

Human Affairs and Racial Conciliation Commission
July 10, 2025

On this date, the Human Affairs and Racial Conciliation Commission held a meeting via video conference call beginning at 5:07 p.m.

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

Present: Co-Chair Jerome Harris, Carroll Frye (virtual and left at 5:40 p.m.), Tom Orth, Alvin Johnson, and Bob Simons.

Staff: Adrian Swinton, Melissa Cruthirds, and Jasmine O’Neal recording.

1. Moment of Silence

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

2. Public Comment Period

Ms. Madison Lee was there representing the Preservation Society of Charleston (PSC). She said there was a student housing project downtown that was proposed for construction on a former City-owned burial ground. The College of Charleston also recently received approval to demolish the YWCA building, which had a rich history of empowerment and civil rights activism.

Ms. Deborah Host was representing the Anson Street African Merit Burial Grounds Project. The student housing project was also going to be built on a large burial site. The State had a burial protection statute, and the City added its own ordinance to that. The PSC proposed a burial protection task force to tackle the issue.

Dr. Millicent Brown was representing the Humane and Friendly Burial Society. She said the burial site most likely held poor adults and children who couldn’t afford other cemeteries and enslaved people. The gravity of the space gave the community a lot of process and the project was unprecedented. HARCC would be a good place to start a productive conversation on how to handle it.

Commissioner Orth asked if there were any protests scheduled or if there was anyone HARCC could write to. They said HARCC could reach out to their email.

Co-Chair Harris said the project would complete construction in 2028, and there would be 2 public meetings scheduled to discuss it.

3. Approval of Minutes of 6/12/2025 Meeting

On a motion of Commissioner Simons, seconded by Commissioner Johnson, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the minutes as amended.

Co-Chair Harris said Commissioner Cleaveland spoke at the last City Council meeting about the First Amendment ordinance. They also forwarded a letter to the City Council requesting that they consider amending the curfew ordinance.

4. Presentation

Charles Singleton, Artistic Director of MOJA Arts Festival, City of Charleston
Ellen S. Steinberg, J.D., Director, Charleston County Criminal Justice
Coordinating Council (CJCC)

Mr. Singleton said the Lowcountry had been supporting the festival for 41 years, and the last couple of years have had renewed energy. They were seeing more tourists, more musicians, and more artists. He said their education initiatives held high importance. They went to different schools to participate in different programs. Though there were areas in the Lowcountry that were still hard to reach.

Commissioner Simons asked if they had made any progress in becoming a 501(c)(3) organization. Mr. Singleton said they were still in the process of achieving that, but had meetings lined up to help reach that goal.

Co-Chair Harris asked if there were any other youth initiatives they were doing outside of school programs. Mr. Singleton said they were working on a Juneteenth celebration and had been partnering with other organizations like IAAM to have programs with them. They had also been establishing contacts with schools off the peninsula to raise awareness of the programs. It was important to reach kids who were off the peninsula to educate them about the roots of the Lowcountry.

Ms. Steinberg was there to do a presentation on the Charleston County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC). Co-Chair Harris said the Council was a jurisdictional effort to reduce the interaction the court had with the youth. Ms. Steinberg said they were the first in the state to do this. She said she started her career representing juveniles in family court. She was also the West Ashley Magistrate for 9 years.

They started the CJCC with the goal of looking at the criminal justice system and how they could improve it. The Council included people whose work involved the criminal justice system at varying levels. They had a Data Fusion Center that collected data from law enforcement agencies and mental health organizations in the County.

Some of the work they've done includes having public defenders at initial bond hearings, validating the Charleston Pretrial Assessment Instrument (CPAI), and starting the Just Home Project in collaboration with the Charleston Center. They also started ongoing research and local impact projects like annual reports, community engagement events, pretrial services, and a multi-tiered approach to case processing. They were in the process of creating a Juvenile Justice Network.

She said the CPD was about to start a program called Highflyers. The program was meant to identify young people they thought were headed down the wrong path and see how they could help them.

Commissioner Johnson said he always believed that people should focus more on the environment than the product. An unchanged environment will produce the same product; therefore, it would be proactive instead of reactive to focus on the product. He asked if any initiatives focused on the environment in which these young people were growing up.

Ms. Steinberg said the Council comprised of people from law enforcement, mental health agencies, judges, and more. They had a diverse career group because they wanted a holistic approach to this issue. The Just Home Project was a program that would tackle housing insecurities.

Co-Chair Harris asked how she thought the curfew in Charleston would affect the data being collected. He asked how they could learn the effectiveness of the curfew. Ms. Steinberg said they were heavily relying on CPD to collect and share that data. She said the CRCC wanted to collaborate with them on the research.

Commissioner Frye left at 5:40 p.m.

5. Adjournment

Due to a lack of a quorum, the meeting was adjourned at 5:40 p.m.

Jasmine O'Neal
Clerk of Council's Office