



South Carolina Human Affairs Commission (SCHAC)

Board Meeting

February 19, 2026 – 10:00 AM – 12:30 PM

South Carolina Department of Archives and History

8301 Parklane Rd, Columbia, SC 29223

Chair Steve Hall, Presiding

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT	STAFF PRESENT
Chair Steve Hall Vice Chair Sharon Sellers Commissioner Mary Amonitti Commissioner Leon Winn Commissioner James Wilson	Commissioner Alisa Warren Deputy Commissioner Marvin Caldwell Deputy Commissioner D. Clark Leslie Ravon Hargrove Trey McLeod Lawrence Smalls Janeen Sanders GUEST Thomas Kaminer – SCHAC Budget Director ADMIN Shared Services

I. CALL TO ORDER

The South Carolina Human Affairs Commission ("SCHAC" or the "agency") held its Board meeting at the South Carolina Department of Archives and History located at 8301 Parklane Road, Columbia, SC. Public notice was posted at SCHAC's main office entrance and placed on SCHAC's website. Chair Hall called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and asked for the role call.

II. ROLL CALL

Janeen Sanders, Executive Assistant, called the roll of Board members. A quorum was established.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chair Hall called for the approval of the prior meeting's minutes. A motion was made and seconded by Board members. The minutes were unanimously approved.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Hall acknowledged that the agency did not receive any request for public comments prior to the beginning of the meeting.

V. OPENING REMARKS — WELCOME OF NEW COMMISSIONER/CAO

Chair Hall offered opening remarks welcoming Commissioner Warren as the new Commissioner and Chief Administrative Officer. He noted that the recruitment process spanned approximately three years — the longest in his 36 years of experience — and expressed gratitude to Commissioner Amonitti, who first initiated the recommendation, as well as to all Commissioners who participated in the interviewing process.

Chair Hall expressed that Commissioner Warren had made a tremendous impression on the Governor throughout the process. Commissioner Warren thanked the Board and staff, with particular recognition of Deputy Commissioner Caldwell for his service, managing the agency for three years during the interim period. She expressed that the transition had been positive and that she felt at home with the team.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business brought to the floor by Board members.

Chair Hall provided an update on efforts to achieve a full-complement Board. He indicated two commissioner nominees have been approved by the Governor's office, have completed required paperwork, and have been presented to the Senate Judiciary Committee for pending interview and approval. The nominees are from the seventh district (Murrells Inlet area) and the third district (Anderson area). Chair Hall indicated he is continuing to apply consistent pressure with Senate Judiciary to expedite the process before the end of the legislative session. The agency is still seeking candidates for the fifth district, which encompasses northern Spartanburg County, York, Chester, Lee, Kershaw, Union, and several other counties.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

No new business was brought to the floor.

VIII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Administration — Relocation Update

Deputy Commissioner Leslie provided a relocation update to the Board on behalf of Commissioner Amonitti (who noted a personal family matter and yielded the floor). Key points included:

- Construction (Grace Construction) is progressing on the third-floor office redesign; substantial completion is projected around the 9th or 10th of March.
- IT setup, demolition, and some concurrent work can proceed while Grace Construction continues; other elements must await substantial completion.
- A slight delay had occurred in carpet installation, which had a trickle-down effect on the cubicle relocation from the second floor to the third floor. The cubicle-moving process projected to take two to three weeks, was somewhat longer than initially anticipated given that some units are not the vendor's product.
- Furniture selection meeting with Department of Corrections representative was completed. Delivery is expected in two to four weeks.
- Overall move-in is projected to begin around the first of April, with staff fully settled by mid-April, subject to contractor performance and supply chain.
- The new location offers enhanced security: armed security in the lobby, badge-required elevator access, and all SCHAC offices on the second and third floors accessible only by escort.
- The new space offers significant amenities for staff, including an outdoor terrace, an auditorium, and breakout training rooms where multiple training sessions can occur concurrently.
- Work on signage is underway, including coordination with DOT for exterior building signage and with the Department of Corrections for interior signage.

B. Legal — Office of General Counsel Update

General Counsel Trey McLeod provided the Legal update. He welcomed Commissioner Warren and noted alignment with her priorities around modernization, AI use, and the move toward a paperless office environment. Key points included:

Staffing:

- The housing attorney position had been vacant since General Counsel McLeod joined in May of last year. An excellent candidate had been identified; a reference call conducted that morning was described as glowing. Offer paperwork is expected to be ready by Friday of the same week with a likely offer the following week.
- Angela Cothorn, the attorney currently on staff, had been covering employment matters. Plans are in place to cross-train attorneys across practice areas to avoid single points of failure.
- The Legal Department had been formally renamed the Office of General Counsel for website and public-facing purposes. Staff attorneys will now hold the title of Assistant General Counsel. The naming change carries no impact on operational authority or letterhead assignments.

Case Activity:

- One pending employment case is before the Board involving the South Carolina Department of Corrections.
- Three cases are pending before the Circuit Court, all pre-dating General Counsel McLeod's tenure. The agency is in discovery phase on those matters.
- Six mediation cases were completed during the period, with approximately half successful, resulting in total recoveries of approximately \$500,000.
- Approximately 207 EEO intake reviews were completed for the period. Six conciliation agreements were reviewed and approved for legal sufficiency — possibly the highest volume in a single period since General Counsel McLeod's arrival.

Regulatory Update:

General Counsel McLeod reported that SCHAC's regulations under Chapter 65 have not been substantially revised since the 1990s and are in need of comprehensive updating. A review of other state civil rights agency regulatory frameworks informed the proposed changes. A Notice of Drafting was to be filed with Legislative Council the following day. Key proposed changes include:

1. Removal of definitions that duplicate statutory definitions to eliminate the need for parallel amendment when the statute changes.
2. Updates to complaint procedure and investigation evidence terminology to modernize and clarify.
3. Correction of the subpoena signature requirement. Current regulations require signatures from all parties, but the statute only mandates this for state agencies. Streamlining will allow faster issuance of subpoenas for non-state-agency respondents.
4. Expansion of the confidentiality provisions from Section 65-5 into a dedicated new section (65-14) to clearly address the scope and limits of confidentiality designations in the investigative record, and to clarify that respondents cannot unilaterally dictate confidentiality status.
5. Replacement of all references to Circuit Court with the Administrative Law Court, which is the proper forum under current law.
6. Correction of statutory citations, adoption of gender-neutral language, and updated formatting to comply with current Legislative Council requirements.
7. Alignment of EEOC coordination sections with federal workshare compliance requirements to protect the agency's substantial equivalency status.

General Counsel McLeod noted that proposed regulation language has not been finalized and that the Board will be engaged at the proposed regulation stage, which involves a required waiting period. The regulatory timeline is lengthy and will be tracked via project management tools.

C. Personnel Update

Commissioner Winn called on Lawrence Smalls from Human Resources for the personnel update. As of February 19th 2026, the personnel report is as follows: :

Total FTEs	57 Full-Time Employees; 1 Temporary Position
Vacancies	4 — Two Employment Investigators, One Trial Investigator, One Housing Attorney (offer pending)
New Hires	4 — Training Coordinator, Community Relations Consultant, Technical Services Consultant, Paralegal
Terminations	1 (details to be addressed in Executive Session as needed)
Resignations	1
Reclassifications	1 — Investigator I to Senior Investigator

D. Financial Update

Tomas Kaminer, Budget Director, provided the financial report. Key points included:

- The agency is 58% through the fiscal year and has spent 60% of projected expenditures. The slight variance is attributable to February 1st falling on a weekend, causing an additional payroll cycle to fall in January's reporting period.
- The agency is still projected to carry approximately \$400,000 surplus this year, against a total cash balance of \$4.5 million.
- With full staffing expected next year the agency projects to break even at that point.
- EEOC federal funds of approximately \$450,000 have been received. HUD funds have not yet been received — this is not unique to SCHAC; no FHAP agency has received HUD payment at this time, due to ongoing changes at HUD headquarters.

IX. COMMISSION REPORTS

A. Administration — Commissioner Warren

Commissioner Warren provided the administrative update. Key items included:

- SCHAC is entering into a Memorandum of Understanding with a co-located state agency for information sharing, which will provide operational efficiencies.
- The agency is joining a statewide contract (in coordination with the Office of the Attorney General and other agencies) for e-discovery software. The software will enable handling of large discovery productions paperless, with improved organization and security in transmittal to opposing parties.
- The agency is separately pursuing a contract for CLEAR; a business contact and entity search tool.
- SCHAC Track — a new case management system — is in the process of being deployed. Training was rescheduled from the current week to the following week. Training will be provided in three sections. The system is expected to significantly improve document accessibility for investigators and administrators and to advance the agency's progress toward a paperless operation.

- Electronic signature capability has been operationalized at the agency, enabling remote execution of documents without the need to print, sign, and scan.

B. Consultative Services — Clark (Community Relations, Outreach, Intake)

Deputy Commissioner Leslie provided the Consultative Services update. Key points:

Community Relations and Outreach:

- Two new FTE positions obtained in the last budget cycle — a Community Relations Consultant and a Trainer — are now producing results, with increased outreach capacity and training delivery.
- SCHAC participated in the Outlook Summit in Greenville; staff were well received and generated significant interest and training inquiries.
- The agency is working with the Society of Human Resource Managers, the Department of Commerce, the State Chamber of Commerce, the Outlookers Association, and Councils of Governments on outreach initiatives. Approximately 12 to 15 events have been booked through the COG partnership alone.
- Advisory Councils: Lancaster County is SCHAC's newest advisory council, bringing the total to eight. The agency plans to add three more during the year. Upcoming COG engagements include the Appalachian COG and the Lowcountry COG.

90-E (Public Accommodations) Cases:

- 35 cases received for the fiscal year to date, with race and disability as the two primary bases of complaint. York County was noted as a leading county for these complaints.

Intake:

Deputy Commissioner Leslie acknowledged the passing of the wife of Alex Nelson, Director over Intake. The Board and agency expressed condolences; visitation was the evening of the meeting and funeral the following day. The Board arranged for flowers.

- Initial contact numbers show a steady increase.
- Total contacts (phone calls, emails, follow-up inquiries) are also growing gradually each month.
- The agency is tracking intake data closely as part of ongoing operational monitoring.

Technical Services & Training:

Ravon Hargrove, Director of Technical Services & Training, presented the annual report to the General Assembly. Key points:

- Two new staff members have joined the team: Joleigh Deguit (media/outreach focus) and Jocelyn Brannon (Training Coordinator). Both are performing well.
- The 2025 Annual Report to the General Assembly includes employment data by race, gender, and employment level from 98 state agencies with 15 or more employees — representing approximately 74,000 full-time state employees.
- Only two agencies failed to meet their hiring goals, and both were off by only 1–2%. This was described as the best performance in the three years of the current Annual Report presentation.
- The leading agency in this reporting period was Sea Grant (Charleston), achieving 100% for the second time.
- The Prevention Corner newsletter now reaches over 23,000 recipients monthly. Recent topics included workplace harassment, understanding workplace prevention, and religion in the workplace.

- Organizational restructuring among state agencies — including the merger of mental health, alcohol/drug abuse, and disability services entities — affected data in this reporting period.
- The Technical Services team is noting national trends reflected in state data; the current political climate has been reflected in an uptick in race-related inquiries and cases.

Commissioners engaged in a substantive discussion regarding the purpose and proper understanding of affirmative action, the importance of documentation in hiring decisions, and the value of the state salary scale as a tool for reducing wage disparities.

D. Compliance Programs — Deputy Commissioner Marvin Caldwell

Deputy Commissioner Caldwell provided the Compliance Programs report. He noted that Ravon was his first hire as Interim Commissioner and recognized her excellent work. He also reported observing approximately 12 walk-in visitors at the new Parklane Road location during a recent visit, expressing confidence that walk-in traffic will continue after relocation.

Federal Contracts:

- EEOC contract funds have been received. HUD FHAP funds have not yet been received — this is the case for all FHAP agencies nationwide, pending changes at HUD headquarters in Washington, D.C.
- Deputy Commissioner Caldwell noted that SCHAC's Region 4 contact, Carlos, has moved to HUD headquarters, which may be a positive development for the region's interests during the transition period.
- One FHAP agency — St. Paul, Minnesota — has lost its substantial equivalency status. The primary cause was the agency's failure to report a change in its sexual/affectional orientation law to HUD. The importance of reporting any legal changes to HUD was emphasized.

EEO Enforcement Staff:

- Staff consists of 1 director, 4 supervisors, 1 administrative program coordinator, and 15 investigators (2 with 7+ years' experience, 2 experienced, 5 intermediate, 4 new/less than one year). Two vacancies remain open.
- The agency has requested 575 cases from EEOC for this fiscal year (up from 530 completed last year). Confirmation of the contract number is pending.
- There are currently approximately 987 open cases: 795 with investigators and supervisors, 192 with administrative staff. Approximately 260 inquiries are in intake.
- The agency employs "stand down" sessions, where investigators present cases to supervisors and OGC to determine closability, and "priority case assignment" reviews by supervisors to identify actionable steps toward closure. Weekly team meetings are also held.
- Case geography: 26% of EEO cases originate from Richland County (predominantly disability-based); Greenville County is high in age and sex cases; York County has race, disability, sex, and retaliation cases; Lexington County is notable for disability, race, and sex cases.

Fair Housing Enforcement:

- 672 fair housing inquiries were received for the fiscal year to date; 358 were processed (analyzed, drafted, or closed); total contacts (walk-ins, calls, and emails) reached 987.

- The HUD MOU requires 60 case closures per year; SCHAC typically closes 100–110 cases annually and is on track for that this year. As of the end of January, 58 cases were closed (compared to 49 at the same point last year).
- The agency receives approximately \$3,200 per closed case. Closing more than 100 cases triggers additional administrative cost reimbursement from HUD.
- Disability is the predominant basis for fair housing complaints, followed by race. Horry County generates the highest volume of fair housing cases, driven in part by a large retiree population with knowledge of fair housing rights. Richland County is second.
- Common issues include HOA accessibility cases, reasonable modification requests, and assistance animal accommodations where properties have no-pet policies or breed restrictions. An emerging challenge involves HOA insurance requirements that restrict certain dog breeds, creating tension with assistance animal accommodation obligations.
- The HUD advertising grant that previously funded targeted outreach in Aiken, York County, Hilton Head, and Beaufort has not been renewed at this time. The agency has funds to conduct its own advertising if needed.
- Due to reduced HUD staffing nationally, SCHAC is receiving an increased volume of cases transferred from HUD headquarters, particularly because of SCHAC's demonstrated capacity to investigate.

X. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Chair Hall invited Board members to offer additional comments.

Commissioner Amonitti offered remarks on the professionalism and quality of the SCHAC staff, noting that the smoothness of the Board meeting is a reflection of their efforts.

Chair Hall invited any final comments and receiving none, called for a motion to adjourn the open session prior to Executive Session.

XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Chair Hall called for a motion to enter Executive Session. A motion was made and seconded. The Board entered Executive Session.

[Executive Session matters are not reflected in the public record of these minutes.]

XII. ADJOURNMENT

Upon conclusion of Executive Session, Chair Hall called for the meeting to be adjourned. A motion was made and seconded. After unanimous consent the meeting was adjourned.

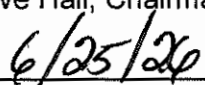
The next Board meeting date and location are to be determined.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Janeen D. Sanders, SCHAC Executive Assistant.



Dr. Alisa Warren, Commissioner



Steve Hall, Chairman


Date