Staff reported that the proposed Human Rights Ordinance amendments were presented to City Council and that Council had few questions about the amendments themselves.
 - 2. Staff stated that the ordinance amendments are expected to be placed on the July 20, 2026, City Council agenda, likely on the consent agenda.
 - iii. Chief Prosperity Officer
 - 1. Staff reported that Joshua Barr is expected to serve as the City's new Chief Prosperity Officer, a position overseeing the Office of Human Rights, Home to Hope, ADA-related work, and the Police Civilian Oversight Board.
 - iv. Outreach Events
 - 1. Staff reported that event season is beginning and that the Office of Human Rights expects to participate in community events such as Sabroso, Pride, Soul of Cville, and the Back to School Bash, subject to capacity.
 - 2. Commissioners were invited to participate in tabling and outreach opportunities.
 - v. Intern Support
 - 1. Staff reported that Intern Kattalin Bennett is available to support Commission research on City policy and state legislation.
 - 2. Staff also noted that another Intern Shounak Reza is interested in presenting a project to the Commission at the July 16, 2026, meeting if time permits.

5. WORK SESSION

- a. Discussion with Delegate Callsen and Senator Deeds
 - i. State Budget, Housing, and Public Safety Updates
 - 1. The Commission heard that the state budget process was still underway and that final numbers had not yet been settled.
 - 2. Discussion included potential historic investments in the Housing Trust Fund, eviction relief, and other housing-related funding.
 - 3. Updates also included legislation related to firearms on college campuses, emergency removal orders, and statewide funding for the Marcus Alert system.
 - ii. SNAP, Medicaid, and Health Coverage Pressures
 - 1. The Commission heard that federal changes have shifted

- substantial SNAP-related administrative costs and funding pressures to the state.
2. Discussion included efforts to address SNAP error-rate issues and state costs associated with federal reductions or penalties.
 3. The Commission heard concerns about Medicaid and health coverage losses, including the expiration of federal tax credits, anticipated Medicaid reductions, and the limits of state funding to buffer those losses.
- iii. Affordability, Leave, Collective Bargaining, and Prescription Drug Costs
1. Discussion included legislation related to minimum wage, paid family medical leave, sick leave, collective bargaining, and prescription drug affordability.
 2. Paid family medical leave was described as a major policy development, with implementation expected in 2028.
 3. Collective bargaining and prescription drug affordability legislation were discussed as items that were passed but vetoed and may require additional strategy in future sessions.
 4. Pharmacy benefit manager reform was discussed as an area where some progress was made.
- iv. Tenant Protections and Housing Legislation
1. Tenant-related updates included the extension of the pay-or-quit period from five days to 14 days and a 90-day notice requirement for rent increases.
 2. The Commission heard that tenants will have greater ability to raise defenses in eviction cases without first paying all past-due rent into court.
 3. Discussion also included legislation allowing localities to sue landlords on behalf of tenants and legislation supporting mobile home park residents when parks are sold.
- v. Data Centers and Budget Negotiations
1. The Commission heard that data centers were a significant issue in the pending budget agreement due to tax exemptions, energy and water demands, environmental concerns, and infrastructure impacts.
 2. A potential budget compromise was described that would preserve existing tax exemptions while creating new tax revenue from data-center equipment or generators.
- vi. Courthouse Access, Immigration Enforcement, and 287(g) Agreements
1. Discussion included legislation intended to limit immigration enforcement arrests in courthouses without appropriate safeguards; that legislation was vetoed.
 2. The Commission also heard that legislation restricting 287(g) agreements passed, with the intent of limiting the use of local and state resources for federal immigration enforcement activity.
 3. Commissioners discussed local and regional concerns about immigration enforcement activity and its effect on community members' willingness to seek help or participate in court processes.
- vii. Rent-Gouging Legislation, Good-Cause Eviction, and Tenant Organizing
1. Commissioners asked about the prospects for rent-gouging legislation and heard that the bill is likely to return but may need to

- be more narrowly tailored to address bad actors and respond to concerns raised by legislators and stakeholders.
 - 2. Commissioners also raised concerns about nonrenewal of leases, tenant organizing, and the absence of good-cause eviction or nonrenewal protections in Virginia.
 - 3. The Commission discussed the possibility of raising those issues with housing advocates and legislators during the recommendation process.
- viii. Benefits Cliffs and Public Housing Rent/Recertification Issues
 - 1. Commissioners raised concerns about benefits cliffs, including situations where increased income or household changes can reduce or eliminate benefits and destabilize residents.
 - 2. Commissioners also discussed public housing recertification, rent increases, the manner in which residents are notified of changes, and situations where residents may face large balances after delayed or difficult administrative processes.
 - 3. The Commission heard that additional expertise will be useful in identifying potential legislative solutions.
- ix. Legislative Follow-Up and Bill Ideas
 - 1. The Commission was encouraged to share bill ideas, constituent concerns, and possible legislative fixes throughout the year.
 - 2. The discussion emphasized that early communication with legislators and subject-matter advocates can help shape more viable recommendations.
- x. Key Decisions
 - 1. The Commission will continue identifying state legislative issues related to housing stability, tenant protections, benefits cliffs, public housing administration, affordability, and access to courts and public systems.
 - 2. The Commission will use stakeholder input and legislator feedback to refine the legislative recommendations process before the August recommendation deadline.
- b. Work Plan Check-In
 - i. Stakeholder Outreach and Recommendation Timeline
 - 1. The Commission discussed adding HOME to the stakeholder outreach list and contacting additional housing-policy experts before or after the July stakeholder meeting.
 - 2. The Commission discussed completing one-on-one or two-on-one stakeholder meetings before August 14, 2026, so that information can be considered before the August 20, 2026, legislative recommendations discussion.
 - 3. The Commission discussed adopting legislative recommendation priorities on August 20, 2026, with the understanding that final language may continue to be refined afterward.
 - ii. City Policy Recommendation Timeline
 - 1. The Commission discussed moving City policy recommendations to November to allow time for additional stakeholder input and local-policy discussion.
 - 2. The Commission also noted that it can still write letters or take other action before November if a local human rights issue requires more immediate attention.

- iii. Additional Stakeholder Meeting
 - 1. The Commission discussed holding another stakeholder meeting in September or October to support City policy recommendations and year-round community engagement.
 - iv. Key Decisions
 - 1. One-on-one or two-on-one stakeholder meetings should be completed before August 14, 2026, where feasible.
 - 2. The Commission will plan for legislative recommendation priorities to be discussed on August 20, 2026, with final language to be refined afterward as needed.
 - 3. The City policy recommendation timeline will be moved toward November to allow additional stakeholder engagement.
 - 4. The Commission will plan an additional stakeholder meeting in September or October, subject to scheduling.
 - c. New Business
 - i. City Council Outreach on Local Recommendation Process
 - 1. The chair reported outreach to City Council members to better understand how local Commission recommendations are received, considered, and used.
 - 2. The chair reported meeting with one Council member, scheduling a meeting with another Council member in August, and reaching out to a third Council member.
 - 3. The goal of the outreach is to clarify and strengthen the process for local recommendations, which was described as less clear than the state legislative recommendation process.
 - d. Decision Regarding Next Work Session on 07/02/2026
 - i. Key Decision
 - 1. The Commission will not hold the July 2, 2026, work session unless a need arises.

6. MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC

- a. PUBLIC COMMENT
 - i. No additional public comment was received at the end of the meeting.
- b. COMMISSION RESPONSE TO MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC
 - i. No additional Commission response was required.

7. COMMISSIONER UPDATES

- a. July Meeting Availability
 - i. A commissioner reported that they will be available for the July 16, 2026, regular meeting after canceling July travel plans.
- b. Tenant Conditions, Supportive Housing, and Encampment Updates
 - i. Commissioners discussed recent local reporting on tenant issues at Parks Edge and conditions affecting residents at The Crossings.
 - ii. Discussion included concerns about evictions at supportive housing properties, rent levels, the need for resident support services, and the impact of funding reductions on permanent supportive housing.
 - iii. Commissioners also discussed encampment-related resources, including portable bathrooms, waste disposal, and access challenges near the 0 East High Street area and the Rivanna River corridor.

8. NEXT STEPS

- a. Key Decisions
 - i. The May 21, 2026, meeting minutes were approved with corrections to the attendance list by a vote of 4 in favor, 0 opposed, and 3 abstained.

- ii. The Commission will continue preparing for the July 16, 2026, stakeholder meeting and will pursue additional stakeholder engagement to support both state legislative and local policy recommendations.
- iii. One-on-one or two-on-one stakeholder meetings should be completed before August 14, 2026, where feasible.
- iv. The Commission will use stakeholder input and legislator feedback to refine legislative recommendation priorities before the August 20, 2026, discussion.
- v. The City policy recommendation timeline will be moved toward November to allow additional stakeholder engagement.
- vi. The Commission will plan an additional stakeholder meeting in September or October, subject to scheduling.
- vii. The Commission will not hold the July 2, 2026, work session unless a need arises.

b. Action items

i. Heather Roberson Gaston

- 1. Distribute or forward Fifeville Neighborhood Association meeting information and any flyer or meeting details received from neighborhood representatives.
 - a. Deadline/timing: As soon as information is received; before the upcoming community meetings if feasible.
- 2. Continue outreach to City Council members to clarify how local Commission recommendations are received, considered, and used.
 - a. Deadline/timing: Ongoing; including scheduled August outreach.
- 3. Coordinate with staff on stakeholder outreach, including possible addition of HOME and other housing-policy experts to the outreach list.
 - a. Deadline/timing: Before the July 16, 2026, stakeholder meeting if feasible.

ii. Todd / staff

- 1. Update the work plan to reflect the stakeholder meeting schedule, August 14 target for one-on-one or two-on-one stakeholder meetings, August 20 legislative recommendations discussion, November City policy recommendation timeline, and July 2 work session status.
 - a. Deadline/timing: After the meeting.
- 2. Continue the hiring process for the policy and impact position.
 - a. Deadline/timing: Interviews expected the week after the meeting; ongoing until filled.
- 3. Track the ordinance amendments expected for the July 20, 2026, City Council agenda and update the Commission as needed.
 - a. Deadline/timing: Before or after the July 20, 2026, City Council meeting, as appropriate.
- 4. Send commissioners dates and information for upcoming outreach events and coordinate tabling opportunities.
 - a. Deadline/timing: As event dates are confirmed.
- 5. Coordinate intern research support for City policy and state legislative research needs.
 - a. Deadline/timing: Ongoing; before legislative

- recommendations are finalized.
- 6. Coordinate whether an intern presentation can be included at the July 16, 2026, regular meeting.
 - a. Deadline/timing: Before the July 16, 2026, meeting.
- iii. Elizabeth Stark and Dawn Lawson
 - 1. Follow up on public housing rent increase, recertification notice, and benefits-cliff issues for possible legislative or policy recommendations.
 - a. Deadline/timing: Before legislative recommendations are finalized.
- iv. Elizabeth Stark
 - 1. Share local reporting on Parks Edge, The Crossings, and related tenant or supportive housing issues with commissioners.
 - a. Deadline/timing: After the meeting.
 - 2. Continue conversations with housing advocates regarding good-cause eviction or nonrenewal concepts, rent-gouging legislation, and tenant-organizing protections.
 - a. Deadline/timing: Before legislative recommendations are finalized.
- v. Delegate Callsen
 - 1. Provide follow-up information on whether the 90-day rent increase notice legislation applies to public housing or similar rent recertification situations, if available.
 - a. Deadline/timing: After the meeting; timing to be determined.
 - 2. Identify or suggest potential experts on benefits cliffs and related legislative options, if available.
 - a. Deadline/timing: Timing to be determined.
 - 3. Flag good-cause eviction or nonrenewal concerns and related tenant-protection ideas for housing-policy advocates, if appropriate.
 - a. Deadline/timing: Timing to be determined.
- vi. Fifeville Neighborhood Association representatives
 - 1. Send the chair the flyer or meeting information for upcoming Fifeville neighborhood and developer meetings.
 - a. Deadline/timing: Before the upcoming Monday and Wednesday meetings, if feasible.
- vii. All commissioners
 - 1. Share bill ideas, constituent concerns, stakeholder input, and possible legislative fixes with Commission leadership and staff for consideration in legislative recommendations.
 - a. Deadline/timing: Ongoing; before the August 20, 2026, legislative recommendations discussion.
 - 2. Attend or monitor Fifeville community meetings and stakeholder meetings if available and appropriate.
 - a. Deadline/timing: As meetings occur.

9. ADJOURN

- a. Meeting adjourned at 7:46 pm.