

Human Affairs and Racial Conciliation Commission
March 13, 2024

On this date, the Human Affairs and Racial Conciliation Commission held a meeting via video conference call beginning at 5:00 p.m.

Notice of this meeting was sent to all local news media.

Present: Co-Chair Jerome Harris, Co-Chair Stephen Bowden (virtual), Alvin Johnson, Carol Jackson, Carroll Frye, Tom Orth, Bonnie Cleaveland (virtual), Brandon Fish, and Bob Simons.

Staff: Adrian Swinton, Melissa Cruthirds, Katie Dahlheim, and Jasmine O'Neal recording.

1. Moment of Silence

The meeting was opened with a moment of silence led by Co-Chair Harris.

2. Approval of Minutes of 2/13/2025 Meeting

On a motion of Co-Chair Bowden, seconded by Commissioner Simons, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the February 13, 2025 minutes as amended.

3. Public Comment

Reverend Adam Shoemaker said his church had a joint service in November with other episcopal churches on the peninsula and it was the start of a good relationship. From that service, they created a council of laypeople. They planned and executed a pilgrimage from Atlanta to Montgomery. At the National Memorial for Peace and Justice, he and others noticed that Charleston and Berkley County were absent. Charleston County was an epicenter of the transatlantic slave trade and shouldn't be absent from a memorial for racial terror lynchings.

Commissioner Jackson said she thought the memorial was for counties that had lynchings that were cataloged and memorialized lynchings, not just where they took place. Reverend Shoemaker said yes, but Charleston should have a recording of some kind and be included in the memorial. Commissioner Fish said even if it wasn't the memorial Charleston should do more to recognize lynch victims and their families.

Ms. LaTisha Vaughn said she was a co-founder of the E3 Foundation. The Foundation was the backbone organizer for the ProTruthSC Coalition. ProTruthSC was formed in response to anti-critical race theory conversations over 3 years ago.

Mr. Josh Malkin was the Director of Advocacy at the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of South Carolina. He was there to talk about the 'Anti-DEI' Bill that was introduced at the State's House of Representatives. He said the language of the Bill was drafted poorly and could affect many things from HARCC's existence to the celebration of Black History Month in schools. The architects of the anti-DEI movement didn't want people, especially youth, to understand how the systems we lived under were designed to create racial inequities.

Commissioner Jackson asked where the Bill was in the voting process. Mr. Malkin said the Bill usually had a public hearing in a subcommittee first, but this Bill was taken to the full Committee immediately. However, last week they did have a 4-and-a-half-hour public testimony where everyone who spoke was against it. He said a second public testimony was confirmed and they were hoping for a third. The session ended on May 9th. If the Bill passed the House this year it could be taken up by Senate in 2026.

Commissioner Bowden asked if there had been any discussion on how the State planned to implement this law and if the Attorney General's Office could evaluate every City and County in South Carolina. Mr. Malkin said there would be a burden placed on the Attorney General, but he wasn't sure about discussions.

Commissioner Jackson asked if the Chamber of Commerce and organizations like it have commented. Mr. Malkin said most had not, but the Chamber of Small Businesses had.

4. Presentation – Rebecca Dail, Deputy Director for Housing and Community Development

Ms. Dail said the Consolidated Plan was a framework for affordable housing and community needs. It was based on data analysis and set the strategic direction for the next 5 years. An important part was community feedback, hence why they were conducting an online survey. The survey has been available for 2 weeks so far and was sent to several neighborhood associations.

Commissioner Jackson asked if it had been advertised in the City's Newsletter. Ms. Dail said it was not, but it was posted on the Housing and Community Development website, Neighborhood Services, and they had been attending neighborhood associations meetings.

Co-Chair Harris asked what the relationship with the City's Master Plan was. Ms. Dail said the plan would focus more on zoning and land use and would set out programmatic goals based on need levels in the area for affordable housing.

Co-Chair Harris asked if there was a way unhoused people were getting the survey. Ms. Dail said there was, they would send people to the Hope Center 3 days a week when the Center gave out free breakfast and solicited people to take the survey.

He asked about the part of the survey about Community Development eligible activities and where the funds went. Ms. Dail said they had a few programs that were using funding like the Community Development Block Grant, Home Investment Partnerships, and more. He asked when the plan would be finished. Ms. Dail said they didn't have a concrete day but were aiming for July 2025.

5. Manager's Update

Ms. Swinton said their annual update was going to be an all-inclusive 3-year report, which was in progress. She said she sent the Community Needs survey to the Commissioners and included a document about the Community Development meeting on February 20th.

She also sent information about the Small Business Expo and reminded Commissioners to register if they wished to attend. The VA was hosting a Veteran's Experience Action Center on March 20-22nd that would include information about unsheltered low-income housing vocational support and mental health resources.

6. Chairperson's Comments

Co-Chair Harris said they could be looking at a presentation in May so a draft of the report should be circulated in April. In the past 2 City Council meetings the Commission on Disability Issues and the Women's Commission have presented, he said HARCC should have a chance to do the same soon.

Co-Chair Bowden encouraged the Commissioners to look at last month's Community Development meeting because they discussed the Rapid Housing Plan and Union Pier. He said if anyone had contacts in neighboring counties it would be nice to reach out to them and encourage them to 'buy-in' on the projects as it could also benefit them.

He then spoke more about the progress the Union Pier project had made. Also, about the possible presentation in May and how they should use this time to show that HARCC had tangible goals and an impact on the City. He suggested Commissioners watch the City Council meeting from February 25th where a consultant from Bloomberg discussed the housing goals that the Council adopted.

Commissioner Fish asked if the racial disparity when it came to flooding impact was included in the housing goals. Co-Chair Harris said in the Master Plan they made clear that the disparity needed to be addressed and was included in the Water Plan. Though, if they were under the threat of being defunded the plan might have to change and evolve. Commissioner Jackson said the City needed to ensure that they help on to their equity lens.

Co-Chair Harris said the Council discussed an expansion of services for the Hope Center and a location for the rapid housing project. Commissioner Jackson said the site of the rapid housing project was being placed far away and it could be incredibly difficult for unhoused people to travel there.

Co-Chair Harris said they circulated a memo about the anti-DEI Bill. Commissioner Jackson asked if HARCC could recommend City Councilmembers to fight the Bill.

On a motion of Commissioner Jackson, seconded by Commissioner Johnso, the Commission voted to request the City of Charleston to oppose the passage of House Bill 3927, because of its impact. The vote was not unanimous, Co-Chair Bowden abstained.

Co-Chair Harris said the Legal Department released a memo on how the City would be affected if the Bill was passed. He proceeded to list the offices, programs, and events that would be dissolved or altered. Commissioner Fish said when they asked them to oppose, to avoid some of the backlash, they should focus on the City programs and offices that would be affected if the Bill passed.

7. Open Discussion

Commissioner Fish said Jewish communities from around the State helped advocate for the introduction of a Bill that would provide grant funding for security at any place of worship that was potentially at risk for crime or hate-based terrorism. He encouraged people to go to their local clergy and ask them to support House Bill 4145 or the South Carolina Pray Safe Act.

Commissioner Jackson thanked Reverend Shoemaker for speaking and bringing the National Memorial for Peace and Justice issue forth. She said she went to a Waterfront Gallery with an exhibit about lynching that had extensive maps and documentation about it. They could reach out to the Gallery and see if they could get the records and work with the Memorial to have it recognized. Co-Chair Harris said there were several organizations they could reach out to for information.

Co-Chair Harris said work was being done for the African American burial ground site. Part of HARCC's job would be to bring more attention to the project and bring people who are doing the work together.

Commissioner Simons said he spoke to the SC250 group and a few people on the History Commission. He said there was an active and positive engagement for minority stories and participation in their upcoming events.

Co-Chair Harris said in the summer they would be recognizing the 10th anniversary of the Mother Emmanuel Massacre. He said the conversations that the event sparked were part of why HARCC existed. They had a few months to make that link known and highlight the necessity of HARCC's work.

Commissioner Orth said at the next meeting they should discuss the men's only shelter that was possibly being built. He said he hadn't heard anything about women and children in the discussion and they should know or inquire about where they would go. Commissioner Simons said he understood it as a response to shelters like My Sister's House where men weren't allowed.

8. Adjournment

There being no further discussion, the Commission adjourned at 6:33 p.m.

Jasmine O'Neal
Clerk of Council's Office

Manager's Update

April 2025

HARCC Report and Reauthorization

If you desire, you can still send your answer to the 3 questions listed below to me, Jerry, and Stephen.

1. Why is HARCC important?
2. In your viewpoint, what has HARCC accomplished?
3. Additional recommendations

Housing & Mobility

Community Needs Survey

Spoke with Rebecca Dail (Deputy Director, Housing & Community Development). The department is reviewing all submissions and will have more next month for an update.

Economic Empowerment

No update on Small Business Expo

Criminal Justice Reform

CPD Annual Report: <https://www.charleston-sc.gov/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=1433>

2024 Annual Report for the Charleston County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (attached)

Environmental Justice

The City of Charleston announced that Mika Gadsden will be taking over as the City's Director of Sustainability.

Health Disparities

Tri-county SHAPE Annual 2024 (attached)

City of Charleston State of the City

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V9X3qbj5UfM>

Remembering Dale Morris, former City of Charleston Resiliency Officer (attached)