



**Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes
Annual Retreat
April 23, 2022
Virtual/Electronic Meeting
10:00 am**

Public link to meeting rebroadcasts on Boxcast: <https://boxcast.tv/channel/vabajtzeuuy3iclkx1a>

1) WELCOME

- a) CALL TO ORDER
 - i) Chair, Jessica Harris, called the meeting to order at 10:05 am
- b) ROLL CALL
 - i) Jessica Harris
 - ii) Ernest Chambers
 - iii) Jeanette Abi-Nader
 - iv) Mary Bauer
 - v) Wolfgang Keppley
 - vi) Erika Robinson
 - vii) Andrew Orban
 - viii) Lyndele Von Schill
- 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) MINUTES

- a) Review of minutes from 3/17/2022 Regular Meeting
 - i) Motion to approve: Ernest
 - ii) Second: Jeanette
 - iii) Vote
 - (1) In favor: 7
 - (2) Opposed: 0
 - (3) Abstained: 1
- b) Review of minutes from 3/24/2022 Community Engagement Town Hall Meeting
 - i) Motion to approve: Wolfgang
 - ii) Second: Jeanette
 - iii) Vote
 - (1) In favor: 4
 - (2) Opposed: 0
 - (3) Abstained: 4

3) INTRODUCTIONS

- a) Commissioners all introduce themselves and share one interesting fact about themselves

4) WORK SESSION

- a) Review of HRC work in 2021
 - i) The public can view the HRC's work on the city website

- ii) Summary of HRC work from Jan. 2021 to Apr. 2022 is included in the agenda packet
 - iii) Previous Chair shares critique of her tenure that the Commission spent too little time on important matters and says that the HRC would have a greater impact if it focused on a few large priorities
 - (1) Commissioner says that the pandemic and the city government situation made it more difficult to get things done
 - iv) Commissioner says she would like to see the HRC continue to do two things at once
 - v) Chair observes that Commission has seen a shift to action and appreciates all of the work done during the previous Chair's term
 - vi) Commissioner acknowledges cohesion and agreement of direction of the current Commission
 - vii) OHR Staff adds that he has observed the Commission's growth over time, and they are now focusing more on how to directly engage the public
- b) Review of OHR work in 2021
- i) OHR data and takeaways is included in the agenda packet
 - ii) Key takeaways
 - (1) Incoming contacts continue to increase ever since reopening the Office in June
 - (a) Has quadrupled, and numbers continue to rise
 - (b) Expects contacts to rise as outreach in the community increases
 - (2) Wants Office to have the resources to accommodate these contacts, especially for formal complaints
 - (a) Will have to advocate to Council for staffing of full-time Investigator and Intake Counselor
 - (3) Race and disability continue to be the most common protected class referenced in inquiries and complaints
 - (4) Most inquiries and complaints are about housing, especially emergency housing
 - (a) Second most common is employment
 - (5) FHAP project
 - (a) Most recent iteration is emailed out, but it often changes
 - (b) Success of the FHAP partnership is going to be dependent on demonstration of Council's financial commitment to it and the OHR's staffing capabilities
 - (c) FEPA project is being outpaced by the need for a FHAP at the moment
 - iii) Response
 - (1) Chair says that the HRC should make OHR staffing a priority and suggests reviewing pending items to determine next steps
 - (2) Commissioner asks OHR staff for status of FHAP
 - (a) Todd submitted a draft to City Attorney's Office for legal review; made some more edits and was given more questions to ask
 - (b) Talked to Kenneth Saunders from the Fairfax County OHR about how they operate as a FHAP

- (c) Still has several questions to ask Erik Steinecker
 - (d) Other priorities have put this project on the backburner lately, but it is an upcoming priority to create a revised draft for adoption
 - (e) Must be prepared staff-wise for changes before adopting the new Ordinance
- (3) Commissioner confirms that 1,962 contacts is from 1/1/2021 to 12/31/2022, but incoming contacts quadrupled once the Office reopened in June
- (a) Also confirms that \$75,000 is about the total cost of an additional Investigator
 - (i) OHR staff says this did not get approved for FY 2023, but HRC can continue preparing to prepare a pitch to Council in September
 - (ii) Importance of completing the CY2021 Annual Report to show Council the numbers
- (4) Wolfgang provides updates on items from last year
- (a) Language Access Plan just needs to be signed by the Chair and taken to Council
 - (i) Plain-language version has not yet been made, but Lyndele and Wolfgang can work on it
 - (ii) Chair notes that there are plans to have a speaker visit to talk about plain language for the May meeting
 - (iii) Passed the Language Access Plan in December regular meeting
 - (b) Disability PSA Project
 - (i) One of the previous contacts responded
 - (ii) Arc of the Piedmont and Independent Resource Center said they would see if anyone is interested in participating, but no follow-ups yet
 - (iii) Project seems to be on hold
- (5) Commissioner also asks Todd about the nature of complaints about emergency housing
- (a) Complaints and inquiries/discussion are mostly about housing discrimination on the basis of disability (mostly mental health, sometimes coupled with substance use)
 - (b) There is a shortage of beds for emergency shelter (congregate shelter, individual room setting, and multi-person room setting)
 - (c) Emergency housing system is not closely linked with mental health services and substance use support (because there are also low resources in these sectors at the moment), but there are potentially other providers if there is funding
 - (d) Commission can provide legislative guidance to Council and advocate increased funding for mental health services, as well as talk to Council about what the

community has been talking about
(e) Look into long-term deeply affordable (<30% AMI) housing

- c) HRC projects to revisit
 - i) Legal representation for parties to a complaint
 - (1) Point of discussion that was tabled
 - (2) OHR staff says that when there is a complaint, one party (typically the respondent) has many more resources than the other, including legal representation
 - (a) So far, OHR tries to find pro bono counsel for complainants through LAJC's VA Volunteer Lawyer Program
 - (b) Also creating a program with law students doing research and presenting to an attorney
 - (c) A difficult system for finding legal advice for parties
 - (3) OHR staff says that Commission can look back at the draft resolution proposing a skeleton program to present to Council establishing a fund so parties to a complaint can pay an attorney
 - (4) Commissioner supports doing this advocacy so that finding legal representation is more sustainable---compare to advocacy for legal representation for tenants in eviction proceedings
 - (5) Add resolution for both legal representation issues to next meeting
 - ii) Commemoration of Days Honored
 - (1) HRC provided Ashley with feedback
 - (2) Does HRC want to partner more with Ashley in planning these days?
 - (3) Commissioner asks about HRC having social media presence to have platform for the days
 - (a) Can revisit this, just need to figure out logistics
 - (b) There are existing Twitter accounts linked to the Dialogue on Race and to OHR
 - (4) Can set up ad-hoc Community Engagement committee meeting to take next steps
 - (5) Commissioner notes it is important to prioritize and ensure HRC can do it
 - (6) Chair notes social media can be helpful in general for the HRC
 - iii) HRC representation on CLIHC
 - (1) Since housing is a big issue, Commissioners could engage/monitor what other groups are doing about it
 - (2) CLIHC had wanted to prioritize having people of color on the committee
 - (3) Meetings are the second Tuesday of every month at 5:30pm
 - (a) Can attend even if not an official participant
 - (4) Chair notes that it can be good to be present at other groups and commissions' meetings
 - iv) Greeting National Society of Black Physicists (NSBP) conference attendees

- (1) HRC can send an official letter of support and greet them in person
 - (2) November 6-9, 2022; conference will take over Downtown
 - (3) Commissioners are free to help with planning
 - (4) Wanting to work with schoolchildren---contact Lyndele if anyone has a contact
 - (a) Note that 11/7 and 11/8 are teacher workdays, so it may have to be up to parents to bring students
 - (b) Commissioner suggests trying to partner with YMCA in addition to public schools
 - (c) Ernest volunteers to help with school contacts
 - (d) Commissioner suggests contacting a Councilor to deliver some kind of welcoming proclamation
 - (5) Could have a dinner on the Downtown Mall open to NSBP students
 - (a) Possible as long as there is no talk about official HRC business
 - (b) Commissioner suggests being a partner with the City government
 - (c) Lyndele has been in contact with Ashley about the City government being involved
- v) Amendment to Rules and Procedures to Martha's Rules
- (1) Need to vote; Kathryn had been working on it
 - (2) Putting it on May's list
- d) Planning for in-person meetings
- i) Remy says there will be a formal email coming out Monday; most Boards and Commissions will be given to option to return to in-person meetings
 - (1) If they elect to stay on Zoom, the bodies will run the meetings themselves without the help of Communications
 - (2) Commissioner asks what restrictions will be put in place for in-person meetings
 - (a) There will be more clarification in coming weeks
 - ii) Commissioner asks what spaces will be available
 - (1) Many groups are being given the option of CitySpace, which would give the option of hybrid meetings (this has historically been the location for HRC meetings)
 - (2) Basement conference room may also be an option
 - iii) Commissioner strongly supports having a virtual option for meetings
 - (1) Town Halls could be helpful in person
 - (2) There are talks of there being state-mandated in-person meetings for publicly-appointed bodies
 - iv) It is helpful to be mindful of when other Commission meetings occur, but HRC can plan its own meeting times
- e) *Break (15 minutes)*
- i) Roll Call: all Commissioners from before the break are present
- f) Strategic planning for 2022
- i) Commissioners use Whiteboard function to brainstorm priorities for 2022
 - ii) Identify items to bring forward to City Council and choose 3-5 action items

- iii) *5-minute brainstorm period*
- (1) Screenshots of whiteboard will be available
 - (2) ** = circled for being a priority
- iv) Discussion over whiteboard points (Commissioners each assign each a numeric value 1-5 depending on their interest; 1=of low interest, 5=of high interest)
- (1) Each Commissioner picks other City committee to attend and report back/share potential overlap of interests/work
 - (a) Average numeric value: 3.31
 - (2) Fair housing testing through HOME (Housing Opportunities Made Equal) - test local landlords for discriminatory practices
 - (a) Came up during Virginia HRC meeting; other cities have invited HOME or another organization to test landlords
 - (b) A FHAP agreement would facilitate this action, or could look into another organization to test local landlords
 - (c) Could be a research project
 - (d) Average numeric value: 3
 - (3) Figure out what mandated "research project" should be
 - (a) Mandated to do 1 per year in current bylaws
 - (b) Chair suggests tabling this until after deciding upon priorities for the year
 - (c) No value assigned
 - (4) Commission committing to participate in one Right to Be webinar in a year (or other various trainings)**
 - (a) Webinars occur periodically throughout the year; can attend one that is convenient then reconvene to talk
 - (b) Not a focus necessarily, but agreeing to do the training to learn together as a Commission
 - (c) Todd adds that he can forward interesting training opportunities to Commissioners
 - (d) Average numeric value: 4.38
 - (5) Transitional housing**
 - (a) Came up in Town Hall and Housing Panel
 - (b) Individuals coming out of jail or treatment centers transitioning into housing
 - (c) Commissioner notes in chat this could be a good research project
 - (d) Average numeric value: 4.88
 - (6) Affordable housing**
 - (a) Come up with definition of affordable housing
 - (b) Being able to live, eat, and work in Charlottesville
 - (c) HRC should coordinate with other organizations/commissions about this
 - (d) Commissioner notes that a success of the Town Hall was how community members made connections; the HRC can continue to act as a facilitator for these kinds of connections
 - (e) Average numeric value: 5

- (7) City of Worcester, MA offers simultaneous interpretation equipment at no cost to community
- (a) Unknown what feasibility would be for Charlottesville
 - (b) In Worcester, it is offered as a service for any community organization that checks in out and returns it
 - (c) Could do within the Accessibility committee
 - (d) Average numeric value: 3.29
- (8) Playing a role in the discussion of what a City budget would look like that is truly equitable
- (a) The voice of the HRC could be valuable in looking at the budget through an equity and justice lens
 - (b) Commissioner suggests this could be a good research project
 - (c) Average numeric value: 3.61
- (9) Clarity around the equitable treatment of residents by CPD
- (a) Inequities are still happening
 - (b) Unsure of HRC action, but could request information or presence from CPD at least once a year to share insights
 - (i) Possibly a Town Hall with the community
 - (c) Commissioner suggests looking at disproportional contact and arrest for BIPOC residents could be a good topic for the mandated research project
 - (i) Could be overlap with PCOB
 - (d) Average numeric value: 4.62
- (10) HRC staffing
- (a) Average numeric value: 5
- (11) Community engagement—attending planned community events
- (a) Can be at community events to engage with the public once HRC decides on priorities
 - (b) Decide on number of engagements to commit to every year
 - (c) Victoria is currently working on an annual outreach plan
 - (d) Average numeric value: 5
- (12) Town Hall discussions**
- (a) Could be under community engagement/used as needed
 - (b) Average numeric value: 4.29
- (13) Homelessness
- (a) Related to transitional/affordable housing and care for local community
 - (b) Average numeric value: 4.78
- (14) Making sure Council follows through on priorities that affect marginalized communities
- (a) From talking to Councilor Payne about keeping up with priorities
 - (b) Average numeric value: 5
- v) Research focus ideas
- (1) Equitable City budget
 - (2) Equitable treatment of residents by CPD

- (a) Disproportional contact and arrest for BIPOC residents
 - (3) Transitional housing
 - (4) OHR staff notes there could be research around the system of care for people experiencing homelessness
 - (a) Anthony Haro is point person
- g) Final HRC conceptual priorities for 2022 (** = specific prioritized action item):
 - i) Housing equity (affordable housing**)
 - (1) Homelessness
 - (2) Transitional housing
 - ii) Community engagement events**
 - (1) Town Hall
 - (2) Providing interpretive tools for residents to rent
 - iii) Equity and accountability
 - (1) Following up with City Council**
 - (2) City budget analysis for equity
 - (3) CPD equity and research
 - iv) OHR capacity building
 - (1) OHR staffing increase**
 - (2) HRC commitment to attend other meetings
 - (3) Research project**
- h) HRC will keep these priorities in mind moving into the next year as it addresses different projects and concerns of the community
 - i) Jessica, Ernest, Todd, and Erika will set up time to meet about going over priorities and thinking about directions for specific action items

5) COMMISSIONER UPDATES

- a) None

6) NEXT STEPS

- a) Jessica
 - i) Sign off on Language Access Plan
 - ii) Will send out notes and visuals from meeting
- b) Jessica, Ernest, Todd, and Erika
 - i) Go over HRC priorities and start list of action items
- c) Lyndele
 - i) Work on plain-language version of Language Access Plan
- d) Wolfgang
 - i) Work on plain-language version of Language Access Plan
 - ii) Will share opportunities of interest as they arise before next meeting
- e) Next meeting
 - i) Plain-language speaker
 - ii) Resolutions for legal representation for parties to a complaint and legal representation for tenants in eviction proceedings
 - iii) Amendment to Rules and Procedures
- f) New committees/volunteers for fields of focus
 - i) Research project: Wolfgang
 - ii) Community engagement: Jessica, Jeanette
 - iii) Helping Todd with staffing increase: Jessica
 - iv) Housing: Mary

7) ADJOURN

a) Meeting adjourned at 1:01 pm

Pending HRC Approval