



**Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes
Housing Committee Meeting
October 7, 2021
Virtual/Electronic Meeting
1:00 pm**

Public link to meeting rebroadcasts on Boxcast: <https://boxcast.tv/channel/vabajtzeuyv3iclkx1a>

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

1. WELCOME

- a. CALL TO ORDER
 - i. Chair, Kathryn Laughon, called the meeting to order at 1:02 pm
- b. ROLL CALL
 - i. Mary Bauer
 - ii. Kathryn Laughon
 - iii. Jessica Harris (arrived at 1:07 pm)
- 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. Anna Mendez
 1. Executive Director of Partner for Mental Health, research fellow through UVA Equity Center, and Board Chair and Public Policy Committee Chair for Mental Health America for VA
 2. Todd and Anna have been speaking for several months
 3. Partner for Mental Health
 - a. Does not provide direct clinical services; rather, it assists those with mental illness with accessing their local resources
 - b. Also, it addresses and helps to improve social determinants of health
 4. Clients are experiencing discrimination on the basis of disability at hotels and motels in Charlottesville
 - a. Partner for Mental Health calls hotel or motel and ascertains there are vacancies, but when it comes time to make the payment under the organization's name, the vacancy goes away or the hotel/motel tells them "We don't rent to your people"
 - b. A fair housing issue under disability and source of payment, as well as ADA issue
 5. Challenges
 - a. The people Partner for Mental Health serves are most often in a critical position—unsheltered or about to be

unsheltered

- b. Filing with OHR is something these people do not have the time nor capacity to do
 - i. PMH supports about 200 people per year—time with each client is finite
- c. City Attorney has told PHR that they as an organization have not experienced discrimination, so they have no standing to submit a complaint

6. What to do next about this systemic discrimination?

b. COMMISSION RESPONSE TO MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC

- i. Chair says this is an important issue for the committee to take up
 - 1. Would like some more information and to put this on the agenda for the next meeting
- ii. Mary says she is very familiar with federal standing doctrines under the Fair Housing Act, and there is a fair argument PMH would have under federal law
 - 1. Not sure about state statutes
 - 2. In addition to support by HRC, would like to meet with Anna offline to talk about legal support options
- iii. OHR staff says finishing the process of creating a city ordinance to become a Fair Housing Assistance Program (FHAP) will allow for Director-initiated complaints on behalf of a client, among other things
- iv. Committee member adds that Anna's situation falls under the very definition of discrimination in that the oppressed cannot change their circumstances alone

3. MINUTES

- a. Review of minutes from 9/9/21
 - i. Vote
 - 1. In favor: 2
 - 2. Opposed: 0
 - 3. Abstained: 1

4. BUSINESS MATTERS

- a. None

5. WORK SESSION

- a. Right to counsel advocacy
 - i. Mary raised this issue at the last City Council meeting, as well as met with a representative from DHA because they were open to follow-up advocacy
 - 1. The City Council meeting was focused on other issues, but this is still an issue worth advocating for; Mary is unsure of next steps, however
 - ii. Committee Chair thinks it necessary to continue to name the DSA as the organization that is advocating for this
 - 1. DSA would like to be more formal partners with whoever is doing the work and would prefer to work on policy change as opposed to direct work
 - iii. Committee member thinks next step would be sending an email asking Council for a response to her comments at the last meeting
- b. CLIHC partnership

- i. Looking to ask if someone from CLIHC would like to apply to be on HRC to create liaison
- ii. OHR staff talked to Emily Dreyfus
 - 1. Said they may not be prepared to do that yet, but can loop in Todd to CLIHC conversation
 - 2. He is attending the CLIHC meeting tomorrow, 10/8/21, at 10:30am—he can bring up CLIHC member as Human Rights Commissioner again
 - 3. Ashley and Sam Sanders will be guests
- c. Support for Midway Manor residents
 - i. Concern because Midway Manor owners have only signed a contract for 2 years instead of 30; what are next steps?
 - ii. Mary Bauer heard from Mary Carey, who has been working with Todd
 - 1. Carey said there is not much advocacy going on that HRC could connect with at the moment
 - 2. Asks if CLIHC is involved at all
 - 3. 98 units at Midway Manor: many people could be in a difficult place
 - iii. Todd talked to Emily some about this: CLIHC has no immediate plans to do anything, but Mary Carey and Todd are working on crafting a letter response to Midway owners asking for the rationale in written format of signing only a 2-year contract and pointing out that the decision has major ramifications for seniors and those with disabilities
 - 1. Letter would be signed by residents; Mary Carey will go around to get these
 - 2. Told Emily from CLIHC about this; maybe a collaborative letter between HRC and CLIHC could be a possibility
 - iv. No current concrete action except for voicing concern and amplifying groups who are already doing advocacy
- d. TJPDC Virginia Eviction Reduction Program (VERP) updates
 - i. OHR staff notes that similarly to how DSA is collecting eviction data, the Equity Center is collecting data for the TJPDC; there is a report that is not yet published
 - 1. There is a set of goals for an implementation grant for the VERP project
 - a. Funding for additional representation in court is a possible action item
 - 2. \$3,000,000 can be awarded and is expected to be spent within a year; awarded over 3-4 partners, so award would be up to \$1,000,000
 - ii. OHR staff has been on advisory committee and is letting them know HRC is advocating for right to counsel
 - iii. Chair thinks different wording should be used to differentiate right to counsel and access to counsel
 - iv. Committee member asks what happens after sending the letter of recommendations for the legislative agenda
 - 1. Lisa Robertson told Todd she was conducting the legal review and taking it to Council, so Council is aware of the recommendations

2. **Could follow up and ask Council for a response**

- e. FHAP process updates
 - i. Eric Steinecker is going to do another informal review this week of the draft ordinance to become a FHAP
 - ii. Then, it is ready to bring to the City Attorney's Office to do a legal review before bringing it to the Commission
 - iii. Aiming to present it at the November meeting

6. MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC

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

7. COMMISSIONER UPDATES

- a. None

8. NEXT STEPS

- a. **General Next Steps**
 - i. **Look into Partner for Mental Health's situation of clients being discriminated against at Charlottesville hotels and motels**
 - ii. **Send email to Council requesting a response to Mary's comments from the last Council meeting**
 - iii. **Ask Council for a response to HRC's letter of recommendations for the legislative agenda**

9. ADJOURN

- a. Meeting adjourned at 1:30 pm