



**Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes
Regular Meeting
September 15, 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 on virtual Zoom platform at 6:33 pm
- b. ROLL CALL
 - i. Jessica Harris
 - ii. Ernest Chambers
 - iii. Jeanette Abi-Nader
 - iv. Mary Bauer
 - v. Wolfgang Keppley
 - vi. 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
- b. COMMISSION RESPONSE TO MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC

3. BUSINESS MATTERS

- a. Director asks if there is any dissent about the new City policies outlined in the agenda packet
 - i. Can meet online for 25% of meetings per year or 2 per year (whichever is greater)
 1. Went into effect in September, so after this meeting, the Commission can meet online once more in 2022 for regular meetings
 2. Each committee gets its own rule for 25% or 2 per year
 - ii. Commissioners now must publicly notice any meeting with 2 or more Commissioners in attendance (not more than 2) conducting business
 - iii. The HRC are still allowed to hold more than one meeting a month requiring a presence of a City staff person
 - iv. Meeting locations must now be approved by City Manager
 1. City Space is an option
 2. Two-person meetings must take place in a publicly-accessible area
 - v. If Commission is meeting in person but someone wants to meet

- virtually, they must notify the Chair and meet the criteria outlined in the Rules & Procedures (set within FOIA Section 2.2-3708.3(b)(1)-(4))
- vi. HRC will need to amend their Rules & Procedures with these changes
 - vii. HRC has support for hybrid meetings, so members of the public can join virtually while the Commission meets in person
 - 1. Members of the public can comment verbally or by written comment (for chat functions, there will be extra steps to prevent trolls from disrupting the meeting)
 - viii. No opposition to the new rules by the Commission
- b. General Assembly legislation review with Delegate Sally Hudson
- i. General Assembly will reconvene in January for a short session, which is 6 weeks long
 - 1. Therefore, there are still about 4 months to talk about legislation
 - ii. Political landscape has changed a lot in Richmond in the past year; Republicans now have a majority in the House, Democrats have a majority in the Senate, and Youngkin's administration is in the executive branch
 - 1. This has changed Delegate Hudson's top legislative priorities
 - a. Housing, LGBTQ+ rights, and mental health care are top topics to talk about in this meeting
 - 2. Some of these topics are being revisited by those in office
 - iii. Housing
 - 1. There is some bipartisan interest in addressing the rising cost of living
 - 2. A lot of places, including rural communities, are beginning to talk about affordable housing and homelessness
 - 3. Governor has talked about revisiting rezoning policies and expediting permitting, things already being talked about in this community
 - 4. Delegate Hudson believes that a desire to expedite housing construction should not come at the expense of protections for workers and the planets
 - 5. The administration is discovering that some bigger changes will require Virginian constitutional reform, as property tax rates are constrained by the state Constitution
 - a. More aggressive solutions like progressive property taxation and land valuation taxation are more challenging
 - b. Delegate Hudson will advocate for taking on affordable housing solutions, but constitutional amendments take years
 - 6. Hudson is disappointed that the administration seems to be pitting supply side reforms against imports and subsidies, but she will continue advocating to relevant needs
 - 7. Need to renew emphasis on eviction prevention since federal eviction preventions expired this summer, which the community has already been feeling effects from
 - a. Need to address inconsistent enforcement of eviction protections

- iv. LGBTQ+ rights
 - 1. Virginia Values Act was passed during the last term, but there have been efforts to repeal parts of this legislation
 - 2. Now, it is under attack from the majority party
 - 3. There is a lot of using public office as a bully pulpit to target LGBTQ+ youth
 - 4. As long as there is a Democratic majority in the Senate, the bills are threatening, but likely will not pass
 - 5. In the Charlottesville-Albemarle area, there are important protections in place that ensure that residents are protected in public institutions
 - 6. A new resource by Equality Virginia put out a School Board Tracker so Virginians can keep tabs on School Board meetings and how their divisions are doing with passing model policies for LGBTQ+ students
- v. Mental health care
 - 1. New laws will only do so much; the issue is the lack of resources
 - a. Need to increase the workforce, especially in community-based settings
 - 2. There is a budget surplus again this year, and Delegate Hudson believes the excess funds need to be allocated into long-neglected resources
 - 3. Believes it is important to diversify the voices that have a role in behavioral health policy
 - a. Has mostly been under the purview of legislators, but there have been efforts to include behavioral health care clients on the state commission
 - b. This effort had bipartisan support but died in the Senate
- vi. Q&A session
 - 1. Commissioner asks Delegate Hudson to speak about abortion rights
 - a. Made progress last term in making VA a true haven for abortion rights
 - b. There is an influx of people coming to VA for health care needs
 - c. In Virginia, abortion is legal in the first and second trimesters, as well as the third given special protections to the health of mothers and in cases of rape and incest
 - d. There is still work to do in expanding access, but VA is in a good place for now despite the Governor making it a top priority to repeal these measures
 - e. In the next session, Delegate Hudson would like to elevate the voices and stories of patients and providers
 - 2. Commissioner asks about current policy options Delegate Hudson is tracking for permanent housing
 - a. Most legal vehicles for permanent supportive housing are already in place; the issue is funding
 - b. The biggest goal right now is investing more money into

- existing resources instead of making policy changes
3. Commissioner has concerns about how there is such a wide range of median incomes around different Charlottesville locales and agrees that it is important to invest in people more so than programs
 - a. Delegate Hudson says empowering workers who power critical services in the community is important
 - b. Housing and labor policy are related
 - c. As the new Comprehensive Plan update continues, some inclusionary zoning measures and density bonuses exist
 4. Director recognizes how landlords who own more than 4 rental properties cannot deny housing vouchers, but rental prices continue to rise; HUD tries to match market rates, but rising rent is outpacing HUD's changes; asks whether there are talks of any legislation that would enable localities to require landlords set prices within payment standards
 - a. Delegate Hudson that this would be a large step for Virginia
 - b. DHCD put out a through report this summer about the current state of the affordable housing shortage; one relevant section talked about "project-based vouchers"
 - c. A solution that would address a similar problem to what the Director mentioned would be putting lots of state funding into project-based vouchers
 5. Commissioner asks about the status of a bill regarding tenant assertion and complaints, as well as whether there are talks about putting more funds into advocacy for evictions (legal aid lawyers representing tenants)
 - a. Delegate Hudson explains that the bill the Commissioner mentioned would have empowered localities to address substandard living standards in large apartment complexes
 - i. Is unsure when the Governor will come around on it; the bill's patron will likely re-introduce it
 - b. Delegate Hudson would like to advocate for more funding for legal aid lawyers
 - c. A big political point of disagreement is whether there will be any money left over and whether certain resources need more funding
 - i. In VA, the vast amount of revenue growth is coming from investment income and corporate profits, which government will need to discuss
 6. Director asks whether site-based Section 8 vouchers are controlled by the state
 - a. Site-based Section 8 vouchers are federal; DHCD is advocating for the state to step up and add an additional funding stream with similar project-based tag
 7. Commissioner asks about holistic policies and how the

Commission can best elevate stories from the public to Delegate Hudson

- a. Delegate Hudson will include her contact information; and she encourages people to contact her directly, as well
- b. Is also willing to help individuals get connected with relevant Boards and Commissions since they work year-round, unlike the part-time General Assembly

4. MINUTES

- a. Review of Housing Committee minutes from 6/28/2022 (2 of 2 Commissioners present who attended committee meeting)
 - i. Motion to approve: Wolfgang
 - ii. Second: Mary
 - iii. Vote
 1. In favor: 2
 2. Opposed: 0
 3. Abstained: 4
- b. 8/18/22 Regular Meeting minutes and 8/30/22 Community Engagement Committee Meeting minutes will be reviewed at the next meeting due to recency of publication

5. BUSINESS MATTERS

- a. CHAIR UPDATE
 - i. Chair is unable to access survey unless logged into HRC account, so it is not live; also asks about the optional status of some questions
 1. OHR Community Outreach Specialist says that the survey is supposed to redirect the respondent if they choose the option to follow up with the Commission, but she will check to make sure
 2. Will talk to Communications about making the survey viewable to the public
 - ii. Asks Community Engagement committee to summarize their meeting
 1. Went over the survey to get community input
 2. **There will be a signup going out for outreach events, including events for the coming weekend**
 - a. Sin Barreras is having their annual Sabroso celebration at Washington Park on 9/17, and Cville Pride is 9/18
 - b. On 9/22 from 10am-12pm, Mahalia Dryden-Mason from the Department of Occupational Regulation in Housing will be discussing fair housing; will be remote or in person at the CRHA office
 3. **Director will upload Resolution A22-1 to website**
 - iii. Asks Housing committee to summarize their meeting
 1. Anna Mendez gave some constructive feedback about looking into service provision data
 - a. Will be in the HMIS database
 - b. Looking at how organizations track referrals, how organizations track referral completion, or if referrals were refused by individuals or service providers
 2. Wolfgang had a conversation about Anthony Haro, and he recommended the Commission look into access to housing as

health care and what UVA is doing with that, as well as look into permanent supportive housing units as a part of new Charlottesville development projects

a. Legal infrastructure is already in place, so it could be doable

3. Can look into next steps, whether it be looking at service provision data or permanent supportive housing

b. OHR STAFF REPORT

i. Outreach Specialist

1. Systematizing the way that the Commission discusses events is an idea

ii. HRC Director

1. Director suggests establishing standing times for committees to ensure the Commission gets a space

2. Director suggests creating a legislative agenda standing committee to ensure that recommendations are completed in time

a. Lisa Robertson, City Attorney, is working as Council's liaison; she does not know what Council's schedule is yet

b. Also have option of lumping committee meetings together

3. Ordinance is attached

a. Still a work in progress

4. Monthly report is not attached, but still averaging 13 contacts per day in August

a. 2,023 incoming contacts for the year as of September (last year's total was 1,962)

b. Indicates that more people are coming to the Office for support, but that there are many people who need support

5. Final Annual Report is attached in the packet and can be voted upon tonight

6. Draft Ordinance and draft Ordinance memo are attached for Commissioners to review for next meeting

a. Commissioners should send feedback by 10/3/22

b. Meeting with Erik Steinecker on 10/11/22 to discuss changes to the OHR if Ordinance changes are accepted

c. 11/7 will be the day of presentation to Council, and 11/3 and 11/4 there will be 2-2-1 meetings with Councilors to discuss the Ordinance

7. Rules & Procedures are attached and will probably need amendments

a. Need to address changes to Martha's Rules, ad-hoc committees, and virtual meeting policy

8. Language Advocacy Plan has been sent to Council

9. Resolution is on the website; letter still needs to be uploaded to the website

a. May talk about it during a Council meeting's public

- comment
- b. Deputy City Manager is currently already working on procuring services to improve language access in the City, so Commissioners should make sure to support this effort when talking to Council
- 10. Commissioner asks Director if the virtual meeting policy in the current Rules & Procedures should be repealed now
 - a. The City's new clause already nullifies the old one; Kathryn had offered to look over the Rules & Procedures with Jessica to look over other sections like about Robert's Rules

6. WORK SESSION

- a. HRC Rules & Procedures
 - i. Director suggests establishing standing times for committees
 - ii. Director suggests creating a legislative agenda standing committee to ensure that recommendations are completed in time
- b. Committee meeting coordination
 - i. Wolfgang and Mary can do 1st and 2nd Thursdays at 6:30pm
 - 1. Todd will check about 1st Thursdays
 - ii. Legislative committee creation
 - 1. Mary, Wolfgang, and Jessica volunteer
 - 2. Committee will likely only have to meet once
 - iii. Director suggests first Thursday 6:30pm meeting to be set aside for all committees
 - 1. Commissioners generally prefer Zoom meetings
- c. Annual Report vote
 - i. Motion to approve: Jeanette
 - ii. Second: Lyndele
 - iii. Vote
 - 1. In favor: 5
 - 2. Opposed: 0
 - 3. Abstained: 0
- d. Committee meeting coordination (continued)
 - i. Director will book the first Thursdays of the next two months for committee meetings
- e. Meeting status
 - i. Will do October regular meeting online
 - ii. Will do October and November committee meetings online
 - iii. Could be hybrid, which would be on the schedule as in person
 - iv. Virtual participation would probably still allow a Commissioner to vote
 - v. Nominating Committee is also on the horizon for the end of the year
 - vi. The first Thursday of every month from 6:30-8:30pm will be reserved for committee meetings
- f. October committee meeting order
 - i. Legislative agenda creation
 - ii. Housing
 - iii. Community Engagement
 - iv. Equity committee
- g. Rules & Procedures amendments can be done at any point

- i. Mayor Snook is working with a UVA law clinic to develop standard operating procedures for all Boards and Commissions, so waiting to review Rules & Procedures may be wise

7. MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC

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

8. COMMISSIONER UPDATES

- a. None

9. NEXT STEPS

- a. Todd
 - i. Connect Jessica with Ashley to discuss Language Access Plan
 - ii. Post Language Access Plan letter to the website
- b. Victoria
 - i. Look into viewing capabilities for the survey
- c. Everyone
 - i. Sign up for events on Outreach Specialist's document
 - ii. Review HRC Ordinance before 10/3
 - iii. Committee meetings will take place on 10/6 starting at 6:30pm—
Legislative, Housing, Community Engagement, Equity

10. ADJOURN

- a. Meeting adjourned at 8:18 pm