



**Human Rights Commission  
Meeting Minutes  
Regular Meeting  
April 15, 2021  
Virtual/Electronic Meeting  
6:30 pm**

Public link to meeting rebroadcasts on Boxcast: <https://boxcast.tv/channel/vabajtzeuuyv3iclkx1a>

Public link to HRC documents on Box: <https://app.box.com/s/xy3wnn2s1tj8h7trkknvd79bipyxezy>

**1. WELCOME**

- a. CALL TO ORDER
  - i. Chair, Mary Bauer, called the meeting to order at 6:05 pm
- b. ROLL CALL
  - i. Mary Bauer
  - ii. Kathryn Laughon
  - iii. Jeanette Abi-Nader
  - iv. Ernest Chambers
  - v. Jessica Harris
  - vi. Wolfgang Keppley
  - vii. Sue Lewis
  - viii. Tobiah Mundt
  - ix. Andrew Orban
  - x. 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. MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC**

- a. PUBLIC COMMENT
  - i. None.
- b. COMMISSION RESPONSE TO MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC
  - i. None.

**3. MINUTES**

- a. Review of minutes from March 18, 2021 Regular Meeting
  - i. Motion to approve as written
    1. Wolfgang
  - ii. Second
    1. Lyndele
  - iii. Vote
    1. In favor: All
    2. Can live with: 0
    3. Opposed: 0
    4. Abstained: 0

**4. BUSINESS MATTERS**

- a. Chair update

- i. City Manager was extremely receptive to HRC recommendations for HRC Director Position
  - 1. Agreed to rename as Director of the Human Rights Commission
  - 2. Agreed to re-set the compensation to be comparable to that of the Executive Director of the Police Civilian Review Board
- ii. Success with moving right to counsel proposal
  - 1. Will save for Housing Committee update
- b. OHR Staff report
  - i. Written report attached to agenda packet
    - 1. 2021 data is not entered electronically yet
    - 2. 2020 data compiled and being prepared for annual report
  - ii. Facilitation and leadership outreach update
    - 1. Equity in outdoor spaces discussion
      - a. Next meeting
        - i. Tuesday, April 20, 3pm to 4pm, at Botanical Garden of the Piedmont site
      - b. Commissioner suggestions
        - i. Downtown Mall public seating has been reduced due to privatization of mall space
        - ii. Explore the reduction and reasons
          - 1. Suspicion is that it was to reduce use by people without stable housing
          - 2. Restaurants have taken more of the outdoor space
        - iii. Benches may be concentrated toward the City Hall and Post Office end of the Mall
        - iv. Move2Health Initiative has a mobility sub-committee
          - 1. Staff notes that Diana Webb has been a participant in the discussion group
      - c. OHR staff will send details of outdoor equity meeting to Jeanette
  - iii. Chair asks for updates regarding hiring of Director of Human Rights Commission
    - 1. Todd not aware if revised position is currently posted
      - a. Notes that archived description had been updated with increased compensation amount
      - b. Commissioner notes that the application deadline is May 14
    - 2. Commissioner notes that two Commissioners were involved in the hiring process for the last Director
      - a. Chair suggests that Commission advocate for ability to participate
      - b. OHR staff will email Chip and copy Mary on a request for Commissioner participation in the hiring process
    - 3. Chair asks about staff proposal to consider a program for attorney representation for complainants
      - a. OHR staff provides a summary of concept
        - i. Complainants are always individuals, often with

- limited financial resources
- ii. Respondents are often business or corporations with existing legal counsel or the resources to procure it quickly
- iii. Staff proposes exploring a City-funded program similar to the eviction right-to-counsel program
- iv. Staff notes that even in situations where complaints are mediated, the Complainant would benefit from legal counsel
- v. Staff solicits help from Commissioners in researching and developing the concept and a proposal to Council
- b. Chair suggests creating an HRC ad hoc committee to address this issue
  - i. Commissioners offer to serve
    - 1. Jessica
    - 2. Kathryn
    - 3. Lyndele
  - ii. OHR staff will work with Communications and Commissioners to schedule an ad hoc Complainant legal representation committee meeting
- c. Commissioner asks if OHR staff was able to acquire a City staffing and organizational chart
  - i. OHR staff shares the draft organizational chart provided by the City Manager
    - 1. The chart is also provided as an attachment to the minutes
    - 2. OHR staff emphasizes that the chart presented is a draft
  - ii. Commissioner observations
    - 1. Clerk of Council, City Manager, City Attorney, and Finance Director appear to be under direct supervision of City Council
    - 2. Parks & Rec. is overseen by Deputy City Manager for REDI
    - 3. ADA Office is still under NDS, which is not overseen by the Deputy City Manager for REDI

## 5. WORK SESSION

- a. Accessibility Committee Report
  - i. Met two weeks ago and Allyson Finchum, ADA Coordinator, attended
    - 1. Discussed how the HRC and ADA Coordinator can work together
    - 2. ADA Advisory Committee is in the process of revising the ADA Transition Plan
    - 3. Historically HRC Commissioners and the HRC Director have sat on the ADA Advisory Committee

- a. May offer an opportunity for HRC input into ADA Transition Plan
4. Also raised potential collaboration around improving access to City services and outreach and engagement with residents who might benefit from more accessible services
5. Committee is also getting good feedback from a member of the public who has been very active with regard to ADA and accessibility issue in the City
6. Also discussed the advantages of moving the ADA Coordinator position out of NDS and under a more person-centered department
- ii. Chair asks if language access issues also fall under ADA Coordinator
  1. Language access is outside the ADA Coordinator purview
  2. The Accessibility Committee is still interested in working on improving access to City resources for non-English speakers
  3. OHR staff explains current understanding of language supports
    - a. City website appears to have no language other than English on the home page
    - b. Search results on the City webpage for "Spanish" yield documents translated by different offices
    - c. Search results on the City webpage for "Español" yield no results
    - d. OHR staff will add some content in Spanish directly to the OHR web page to see how this affects City web page search results
    - e. Not aware of any City directory of Spanish-speaking or other language-speaking staff
    - f. OHR staff will contact Human Resources to see if they have a record of staff that speak other languages or a language access plan
  4. Discussion as to whether language access should be held by the Accessibility Committee in addition to ADA concerns
    - a. Accessibility Committee's focus is citizen access to the City
    - b. Level of work of the committee does not feel too overwhelming to also include language access
    - c. If the City does have a language access plan and the committee felt like it needed major revision then it could explore a sub-committee to do that work
- b. Housing Committee Report
  - i. Coordinated with multiple organizations to advocate for right to counsel program with City Council
  - ii. Calculated the estimated costs of a right to counsel program based on local eviction data
  - iii. HRC Chair wrote a letter and shared it with local partners for feedback
  - iv. HRC Chair and Committee Chair (Shantell) spoke to media and presented during public comment at City Council
  - v. Council verbally committed to a right to counsel program and may use Cares Act funding to support it

- vi. Legal Aid Justice Center is negotiating with the City Manager regarding funding for attorneys for two consecutive years
- vii. Councilors suggested extending this idea to the County Board of Supervisors
- viii. Commissioner discussion
  - 1. Concern raised about a two-year program that relies on temporary funds
  - 2. Other cities have passed ordinances/laws that state that right to counsel programs must be funded and continued
  - 3. Charlottesville could demonstrate efficacy through a two-year program that influences the General Assembly to pass laws that make it more permanent
  - 4. Data collection will be key to demonstrating efficacy
    - a. Data related to the court outcomes
    - b. Qualitative data from tenants regarding what it means to them to have avoided eviction
    - c. UVA Equity Center is focused on equity data collection
      - i. Potential for UVA student involvement
  - 5. City often relies on non-profits to do innovative programs (ex. Food Equity Initiative) which places the funding burden on the non-profits
    - a. State-level advocacy might change that
  - 6. Assumed start date is after the new budget goes into effect
    - a. It will take time to hire the people to carry out the program
  - 7. The HRC could write a letter to the County Board of Supervisors to encourage a similar program
  - 8. Chip Boyles has discussed the terms under which Legal Aid Justice Center might participate in this program
    - a. LAJC emphasized the need for an organizer as part of the program in addition to lawyers
    - b. Organizer could also coordinate data collection
- ix. Councilor Michael Payne speaks as an attendee
  - 1. Funding coming from American ARP
    - a. First half of funding comes in May
    - b. Second half comes a year later
  - 2. First half of money will be used to fulfill the request starting in May
    - a. The two-year cycle will start once the ARP money comes in and the first hire is made
    - b. It is not tied to the budget cycle like the stimulus money
  - 3. Agrees that this program is a long-term need that extends beyond the initial two-year funding
  - 4. Suggests that Commissioners could contact the County Board of Supervisors and individual citizens
    - a. County will also receive stimulus money and could also support a similar program
- x. Commissioners encouraged to join the housing committee to support Shantell and Tobiah

1. Suggestion to reinvigorate the Engagement Committee to support community awareness of housing committee work
  - a. Commissioner notes that Engagement Committee used to handle the Bridge Builders Award
  - b. Pre-COVID OHR staff and Commissioners attended many community events
  - c. Engagement Committee volunteers
    - i. Jeanette
    - ii. Jessica
  - d. May be overlap with Accessibility Committee
    - i. Identifying gaps in City information access
    - ii. Disability Awareness PSA project
- c. Commissioners discuss potential HRC action regarding police violence
  - i. Engagement Committee could consider ways the HRC can make statements and on what platforms
    1. Explore social media as a medium for expression
  - ii. City schools ended MOU with CPD and have proposed a police-free model
    1. HRC could support presentation to school board
    2. Will be on the next school board meeting agenda
    3. Model uses additional non-police adult support staff in place of security and police personnel – based on similar model in Toronto
    4. City Schools released a video discussing the model
      - a. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ajUXN4W1iTM>
  - iii. Commissioner notes desire to issue a statement similar to the statement the Mayor made over the summer
  - iv. Commissioner asks about the parameters for what is allowable regarding the HRC's use of social media for advocacy
    1. Suggestion to include as a discussion point during the June 5, 2021 VAHR conference
      - a. Potential to explore what other HRC's are doing
  - v. OHR staff notes that the HRC could show support for the work of the B.U.C.K. Squad
    1. Community members volunteer to diffuse situations that might otherwise escalate with police involvement
  - vi. Commissioner notes that police brutality often involves traffic stops and other interactions where police are stopping Black citizens
    1. Commissioner makes a statement of support and recognition for all that continue to go about daily life, despite the fear of unexpected and violent interactions with police
    2. The HRC could advocate for policy change to reduce these events
  - vii. Commissioner suggests advocacy on multiple fronts
    1. Public statements
    2. Partnership with other efforts
      - a. Including health care to deal with racial trauma
    3. Policy change
    4. Holding space for acknowledgement of events

- viii. Allies are needed on the front lines
  - 1. Commissioner notes that Black men are not recognized or seen in the same way that White allies are
- ix. Policy suggestion
  - 1. Work with groups to defund or reduce police funding
    - a. Example of removing police in parking garages
- x. Commissioner asks what action the CPRB is taking
- xi. Suggestion to start with a public statement of values and putting it in the context of the current situation
  - 1. Commissioners felt the HRC should make the statement prior to seeking permission to do so
- xii. Potential next steps
  - 1. Create written statement
  - 2. Potential formation of a committee to explore longer-term action
    - a. Policy recommendations
    - b. Support of other movements
- xiii. Commissioners show general support for committee formation
  - 1. Could merge with Community Engagement initially
  - 2. Volunteers
    - a. Jessica
    - b. Lyndele
    - c. Wolfgang
    - d. Jeanette
    - e. Andy
- xiv. Commissioner suggests advocating for emergency funding for mental health around racial trauma
  - 1. Could include this in the initial statement
- xv. Commissioners discuss the frequency of statements
  - 1. May need to make regular statements
- xvi. **HRC Chair will draft an initial statement for HRC review**
  - 1. Will draft on Sunday
  - 2. Suggestion to include multiple voices on draft
  - 3. Commissioner suggestions are encouraged

## **6. MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC**

### **a. PUBLIC COMMENT**

#### **i. Molly Conger**

- 1. Thanks Commissioners for intention to act before seeking permission to issue a statement

#### **ii. Don Gathers**

- 1. Suggests that statements should be made anytime and every time one of these incidents occurs
- 2. The Commission should step to the forefront on issues of racism and take the lead
- 3. The statement should be blunt
- 4. People will support the Commission but the Commission should lead

### **b. COMMISSION RESPONSE TO MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC**

- i. Chair expresses appreciation for the comments for both members of the public

1. Acknowledges the need to act before seeking permission
- ii. Commissioner affirms the need to make a statement and make repeated statements
  1. Agrees that this work is the charge of the HRC

## 7. COMMISSIONER UPDATES

- a. Sue
  - i. VAHR annual meeting on Saturday, June 5, 2021
    1. Virtual meeting
  - ii. Notes that all Commissioners are in the VAHR system
  - iii. Will ensure that all Commissioners received communication from VAHR
- b. Jeanette
  - i. Cultivate Charlottesville is working with Council on the Food Equity Initiative
    1. Looks at how food is represented in the City's planning and actions
  - ii. Notes that food is currently not mentioned in the City's comprehensive plan
    1. Cultivate is working with Council to integrate food language into the plans by viewing food as a human right
  - iii. Food Equity Initiative Policy Platform
    1. Will present to Council on May 17th
    2. Six planks of the platform
      - a. Each plank speaks to an area that affects food equity
      - b. Within each plan are action recommendations
        - i. Recommendations emerged from community conversations and dialogue with City departments
    3. Community Roundtable on April 29
      - a. Shantell will introduce the platform to the public
    4. Commissioners encouraged to sign on to the Food Equity Initiative Policy Platform
      - a. <https://cultivatecharlottesville.org/what-is-food-equity/take-action/>
- c. Mary
  - i. Acknowledges the beginning of the month of Ramadan
  - ii. Wishes happy Ramadan to Muslim community members

## 8. NEXT STEPS

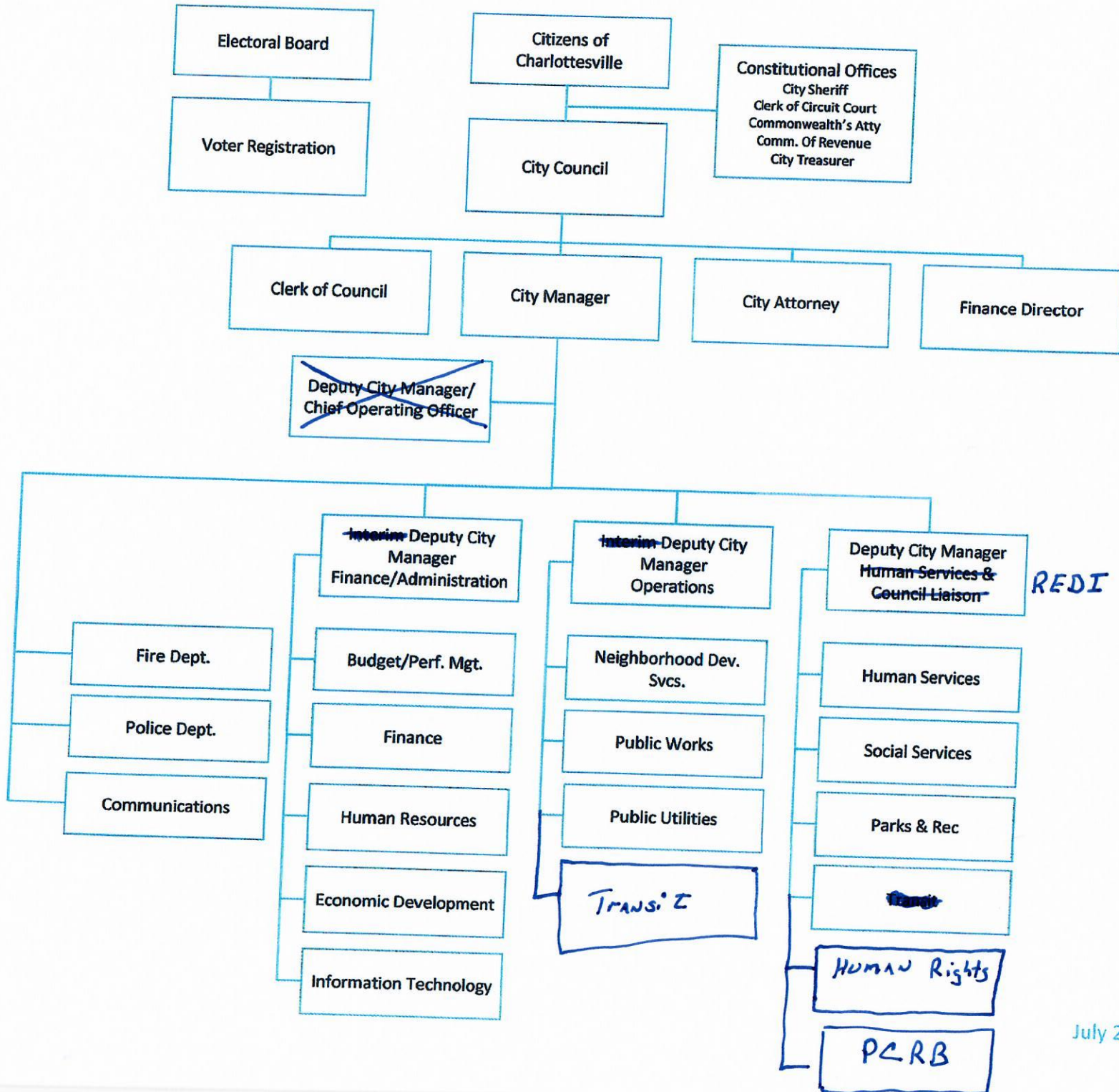
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  - i. Commissioners: Jessica, Kathryn, Lyndeale
- d. OHR staff will add some content in Spanish directly to the OHR web page to see how this affects City web page search results
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- f. OHR staff will contact Human Resources to see if they have a record of staff that speak other languages or a language access plan



- g. OHR staff will reach out to Engagement Committee members to schedule a meeting (add committee report to May meeting)
    - i. Commissioners: Jessica, Lyndele, Wolfgang, Jeanette, Andy
  - h. HRC Chair will draft an initial statement for HRC to review
- 9. ADJOURN**
- a. Meeting adjourned at 8:18 pm.

Pending HRC Approval

# Attachment 1



REDI