

Human Rights Commission Meeting Minutes
October 15, 2024

1. Call to Order

Chair Sarah Zoen called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM.

2. Roll Call

Municipal Policy Analyst Doug Newton called the roll .Present were Corey Barr, Gabriel Camacho, Lisa LaPlante, Susan Musinsky, Mel Poindexter, Xin Peng, and Sarah Zoen. Elizabeth Brusie had informed the Commission prior to the meeting that she could not be in attendance. Doug Newton was present as staff for the Committee.

3. Acceptance of Minutes

The minutes for the September 9th meeting were approved unanimously.

4. Confirmation of Co-Chairs

Mel Poindexter was confirmed as Co-Chair alongside Sarah Zoen unanimously.

5. Discussion

a. Participation in Massachusetts Human Rights Commission

Corey Barr mentioned that she attended a recent meeting of the Massachusetts Human Rights Commission and told them about the formation of Watertown's Commission. She noted that their meetings are during working hours. Mel Poindexter asked Commission members to consider if they can attend the Massachusetts Commission meetings. Sarah Zoen, Lisa LaPlante and Susan Musinsky expressed that they may be able to attend future meetings.

b. Community Table at Watertown Farmer's Market

Mel Poindexter asked who on the Commission would be able to attend. Sarah Zoen and Mel Poindexter each expressed availability.

c. Update on Community Table at Faire in the Square

Mel Poindexter expressed that the event went well.

d. Meet Your HRC Event with World in Watertown

Xin Peng explained that this would be an event in which the public can meet members of their Human Rights Commission and that World in Watertown would do the legwork of organizing the event.

e. Co-sponsoring Disability Awareness Event with Watertown Free Public Library on 11/2

Xin Peng explained that this event will be an opportunity for the Commission to engage in community outreach. Mel Poindexter and Sarah Zoen expressed that they will try to attend.

f. Screening of Borderland: The Line Within with Watertown Free Public Library

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Corey Barr explained that she has seen a trailer for Borderland: The Line Within on immigrant rights and reached out to the library to see if they would be able to host a screening. The library said that they could do this and can do the legwork and marketing. Gabriel Camacho said that he will be more than happy to help plan the event.

g. Watertown Unity Breakfast

Xin Peng explained that this is another program organized by World in Watertown and that it will be held in person on January 20th, 2025 for the first time since the pandemic. World in Watertown would like Commission members to attend and perhaps be part of the planning committee.

Lisa LaPlante suggested that the Committee discuss membership in the International Association of Human Rights Commissions which will be discussed at the next meeting.

6. Committee Report

a. Rules Committee

Lisa LaPlante explained that the Open Meeting Law has made the process of establishing the Committee's rules difficult and lengthy. She presented the slate of rules that the Rules Committee has already discussed and took input from the members. The Commission voted unanimously to approve the process that has been ongoing and express support for the slate of rules that the Rules Committee has agreed to already. Member of the public Russ Arico expressed displeasure with the Open Meeting Law.

7. Municipal Policy Analyst's Report

Municipal Policy Analyst Doug Newton noted that most of what he had intended to share in his report had already been discussed in the meeting. He added that the Commission has a budget of \$5,000 in FY25 and that they can sponsor events monetarily or non-monetarily. He shared that the next Rules Committee meeting is via zoom on November 7th. He also noted that the main sticking point in their discussions has been establishing a process to handle resident concerns and if the Committee should be able to take such concerns on an anonymous basis.

8. Public Comment

Russ Arico spoke about his concern that the snow removal ordinance in Watertown is a violation of the human rights of disabled homeowners, as well as a violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

9. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:41 PM.