

Human Affairs and Racial Conciliation Commission
November 13, 2025

On this date, the Human Affairs and Racial Conciliation Commission held a meeting via video conference call beginning at 5:11 p.m.

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

Present: Co-Chair Jerome Harris, Co-Chair Stephen Bowden (virtual and left at 5:47 p.m.), Carroll Frye (virtual), Tom Orth, Bonnie Cleaveland, Carol Jackson, and Bob Simons.

Staff: Adrian Swinton, 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.

Co-Chair Harris stated that they were unable to meet in October due to extenuating circumstances and noted that it was the first time HARCC had failed to reach a quorum.

2. Approval of Minutes of 9/11/2025 Meeting

On a motion of Commissioner Jackson, seconded by Commissioner Cleaveland, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the September 11, 2025 meeting.

3. Chairperson Comments

Co-Chair Harris recognized Co-Chair Bowden for being reelected to City Council. He then listed the results of the other City Council elections that occurred. He noted that the newly elected Councilmembers could appoint new people to HARCC.

4. Presentation

Sonya B. Jones, M.Ed., Title I, Programs, CCSD Office of Services for Displaced Families, Laurie Yarbrough, Director of Recreation, Jerome Smalls, CPD Youth Developer, and Jennifer Gorham, Youth Program Coordinator for the City of Charleston

Co-Chair Harris said they had a presentation on youth initiatives, particularly unhoused youth. Commissioner Orth introduced the panelists speaking on the issue.

Ms. Jones said she was serving unhoused youth through the McKinney-Vento program in the Charleston County School District. She said homelessness affected more in a child's life than just where they slept; it also affected how they learn and grow. She gave a brief history of the McKinney-Vento Act. She said as of last year, the county had 621 unhoused students, which was less than was statistically likely, leading them to believe many are unreported.

Ms Pryor said she worked with the McKinney-Vento program for Charleston County schools. She said they had started holding an event before the start of the school year for unhoused families, where they could attend and be connected with an array of resources. The organizations there provided an array of services like health screenings, groceries, and employment opportunities.

Commissioner Jackson asked if the attendees of the fair were followed up with or had a place to go to afterwards to continue the work. Ms. Jones said they didn't provide case management; they instead built community partnerships to connect the families with those resources. She said they did have organizations that did case management at the event. They showed a video about the event.

Commissioner Simons asked if they had a storefront. Ms. Jones said they didn't, and people had to go through the School District to connect with them. Though they typically identified the family and helped with whatever their needs were and referred them to different agencies.

Ms. Strum gave a presentation on the youth initiatives the City was pursuing. The Mayor's Youth Commission met regularly with the Mayor so young people could voice their thoughts on youth issues. She showed the 2024-2025 impact of the Commission and its 2025-2026 goals. The City also became an affiliate of the Youth Volunteer Corps in 2015.

Mr. Smalls said he had been working on a pilot program called the Highflyers Initiative. He traveled to Boston which had similar programs to observe their work, as well as the National League of Cities in Las Vegas. They wanted to bring aspects of successful programs to Charleston. They recognized that more arrests weren't going to fix the root cause of this issue.

There were 4 pillars he wanted to work on with high-risk youth: trauma, informed cognitive behavior therapy, transformative mentorship by credible messengers, restorative justice practice with the families, and workforce development. He said there were a few procurement processes away from getting started. He said cities that successfully lowered their crime rates made a holistic effort through credible messengers, recreation centers, after-school programs, and summer programs.

Ms. Jones said they were always looking for recreational activities for unhoused children to participate in, and the biggest obstacle was transportation. Mr. Smalls said another goal was to establish community service vans that could help with that.

Commissioner Orth asked if the curfew was a group punishment due to the actions of a few young people. Mr. Smalls said they were tracking the impact of the curfew closely. He said a combination of the State's new open carry law and the types of interactions and crimes that were occurring pushed the police towards this. He said it was a short-term response, and his work was a long-term one. The curfew was a call to action for the community to be more present and aware of where young people were and what they were doing.

Commissioner Orth asked if there were plans for more programs for youth in the summer. Mr. Smalls said they recognized the importance of more programs, but CPD weren't able to spearhead

as many programs as preferred. They did want to help the other pillars of the City however they could though. Ms. Strum said there were multiple City Departments collaborating on this work.

Co-Chair Harris said a plan and implementation strategy were developed in 2005 for this issue and asked what group would be best at revisiting that plan and moving it forward. Mr. Smalls said he thought the County would be best at fostering that collaboration again, and he had been working with their Criminal Justice Coordinating Council for over a year.

5. Manager's Update

Ms. Swinton said when discussing the HARCC Ordinance, the Community Development Committee decided to have a 30 to 60 day review period before voting on it. She listed the meeting dates and times for events concerning the Coming Street Commons project.

She said the City was under internal review doing a compensation study for employees. There was a meeting today where City employee job descriptions were discussed.

6. Old Business

Co-Chair Harris said City Council approved a funding project that would generate more affordable housing. The History Commission decided to move forward with their statement on the Coming Street Commons project instead of doing a joint one. A public hearing regarding the demolition would be held on November 18th, and Protect and Respect the Bodies would be holding a meeting on November 24th.

Commissioner Jackson asked if a summary report or action plan would be presented. Mr. Clay Middleton, a community engagement council facilitator for the College of Charleston, said yes at the preliminary meeting, they discussed what their goals and objectives were and how they would proceed forward.

Commissioner Jackson asked who was on the Council and if there was a variety of people. Mr. Middleton said there was a variety of people who were self-nominated, nominated by CofC, and nominated by the City.

Commissioner Jackson asked what the History Commission was asking the City Council to do in their resolution. Co-Chair Harris said they wanted to follow state statutes, follow the guidelines and protocols adopted related to these matters, and attempt to be a role model in producing new or improved best practices.

Commissioner Cleaveland said that since the History Commission didn't want to release a joint resolution with HARCC, she drafted a resolution for the Commission instead. They agreed to circulate her draft.

7. Adjournment

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 6:23 p.m.

Jasmine O'Neal
Clerk of Council's Office