



**Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes
Regular Meeting
May 19, 2022
Virtual/Electronic Meeting
6:30 pm**

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1) WELCOME

- a) CALL TO ORDER
 - i) Chair, Jessica Harris, called the meeting to order at 6:33 pm
- b) ROLL CALL
 - i) Jessica Harris
 - ii) Ernest Chambers (arrived at 7:50pm)
 - iii) Jeanette Abi-Nader
 - iv) Mary Bauer
 - v) Kathryn Laughon
 - vi) Lyndelee 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 Annual Retreat minutes from 4/24/2022
 - i) Commissioner notes how people are referenced is inconsistent (titles vs. names) and the focus item summary may not be the same as what was decided
 - (1) All Commissioner names will be changed to "Commissioner," and all OHR staff names will be changed to respective title ("OHR Director" or "OHR Community Outreach Specialist") besides in "Next Steps" section
 - ii) Jessica makes motion to pass minutes with aforementioned edits
 - (1) Lyndelee seconds
 - iii) Vote
 - (1) In favor: 5
 - (2) Opposed: 0
 - (3) Abstained: 0

4) BUSINESS MATTERS

- a) Chair update (1)

- i) There has been discussion between Deputy City Manager for REDI, OHR Director, and HRC Chair and Vice-Chair regarding the fifth anniversary of the attacks on Downtown Charlottesville
 - (1) Deputy City Manager is asking for the Commission's and community members' thoughts on certain matters (Chair will forward email about this):
 - (a) Idea to close appropriate parks and Heather St. and place tasteful wreaths, and also to "black out" on social media
 - (b) Concerns about alienating activists in the community who feel there were missteps in what took place or potentially allowing for far-right activists to disrupt proceedings
 - (c) Concerns about having a public event that CPD is not able to manage
 - (2) Commissioner recommends there be some kind of community dialogue about the subject
 - (a) Could also talk to Susan Bro, mother of Heather Heyer
 - (3) Commissioner strongly opposes closing parks, as they have historically been important meeting spaces for the community
 - (a) Supports closing Heather Heyer Way to cars, but not regulating who is allowed to go there
 - (b) Other Commissioners agree that closing parks would be a bad idea since parks are used for community spaces
- b) OHR Staff Report
 - i) OHR Community Outreach Specialist update
 - (1) Since April, Community Outreach Specialist has been working on connecting with other community service provision organizations to form new ties and strengthen old ones
 - (2) Currently working on a Communications plan that will include time frames for internally generated outreach programming and collaboration with external agencies
 - (3) Both are part of a Strategic Outreach Plan that can be shared with any Commissioner who would like to see it
 - (a) Jessica and Jeanette are interested
 - (4) Has also been working on brochures in English and Spanish that cover VA fair housing, the OHR, and discrimination on a broad level
 - (a) Feedback by phone, email, etc. is welcome by June 3
 - (5) Also hoping to work on tracking/reporting methods for OHR to measure success of initiatives going forward
 - ii) OHR Director update
 - (1) Report is attached in agenda packet
 - (2) Incoming contacts remain high, likely around 10 per day
 - (3) CY21 Report and amended Ordinance will be presented to Council together once they are completed by the end of June
 - (4) Virtual VAHR Annual Conference on June 11: OHR Director will forward the link
 - (a) Must register to join; all Commissioners are members of VAHR

- (b) Focus will be on housing—a chance to network with other state Commissioners
- (c) Former Commissioner Sue Lewis is still attending VAHR meetings and could attend as a sponsor; let OHR Director know if Commissioners are interested in this option
 - (i) No financial burden, just acknowledging that she is sponsored by the former Commission on which she served
 - (ii) Commissioner suggests first seeing whether someone on the current Commission would like to attend
- (d) Conference begins at 10am, and final agenda is yet to be determined
 - (i) HRC Chair and OHR Director have final say on any decision-making on behalf of the Charlottesville HRC, but sponsored members would have a vote in general membership (but would not represent the Charlottesville HRC on the VAHR Board, which allows one vote per Commission)
 - (ii) OHR Director can forward VAHR bylaws and Zoom information
- (5) Allyson Davies has offered to do FOIA/COIA and VA Public Records Act training with the Commission
 - (a) Can put this on the agenda for June if possible
- c) Chair update (2)
 - i) Chair asks Director if it would be possible to petition the City to close Heather Heyer Way
 - (1) This should be possible to propose
 - (2) Commissioner reiterates that the City should close the road to traffic, but in no way regulate the people who can visit on foot
 - (3) Commissioner asks for clarification on whether this would be closing the road for the day of 2017 remembrance or permanently
 - (a) Says that closing the road permanently should be a bigger community conversation, not a decision made only by the Commission
 - (4) Commissioner pedestrian safety is a serious equity issue; the City's design makes it so that the health and well-being of the most vulnerable population is disproportionately affected
 - (a) Would like the HRC to consider speaking out about this when considering zoning changes
 - (5) Commissioner adds that she read an article saying that pedestrian deaths are at their highest in 40 years and are overwhelmingly Black or other people of color, so this is definitely an issue that the HRC should take up
 - ii) Chair asks for thoughts about closing Heather Heyer Way to vehicular traffic for only the one day
 - (1) Commission expresses general approval

- (2) Chair asks OHR Chair to follow up with Deputy City Manager about this
 - iii) Commissioner suggests adding this conversation to the list of town halls to get community feedback
 - (1) Framing it as a human rights issue
 - iv) Commissioner recalls that the response was highly militarized at one of the anniversaries of the 2017 attacks, and says that the community does not need this kind of response
 - (1) Avoid re-traumatizing people
 - (2) Chair says that Deputy City Manager specified she does not want large police presence, and would also prefer the City to not lead efforts in commemorating the events
 - v) Commissioner suggests adding City pedestrian issues to the list of potential topics for town halls
 - (1) Another Commissioner suggests before the Town Hall having an event with someone who is knowledgeable to talk about the issue so that the right solutions are being supported
 - (2) Another Commissioner says this event should be widely publicized
 - (a) Like the previous Town Hall, it could be a speaker followed by open community discussion
 - vi) Chair reflects on the events of 2017 and stresses the importance of having safe community spaces and facilitating conversation within the community
- 5) WORK SESSION
 - a) Strategic Action Plan for annual goals
 - i) In Retreat Summary, Chair thought #3 Equity in City Government Review was more supposed to be about following up with City Council about certain issues
 - (1) Can correct this if it is supposed to be different
 - ii) Next step is to decide on action items
 - b) Ad-hoc committee updates
 - i) Accessibility Committee
 - (1) Wolfgang and Lyndele met to work on draft of Plain Language Resolution A21-1
 - (a) Ready for the Commission to review
 - (i) Current HRC Chair is able to sign it
 - (b) Can wait until Wolfgang is present to go over—**put on agenda for next meeting**
 - ii) Retreat action items
 - (1) Goal was to identify areas the Commission will focus on in the next year
 - (2) Potentially have ad-hoc meetings for each topic
 - (3) Housing equity assessment
 - (a) Commissioner asks if other housing work discussed during the retreat was officially excluded, like representation for tenants in eviction proceedings and recommendation that Council pursue legislative change to

- allow localities to bring conditions cases
 - (i) Can add these to the summary
- (b) Commissioner asks if there will be research done about this topic
 - (i) Commission can look at previous resources and feedback to decide how much research is necessary
 - (ii) Could also invite relevant people in the City who are involved in this topic to speak at Commission meetings
- (c) Director reiterates that the HRC is welcome to narrow down its focus from the notes from the retreat
- (d) Commissioners generally agree that each of these topics are better suited to a subcommittee for individual attention
- (e) Commissioner notes that there are significantly higher personal property and real estate taxes this year combined with increases in assessment values and tax rate
 - (i) The City should find a way to make it more feasible for residents to pay these taxes
 - (ii) Another Commissioner explains that the City was not in compliance with the code and was not offering relief
 1. The City's cap was too low, and there has been a movement to address these problems
 2. Commissioner suggests talking to someone knowledgeable in the area to develop a course of action
 - (iii) Another Commissioner notes that even when there is relief, it is not enough to cover the taxes, so there may be something else the Commission can do
- (4) Commission decides to move topics from the retreat into subcommittee work
 - (a) Community Engagement
 - (i) Jessica, Ernest, Jeanette, Lyndele, and Andy
 - (b) Housing Equity Assessment
 - (i) Mary
 - (c) Equity in City Government Review
 - (i) Kathryn
 - (d) HRC and OHR Capacity Expansion
 - (i) OHR Director will work on completing the CY21 Report
 - (ii) There may be a work session with Council eventually
 - (e) Commissioners not present can join committees, as well

6) Five-minute break

- a) Meeting called back to order at 7:45 pm
- 7) MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC**
 - a) PUBLIC COMMENT
 - i) None
 - b) COMMISSION RESPONSE TO MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC
 - i) None
- 8) COMMISSIONER UPDATES**
 - a) Lyndele
 - i) Requests OHR Director or HRC Chair help her get in contact with Deputy City Manager to discuss the National Society of Black Physicists meeting
 - b) Kathryn
 - i) Is going on UVA Memory Project/Jefferson School African American Heritage Center Civil Rights bus tour at the end of June
 - (1) Let Kathryn know if she can look into anything while she is on the tour
 - (2) Can send itinerary if anyone is interested
 - ii) Has already sent to the Chair updates about Martha's Rules
 - c) Mary
 - i) Asks about process for setting committee times
 - ii) OHR Director will ask about broadcasting capabilities
 - (1) Because the Commission now runs its own meetings, this likely means there is more flexibility with meeting times (i.e. more per month) unless there is a limited number of Zoom webinar accounts
 - (2) Can discuss potential meeting times now
- 9) NEXT STEPS**
 - a) Todd
 - i) Make necessary changes on 4/24/2022 annual retreat minutes
 - ii) Help Lyndele get in contact with Deputy City Manager
 - iii) CY21 Annual Report
 - b) Victoria
 - i) Send Jessica and Jeanette Strategic Outreach Plan
 - c) Mary
 - i) Review Resolution A21-1
 - d) Kathryn
 - i) Send itinerary for Civil Rights bus tour
 - e) Jeanette
 - i) Set up poll to get Commissioners' availabilities and send to Todd
 - f) Next meeting
 - i) Plain Language Resolution A21-1 draft
 - g) Ad-hoc committee meetings
 - i) Will be given one hour each
 - ii) Todd will send out details about meeting time poll to Commissioners
- 10) ADJOURN**
 - a) Meeting adjourned at 8:03 pm