



Human Rights Commission Meeting

Monday, March 10, 2025 at 5:30 PM

Agenda

ACCESS INFORMATION:

- A. This meeting will be held on March 10, 2025 at 5:30 PM. Location: Remote Only (Zoom)
 - B. The Public may join the virtual meeting online: <https://watertown-ma.zoom.us/j/86108277928>
 - C. Public may comment through email: dnewton@watertown-ma.gov
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- 1. Call to Order
- 2. Roll Call
- 3. Acceptance of Minutes
- 4. Discussion
 - A. City Attorney's Feedback to Rules
- 5. Public Comment
- 6. Adjournment

Watertown Human Rights Commission Rules of Procedure

Purpose

The Watertown Human Rights Commission ~~affirms~~was established by an Ordinance Establishing the Watertown Human Rights Commission, approved on _____, 202_ (Ordinance). The Ordinance outlines in detail the commitments of the City and the Commission to affirming that human rights are universal and inalienable, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated. All of these, and to protecting those rights, whether civil, political, economic, social or cultural, are inherent to the dignity of every person. All of these rights all have equal status as further detailed in the City of Watertown.

~~The purpose of the Watertown Human Rights Commission is to affirm that our city is an inclusive community that values freedom from:~~

- ~~• discrimination;~~
- ~~• disrespect;~~
- ~~• bigotry;~~
- ~~• hatred and~~
- ~~• oppression.~~

~~The Watertown Human Rights Commission reaffirms the city's commitment to uphold and defend everyone's right to free and equal exercise of their human and civil rights and privileges.~~

~~The Watertown Human Rights Commission strives to ensure that everyone enjoys equal opportunity to, including (but not limited to):~~

- ~~—housing;~~
- ~~—employment;~~
- ~~—education;~~
- ~~—public accommodation;~~
- ~~—access to city services;~~
- ~~—insurance;~~
- ~~—credit;~~
- ~~—banking and~~
- ~~—health care~~
- ~~—and other civil, political, social, economic, and cultural rights~~

~~The Watertown Human Rights Commission strives to ensure everyone enjoys these opportunities equally, regardless of:~~

- ~~—race;~~
- ~~—color;~~
- ~~—ancestry;~~

- ~~—national origin;~~
- ~~—sex;~~
- ~~—sexual orientation;~~
- ~~—gender identity or expression;~~
- ~~—citizenship;~~
- ~~—age;~~
- ~~—religion;~~
- ~~—disability;~~
- ~~—health status;~~
- ~~—marital or familial status;~~
- ~~—military or veteran status;~~
- ~~—socioeconomic status;~~
- ~~—ex-offender status;~~
- ~~—genetic, and/or~~

~~“protected class” status~~Ordinance.

Organization

Presiding officers: ~~The Each April, the~~ Commission shall elect at a regular meeting from amongst its members a Chairperson ~~in April at a regular meeting, by majority of votes cast, to serve~~, Vice Chairperson, and Clerk, each for a one-year term ~~as.~~ Notwithstanding the Chairperson with their term beginning upon election.

~~Nothing in these Rules provisions of Procedure shall prohibit members of this paragraph, however, the Commission from electing two~~may reorganize at any time during the year.

Co-Chairs. Notwithstanding the preceding paragraph, the Commission may elect Co-Chairs to share the responsibilities of being the position of Chair. In any year when Co-Chairs are elected, a Vice Chair need not be elected for that year; provided, however, that one of the Co-chairs shall be deemed the Chair for purposes of finalizing the agenda for each meeting and for facilitating the conduct of Commission meetings. Except as otherwise specified, for purposes of these Rules, a single chair, or co-chairs, shall be referred to as the “Chairperson or Co-Chairs to be re-elected for an additional term.” or “Chair”.

Duties of Chairperson(s): ~~The Chairperson(s) of the Human Rights Commission, if present, shall preside at the full Commission meetings. In the Commission meetings; provided, however, that if there are Co-chairs, one shall function as the Chair for purposes of facilitating each meeting, and, if only one is present, that person shall chair the meeting. If there is a single Chairperson, in their absence of the Chairperson(s), the Vice-Chairperson shall preside, and in the absence of both.~~ Notwithstanding the provisions of this paragraph, if there is no Chair or Vice Chair present

at a particular meeting, a temporary Chairperson ~~as~~shall be chosen by the Commission ~~shall serve for that meeting.~~

The Chairperson(s) ~~shall conduct the meeting to manage it efficiently; preserve decorum and order; may speak to points of order in preference to other members; and shall decide all questions of order, subject to an appeal to the full Commission.~~

The Chairperson(s) ~~will be responsible for coordinating~~ shall coordinate with the City staff liaison for preparation of the meeting agenda with the City staff liaison. The Chairperson ~~shall have the discretion to appoint committees, conduct the meeting, decide all questions of order, and perform other duties that arise in the course of business of the Commission.~~

declare votes taken at the meeting. Additional duties of the Chairperson(s): shall include:

- ~~— The Chairperson(s) shall not move for action but may second motions.~~
- ~~- The Chairperson(s) shall be responsible~~ Appointment of subcommittee members;
- ~~- Inviting and seconding motions;~~
- ~~- Responsibility for the communications of the Commission.~~
- ~~- The Chairperson(s) shall be responsible for submitting~~ Submitting to the full Commission for review and approval an Annual Work Plan and Annual Report ~~to the Commission for review and approval prior to presenting it to the City Council, both of which are described in further detail below.~~

Vacancies: If the Chairperson ~~retires during their term of office~~ resigns, the Co-chair, if applicable, or the Vice-Chairperson, shall become Chairperson. A new Co-chair, if applicable, or Vice-Chairperson, will be elected at the next Commission meeting. ~~If both retire, new officers shall be elected at a meeting called as soon as possible, but not to exceed 60 days from the date of stepping down.~~

Responsibilities of Commissioners

~~Commissioners appointed to the Human Rights Commission are expected to attend all Commission meetings, as well as any special meetings. Commissioners are encouraged to join committees of interest or in line with their expertise. Commissioners are expected to contribute to the development and implementation of the Action Plan and to assist with the preparation of the annual report.~~

Code of Conduct

Commission Conduct

The Chairperson(s) shall be the official spokesperson(s) for the Commission. ~~Individual commissioners regarding votes taken by the Commission on any matter within its jurisdiction or as otherwise authorized by a vote of the Commission. An individual commissioner shall not express personal opinions on any matter that has come, or is likely to come, before the Commission without clarifying~~ expressly stating that the such opinion is his or her their own

personal opinion and does not reflect or represent the opinion or position of the Commission on the matter.

Each Commissioner shall adhere to the highest standards of ethical conduct ~~and support to further~~ the Commission's mission, goals, and objectives, and to instill in the public a sense of confidence in the Commission's operations. ~~The standard of conduct for the Commission includes, but is not limited to, including compliance with:~~

- The Open Meeting Law (G. L. c. 30A, §§ 18-25);
- The Conflict of Procedure Interest Law (G. L. c. 268A); and decisions;
- The Public Records Law (G.L. c. 66, § 10)

—~~and promoting accountability of all members of the other applicable laws. The Commission treating all members of the Commission, members of the public and colleagues with courtesy, respect, objectivity, reasonableness, and fairness;~~

~~Conducting all Commission~~ shall conduct its business in a transparent, timely manner and, except as otherwise allowed by law, in public meetings ~~with transparency;~~

—~~Subcommittees~~ Reviewing its actions, recommendations, and procedures periodically to determine whether the Commission has adhered to its Code of Conduct and mission in all respects.

Committees

The Commission may establish such ~~committees~~ subcommittees as are deemed necessary to carry out the work of the Commission. ~~The Chairperson(s) shall seek Commissioners' requests for Committee appointments and then appoint members as s/he deems necessary. The Committees~~ Subcommittees shall meet at such times and places as each ~~Committee~~ deems suitable and subject to in accordance with the provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A. ~~The proceedings and/or output of every Committee meeting, §§ 18-25. Each subcommittee shall be reported at report to the full Commission meeting for inclusion in the meeting's minutes from time to time or at the full Commission's request.~~

Meetings

Regular meetings: ~~Regular meetings of the~~ The Commission shall ~~be held on a regularly meet~~ monthly ~~basis. At City Hall and post its~~ schedule ~~of the regular meetings shall be publicized on the Commission's webpage. Regular meetings shall ordinarily be held at Watertown City Hall with virtual meeting options as regulated by State Law. Meetings may be held in~~ shall, to the extent feasible, offer remote access and/or offer other accessible facilities ~~as the Commission deems necessary. If the Commission decides to hold a regular meeting at a time or place different from the time or place stated in its schedule of regular meetings, it shall give the same notice of the meeting that is required for a special meeting~~ options consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Special meetings: Special meetings may be called from time to time by the Chairperson(s), or by at the request of three members of the Commission. ~~Special meetings may be called only when such meetings comply with the advance notice requirements of Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A. A quorum for a special meeting shall be the same as for a regular meeting. A majority of the commissioners participating in this meeting may take action on any matter presented.~~

Emergency meetings: In the unlikely event an emergency occurs meeting the requirements of the Open Meeting Law, the Chairperson(s) may call an emergency meeting with forty-eight (less than 48) hours' notice. ~~Notice of the emergency meeting must be given via the public website per Open Meeting laws. A quorum for~~ At an emergency meeting, the Commission shall be the same as for a regular meeting. A majority of the commissioners participating in this meeting may take action on any matter presented. If action is taken, a report shall be presented, to the full Commission at the next regularly scheduled meeting. The report shall include the nature of the emergency, the issue(s) presented for consideration, and the action taken extent possible, comply with all other provisions of the Open Meeting Law.

Public comments

There ~~will~~shall be a public comment period ~~following monthly~~included on the agenda at all regular meetings of the ~~full Human Rights Commission.~~ At special meetings of created by the Commission will have, and at subcommittee meetings, public comment at their meetings at their shall be included on the agenda at the discretion. ~~Commentators will of the Chair. To facilitate the orderly conduct of the meeting and to ensure that matters are raised that fall within the jurisdiction of the Commission or subcommittee, as applicable, each person recognized for public comment shall state their name and address, have three minutes to speak and shall, speak only address once, and limit their comments to matters on the agenda of the for that meeting just concluded.~~ Individuals are requested toshall address the Commission or subcommittee from the podium to ensure the that the remarks can be heard by the remote audience. ~~There shall only be one commentator at a time. The chair may rule a commentator out of order for not complying with these rules. No person shall: speak without being recognized by the Chair, speak over another, continue to speak when asked to conclude, speak to others while another person has the floor, or otherwise disrupt the meeting.~~ If a comment pertains to a particular complaint or grievance, to ensure respect for the privacy of the person making the complaint or grievance or the person against whom such a matter is raised, the Commissioners may request that the individual first submit the matter using the official complaint form. The Commission encourages but cannot require commentators to engage in a mutually respectful and civil manner. In light of the constitutional protections for free speech, however, the Commission cannot place limits on the content of speech other than by limiting comments to the matters listed on its agendas. For that reason, it is possible that comments made by persons during a public comment period may offend, upset, or otherwise disturb listeners.

Attendance

Commissioners shall attend all regular meetings of the. ~~The Commission regularly and participate actively. Commissioners may recommend for removal a Commissioner who have~~ misses three (3) unexcused absences or more regular meetings during a one-year period ~~shall be recommended for removal. An unexcused absence is defined as an absence without notifying, provided, however, that such action may be taken only in the event that for each of the missed meetings the Commissioner failed to notify the City staff liaison prior to the beginning of the Commission's regular monthly~~ that meeting, or, if the absence was unanticipated due to unforeseen circumstances, such as illness or emergency, shall also qualify as notified absence where the Commissioner reports such absence to the staff liaison as soon as reasonably possible thereafter.

Quorum and Action

A quorum shall consist of ~~five (5) Commissioners. Decision-making shall be subject to a majority vote of the Commissioner~~ total number of Commissioners, or, if a subcommittee, a majority of the total number of subcommittee members, and action can be taken by a majority of those present, provided that a quorum has been established, and voting. When a quorum fails to attend a scheduled meeting or the Commission loses a quorum because of the departure of ~~some~~ members, the only official actions the Commission may take are to: 1) fix the ~~time~~date to which to adjourn, continue the meeting, with notice of such continued meeting to be provided in accordance with the Open Meeting Law; 2) adjourn the meeting; and/or 3) recess the meeting; or 4) and take measures to secure quorum. Any other action taken by the Commission while it does not have a quorum is void.

Each regular meeting ~~must begin with a role~~ agenda shall include the following items: roll call. The staff liaison will ask that the previous meeting's for attendance; approval of the minutes are approved. Before ending from the prior meeting, a commissioner must make a motion to adjourn, which must be seconded.; public comment; Action Plan progress; and adjournment.

Cancellation of meetings

The Chairperson(s) may cancel a regular meeting ~~in the event that if~~ a quorum will not be present or ~~if the meeting date other~~ conflicts with other responsibilities exist, notice of the Commissioners. Notices of continued, rescheduled, or canceled meetings which cancellation shall be posted on the City website as soon as practicable following the cancellation.

Liaisons

The Commission will work with ~~the~~ liaisons from designated by the Watertown Police Department and the Watertown School Department, and the Superintendent, and, if deemed appropriate by the Superintendent, with designated student liaisons chosen by the superintendent, to understand issues of concern and ideas and help explore possible responses and solutions.. The Commission may invite other City agencies and community organizations to formulate constructive resolutions, as needed. appoint liaisons to work with the Commission.

Action Plan

The Commission shall develop an annual Action Plan ~~annually that outlines~~outlining specific goals and associated activities for the upcoming year, ~~aligned in alignment~~ with the Commission's purposes as ~~stated~~described in the ordinance. ~~The goals and activities outlined in the Action Plan shall directly relate to one or more of the Commission's core purposes as outlined in the ordinance.~~

Action Plan content: The Action Plan shall include:

- Primary goals for the year
- Specific, measurable activities associated with each goal
- Timelines for completion of each activity
- Responsible parties or subcommittees for each activity
- Resources required for implementation

Development process: The Commission shall annually dedicate at least one full meeting to Action Plan development ~~and/or deliberation annually~~. Prior to this meeting, Commissioners shall review the previous year's Action Plan and progress and consider ~~current~~ human rights issues then affecting the ~~community~~City. The Commission shall endeavor to engage and collaborate with local stakeholders, including through surveys, public forums, or other means. The Commission may ~~form~~designate a ~~temporary Action Plans~~single member or a subcommittee to draft the plan for full Commission review and approval.

Approval and implementation: The Action Plan must be approved by a majority vote of the full Commission. Once approved, the Action Plan shall be:

- ~~Published~~Posted on the Commission's website;
- Submitted to the City Council; and
- Distributed to ~~relevant city~~City departments and community partners

Progress monitoring: The Commission shall review Action Plan progress as a standing agenda item at each regular meeting. Commissioners or subcommittees responsible for specific activities shall provide brief updates on their progress.

Mid-year review and updates: The Commission shall conduct a comprehensive mid-year review of the Action Plan. Based on the review, the Commission may vote to:

- Adjust timelines for existing activities;
- Modify or remove activities that are no longer feasible or relevant; or
- Add new activities in response to emerging issues or opportunities.

Any substantive changes to the Action Plan must be approved by a majority vote of the Commission.

Annual Reporting: The Commission shall prepare an annual report summarizing Action Plan achievements, challenges, and lessons learned. ~~This~~In accordance with the Watertown Home Rule Charter, this report shall be submitted to the City Council on or before March 15 each year, filed with the City Clerk, and made publicly available. The Commission may designate a single member or form a temporary subcommittee to draft the annual report for review and approval by the Chairperson(s) and subsequently the full Commission ~~review and approval.~~

Continuous improvement: As part of the annual Action Plan development process, the Commission shall reflect on the effectiveness of the previous year's plan and process. Based on this reflection, the Commission may vote to modify these Rules of Procedure to improve the Action Plan's impact and the efficiency of the development process.

Training/onboarding

Each new member of the Commission shall be furnished with orientation materials upon their appointment, to include the Ordinance, Annual Plan, Annual Report, the last two months of minutes, a meeting calendar, materials and certifications provided by the City Clerk in accordance with the Open Meeting Law, and any other pertinent information. ~~An orientation will be held for~~ The City shall assist newly appointed Commissioners to ~~familiarize them~~ understand and become familiar with: the Ordinance ~~Establishing the Watertown Human Rights~~ and its purposes; the Open Meeting, Public Records and Conflict of Interest Laws; Commission; ~~Open Meeting Law; the Commission's purpose;~~ attendance requirements, roles, and meeting dates; these Rules of Procedure; and other relevant information.

Amendment of Rules of Procedure

~~These Rules of Procedure may be amended, repealed, or suspended following discussion among Commissioners, and new Rules of Procedure adopted, by~~In accordance with the Human Rights Watertown Home Rule Charter, these rules shall be filed with the City Clerk. The Commission by majority may vote, if a quorum is present, to amend, repeal, or suspend these Rules. Prior to the adoption of ~~the any~~ amendment, the City staff liaison shall e-mail notice meeting the requirements of the Open Meeting Law to each Commissioner ~~shall be given~~ at least 10 days' notice in advance, along with a copy of the date, time, Rules of Procedure and place of the meeting at which the proposed amendment is to be considered, and the notice shall state that one of the purposes. If amended, an updated copy of the meeting is to consider a proposed amendment to the Rules of Procedure and shall contain a copy of the proposed amendment. will be filed with the City Clerk.

Watertown Human Rights Commission Rules of Procedure

Purpose

The Watertown Human Rights Commission was established by an Ordinance Establishing the Watertown Human Rights Commission, approved on _____, 202__ (Ordinance). The Ordinance outlines in detail the commitments of the City and the Commission to affirming that human rights are universal and inalienable, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, and to protecting those rights, all as further detailed in the Ordinance.

Organization

Presiding officers: Each April, the Commission shall elect at a regular meeting from amongst its members a Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, and Clerk, each for a one-year term.

Notwithstanding the provisions of this paragraph, however, the Commission may reorganize at any time during the year.

Co-Chairs. Notwithstanding the preceding paragraph, the Commission may elect Co-Chairs to share the responsibilities of the position of Chair. In any year when Co-Chairs are elected, a Vice Chair need not be elected for that year; provided, however, that one of the Co-chairs shall be deemed the Chair for purposes of finalizing the agenda for each meeting and for facilitating the conduct of Commission meetings. Except as otherwise specified, for purposes of these Rules, a single chair, or co-chairs, shall be referred to as the “Chairperson” or “Chair”.

Duties of Chairperson: The Chairperson shall preside at Commission meetings; provided, however, that if there are Co-chairs, one shall function as the Chair for purposes of facilitating each meeting, and, if only one is present, that person shall chair the meeting. If there is a single Chairperson, in their absence, the Vice-Chairperson shall preside. Notwithstanding the provisions of this paragraph, if there is no Chair or Vice Chair present at a particular meeting, a temporary Chairperson shall be chosen by the Commission for that meeting.

The Chairperson shall coordinate with the City staff liaison for preparation of the meeting agenda, conduct the meeting, decide all questions of order, and declare votes taken at the meeting. Additional duties of the Chairperson shall include:

- Appointment of subcommittee members;
- Inviting and seconding motions;
- Responsibility for the communications of the Commission.
- Submitting to the full Commission for review and approval an Annual Work Plan and Annual Report, both of which are described in further detail below.

Vacancies: If the Chairperson resigns, the Co-chair, if applicable, or the Vice-Chairperson, shall become Chairperson. A new Co-chair, if applicable, or Vice-Chairperson, will be elected at the next Commission meeting.

Commission Conduct

The Chairperson shall be the official spokesperson for the Commission regarding votes taken by the Commission on any matter within its jurisdiction or as otherwise authorized by a vote of the Commission. An individual commissioner shall not express personal opinions on any matter that has come, or is likely to come, before the Commission without expressly stating that such opinion is their own personal opinion and does not reflect or represent the opinion or position of the Commission on the matter.

Each Commissioner shall adhere to the highest standards of ethical conduct to further the Commission's mission, goals, and objectives, and to instill in the public a sense of confidence in the Commission's operations, including compliance with:

- The Open Meeting Law (G. L. c. 30A, §§ 18-25);
- The Conflict of Interest Law (G. L. c. 268A); and
- The Public Records Law (G.L. c. 66, § 10)

and all other applicable laws. The Commission shall conduct its business in a transparent, timely manner and, except as otherwise allowed by law, in public meetings.

Subcommittees

The Commission may establish such subcommittees as are deemed necessary to carry out the work of the Commission. Subcommittees shall meet at such times and places as each deems suitable and in accordance with the provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §§ 18-25. Each subcommittee shall report to the full Commission meeting from time to time or at the full Commission's request.

Meetings

Regular meetings: The Commission shall meet monthly at City Hall and post its schedule on the Commission's webpage. Meetings shall, to the extent feasible, offer remote access and/or offer other accessible options consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Special meetings: Special meetings may be called from time to time by the Chairperson, or at the request of three members of the Commission.

Emergency meetings: In the unlikely event an emergency occurs meeting the requirements of the Open Meeting Law, the Chairperson may call a meeting with less than 48 hours' notice. At an emergency meeting, the Commission shall, to the extent possible, comply with all other provisions of the Open Meeting Law.

Public comments

There shall be a public comment period included on the agenda at all regular meetings of the Commission. At special meetings of the Commission, and at subcommittee meetings, public comment shall be included on the agenda at the discretion of the Chair. To facilitate the orderly conduct of the meeting and to ensure that matters are raised that fall within the jurisdiction of the

Commission or subcommittee, as applicable, each person recognized for public comment shall state their name and address, have three minutes to speak, speak only once, and limit their comments to matters on the agenda for that meeting. Individuals shall address the Commission or subcommittee from the podium to ensure the that the remarks can be heard by the remote audience. No person shall: speak without being recognized by the Chair, speak over another, continue to speak when asked to conclude, speak to others while another person has the floor, or otherwise disrupt the meeting. If a comment pertains to a particular complaint or grievance, to ensure respect for the privacy of the person making the complaint or grievance or the person against whom such a matter is raised, the Commissioners may request that the individual first submit the matter using the official complaint form. The Commission encourages but cannot require commentators to engage in a mutually respectful and civil manner. In light of the constitutional protections for free speech, however, the Commission cannot place limits on the content of speech other than by limiting comments to the matters listed on its agendas. For that reason, it is possible that comments made by persons during a public comment period may offend, upset, or otherwise disturb listeners.

Attendance

Commissioners shall attend all regular meetings. The Commission may recommend for removal a Commissioner who misses three or more regular meetings during a one-year period, provided, however, that such action may be taken only in the event that for each of the missed meetings the Commissioner failed to notify the City staff liaison prior to the beginning of that meeting, or, if the absence was unanticipated due to circumstances such as illness or emergency, as soon as possible thereafter.

Quorum and Action

A quorum shall consist of a majority of the total number of Commissioners, or, if a subcommittee, a majority of the total number of subcommittee members, and action can be taken by a majority of those present and voting. When a quorum fails to attend a scheduled meeting or the Commission loses a quorum because of the departure of members, the only official actions the Commission may take are to: 1) fix the date to which to continue the meeting, with notice of such continued meeting to be provided in accordance with the Open Meeting Law; 2) adjourn the meeting; and/or 3) recess the meeting and take measures to secure quorum.

Each regular meeting agenda shall include the following items: roll call for attendance; approval of the minutes from the prior meeting; public comment; Action Plan progress; and adjournment.

Cancellation of meetings

The Chairperson may cancel a regular meeting if a quorum will not be present or other conflicts exist, notice of which cancellation shall be posted on the City website as soon as practicable following the cancellation.

Liaisons

The Commission will work with liaisons designated by the Watertown Police Department and the Watertown School Superintendent, and, if deemed appropriate by the Superintendent, with designated student liaisons, to understand issues of concern and explore possible responses and solutions.. The Commission may invite other City agencies and community organizations to appoint liaisons to work with the Commission.

Action Plan

The Commission shall develop an annual Action Plan outlining specific goals and associated activities for the upcoming year in alignment with the Commission's purposes as described in the ordinance.

Action Plan content: The Action Plan shall include:

- Primary goals for the year
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- Resources required for implementation

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Approval and implementation: The Action Plan must be approved by a majority vote of the full Commission. Once approved, the Action Plan shall be:

- Posted on the Commission's website;
- Submitted to the City Council; and
- Distributed to City departments and community partners

Progress monitoring: The Commission shall review Action Plan progress as a standing agenda item at each regular meeting. Commissioners or subcommittees responsible for specific activities shall provide brief updates on their progress.

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- Adjust timelines for existing activities;
- Modify or remove activities that are no longer feasible or relevant; or
- Add new activities in response to emerging issues or opportunities.

Any substantive changes to the Action Plan must be approved by a majority vote of the Commission.

Annual Reporting: The Commission shall prepare an annual report summarizing Action Plan achievements, challenges, and lessons learned. In accordance with the Watertown Home Rule Charter, this report shall be submitted to the City Council on or before March 15 each year, filed with the City Clerk, and made publicly available. The Commission may designate a single member or form a temporary subcommittee to draft the annual report for review and approval by the Chairperson and subsequently the full Commission.

Continuous improvement: As part of the annual Action Plan development process, the Commission shall reflect on the effectiveness of the previous year's plan and process. Based on this reflection, the Commission may vote to modify these Rules of Procedure to improve the Action Plan's impact and the efficiency of the development process.

Training/onboarding

Each new member of the Commission shall be furnished with orientation materials upon their appointment, to include the Ordinance, Annual Plan, Annual Report, the last two months of minutes, a meeting calendar, materials and certifications provided by the City Clerk in accordance with the Open Meeting Law, and any other pertinent information. The City shall assist newly appointed Commissioners to understand and become familiar with: the Ordinance and its purposes; the Open Meeting, Public Records and Conflict of Interest Laws; Commission attendance requirements, roles, and meeting dates; these Rules of Procedure; and other relevant information.

Amendment of Rules of Procedure

In accordance with the Watertown Home Rule Charter, these rules shall be filed with the City Clerk. The Commission may vote to amend, repeal, or suspend these Rules. Prior to the adoption of any amendment, the City staff liaison shall e-mail notice meeting the requirements of the Open Meeting Law to each Commissioner at least 10 days' in advance, along with a copy of the Rules of Procedure and the proposed amendment. If amended, an updated copy of the Rules will be filed with the City Clerk.

**PROCEDURE FOR FILING COMPLAINTS
WITH THE
WATERTOWN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**
10/15/24 Draft (Commissioner Lisa Laplante, Rules Committee)

- 1) Pursuant to the ~~charge established in provisions of~~ Ordinance 0-2023-66-05 “Duties”, § 31.73, the following ~~rules establish the~~ procedures ~~for receiving~~ shall apply to the Commission’s receipt and ~~managing~~ management of human rights complaints brought to the Commission.

Competence

~~The Commission may receive concerns, complaints or questions regarding anything related so as to its general aim established in [0-2023-66-02 “Purpose”] which is “to “ensure the protection of every individual in the enjoyment and exercise of their human and civil rights and to encourage and bring about mutual understanding and respect among all people who live, work, visit, and travel within the Town~~City.”

A. Jurisdiction

- 1) ~~The Commission serves as a resource for residents, employees, visitors and those doing business with or in the City, with regard to concerns, complaints, or questions of discrimination or unequal treatment of individuals in the City of Watertown. The Commission does not have the jurisdiction to investigate or resolve complaints directly between parties to a dispute.~~
- 2) The Commission may ~~consider such communications concerning the receive concerns, complaints or questions regarding the full~~ range of human rights, whether civil, political, economic, social, or cultural ~~in nature~~ in nature, as recognized by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and other related international human rights instruments related to human rights, including but not limited to:
 - i. ~~In particular, the Commission may receive complaints related to the~~Perceived withholding, denying, interfering with, threatening or subjecting of any individual to coercion or intimidation concerning equitable access to and/or discrimination in employment, housing, education, recreation, services, public access and accommodation and public area against a person is based upon race, color, religious views, national origin, sex, gender identity or expression, citizenship, age, ancestry, family/marital status, sexual orientation, disability, source of income, military or veteran status. ~~Similarly, the Commission may receive complaints about; and~~
 - ii. Perceived acts of prejudice, intolerance, bigotry, bias, unlawful discrimination, threats, coercion, or intimidation based upon an individual’s race, color, religious

views, national origin, sex, gender identity or expression, citizenship, age, ancestry, family/marital status in any form, sexual orientation, disability, source of income, or military or veteran status. Such events may also amount to violations of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 151B (the Massachusetts Anti-Discrimination Law) and 42 U.S.C. §3601, et. (the Federal Fair Housing Act), and other relevant state and federal anti-discrimination laws.

- 3) ~~Such concerns may implicate the provisions of state and federal laws including but not limited to G.L. c. 151B (the Massachusetts Anti-Discrimination Law), 42 U.S.C. § 3601, et. seq. The Commission serves as a resource for residents, employees, those doing business with or in the city, or visitors on concerns, complaints, or questions of discrimination or unequal treatment of individuals in the City of Watertown. It does not have the jurisdiction to investigate or resolve complaints directly between parties of a dispute.~~
- 3) (the Federal Fair Housing Act), the Americans with Disabilities Act, and other relevant state and federal anti-discrimination laws. As such, the Commission may, after review and as appropriate, refer any such complaints to an appropriate authority having jurisdiction, including but not limited to local, state, or federal law enforcement agencies, social services agencies, the Massachusetts Commission against Discrimination, or the City's Human Resources Department. Whether or not the Commission makes such a referral, the complainant retains the right to seek any and all remedies available to them in law and in equity, and the failure of the Commission to make such a recommendation in no way reflects a determination by the Commission that such remedies are unavailable or inappropriate.
- 4) **IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR COMPLAINANTS:**
- i. The Commission cannot as a matter of law guarantee the confidentiality of any concerns, complaints or questions brought to its attention, as all records received by the Commission, and all meetings of the Commission, are subject to the requirements of the Public Records and Open Meeting Laws.
 - ii. In the event a complaint is made to or filed with the Commission outside of a public meeting, the Commission shall, to the extent possible and consistent with law, protect the privacy of the complainant and any person(s) named in the complaint.
 - iii. The Commission reserves the right to refer a concern, complaint, or question concerning a potential crime, after notice to the person bringing the same to the attention of the Commission, if possible, to appropriate local, state or federal law enforcement authorities.

B. Directions for Filing a Complaint

- 4) ~~Any person or class of persons claiming to be aggrieved by acts or events believed to be violations of their human rights may submit a complaint or concern with the Commission in writing and/or appear in person during a regularly scheduled meeting.~~
- 1) Submissions By Mail, E-Mail, Telephone or In Person. Any person or class of persons with a concern, complaint or question concerning an act or event perceived to be a human rights violation may submit the same to the Commission by mail, e-mail, or telephone; in

person at a meeting; or by making an appointment to meet with a Commissioner and/or the City staff liaison. Generally, submissions shall be made within one year of the relevant act or event; however, the Commission may accept submissions outside of that timeframe should circumstances so require. Contact information is as follows, and confirmation of a written complaint will be provided as soon as possible but within seven days:

In Person or By Mail: Human Rights Commission, Watertown City Hall, 149 Main Street, Watertown, MA 02472

By E-mail: Doug Newton at dnewton@watertown-ma.gov

By Telephone:

- ~~1)2)~~ Substance of Written Complaints ~~should. While anonymous concerns, complaints, and questions will be accepted, written complaints may~~ state the name and address of the person making the complaint and must include a concise description of the events or acts believed to constitute a violation of human rights. When ~~possible~~appropriate, the complaint ~~should~~may indicate the person, institution, or company believed to be responsible for the violation. ~~Complaints and concerns can be filed anonymously.~~
- ~~5) Complaints should be submitted through email~~All Remedies Available to Doug Newton, Municipal Policy Analyst at dnewton@watertown-ma.gov or mailed to Watertown Human Rights Commission, City of Watertown, Massachusetts, 149 Main Street, Watertown, MA 02472. Confirmation of receipt of and Complainant. Neither the complaint will be made within seven business days.
- ~~6) The complaint should be filed within one year of the alleged act or event. The WHRC reserves the right to waive this requirement based on reasonable grounds.~~
- ~~7) The WHRC does not guarantee the confidentiality of such complaints or concerns in accordance with Massachusetts Public Records Law (M.G.L. c. 66). [Question: do we affirmatively state that any evidence of a criminal violation would be reported to the authorities?]~~
- ~~2)3)~~ The filing of a complaint, with the Commission, nor the failure to makefile a complaint, or the dismissal of a complaint by the Commission shall not bar thea complainant from seeking assistance from or relief in any other administrative or judicial forum. ~~Nor shall filing or failing~~Similarly, neither the filing of a complaint nor the failure to file a complaint within any other Federal, Stateadministrative or City agencies or courtsjudicial forum bar thea complainant from seeking assistance from the Commission. ~~The Human Rights Commission may also submit areas of concern to be reviewed by a Complaint Review Committee.~~
- ~~4) After filingConfidentiality. In the event of anya complaint, made to the Chairperson(s)Commission outside of a public meeting, the Commission shall designate a Complaint Review Committee of one or more of the Commissioners to review the, to the extent possible and consistent with law, protect the privacy of the complainant and~~

~~any person(s) named in the complaint. Any commissioner who identifies a conflict of interest shall recuse themselves from participating in any stage of handling the~~

~~3)5) City Employees. If the concern, complaint, or question involves a City employee, the Chairperson shall refer the matter to the City's Human Resources Director for appropriate action. If the alleged violation involves the City Manager or a City Councilor, the Human Resources Director shall consult with the City Council President on next steps. In both cases, consideration may be given to hiring an outside investigator, if necessary.~~

~~6) The Review Committee shall make an initial determination of whether or not the stated matter based on the alleged facts constitutes a prima facie violation of a human right as recognized either by these rules, state or federal law, or international human rights law. If the matter does not amount to Review/Designation of Complaint Review. If the concern, complaint, or question involves any other person, the Chairperson may elect to review the same themselves or designate one or more Commissioners to conduct a Complaint Review. If two or more Commissioners are assigned to review the complaint together, they shall constitute a subcommittee subject to the requirements of the Open Meeting Law, and all meetings shall be held in open session unless one of the executive session purposes in G.L. c. 30A, §21 is applicable.~~

~~Pursuant to G.L. c. 30A, §21(a)(1), public bodies may meet in executive session to, "discuss the reputation, character, physical condition or mental health, rather than professional competence, of an individual, or to discuss the discipline or dismissal of, or complaints or charges brought against, a public officer, employee, staff member or individual." Under such circumstances, the individual to be discussed must be provided with written notice at least 48 hours in advance of the session, and that person must be afforded the following rights:~~

- ~~i. to be present at such executive session during deliberations which involve that individual;~~
- ~~ii. to have counsel or a representative of his own choosing present and attending for the purpose of advising the individual and not for the purpose of active participation in the executive session;~~
- ~~iii. to speak on his own behalf; and~~
- ~~iv. to cause an independent record to be created of said executive session by audio-recording or transcription, at the individual's expense.~~

~~7) Complaint Review Resolution –~~

~~8) Evidence Suggesting Further Action May be Warranted. If the Complaint Review finds evidence suggesting a further inquiry is appropriate as to whether the act or event at issue constitutes a human rights violation, the Complaint Review Committee will dismiss Commissioner(s) reviewing the complaint and/or refer it back to the Commission. The complainant will be notified within seven days of such action and have an opportunity to appeal the decision within 10 business days following the same procedure outlined in (H) above.~~

- i. ~~If the matter does amount to a prima facie violation of a human right, the Review Committee may informally meet~~may request an informal, purely voluntary meeting with the complainant to learn more about the facts or to request additional information, if deemed necessary by the committee, related to. Regardless of whether such a meeting is held, however, the Commissioner(s) reviewing the complaint. At that time, the Complaint Review Committee may choose to educate shall notify the complainant of their initial impressions and work with respectthe complainant to provide information and resources about possible other administrative and judicial avenues to resolve the complaint. See Annex 1 for a list of relevant venuespursue and address the complaint, and, further, to identify, and/or refer the complainant to support from state agencies, nonprofits, or other professionals that may be available resources.
- 9) ~~If such Review Committee determines after such informal meetings and review of the complaint that there is probable cause to find a violation of a human right, the Review Committee shall endeavor to facilitate access to a third-party mediator or facilitator to assist with the complaint. It may also refer the complaint to the appropriate town agency or body established to handle the subject matter of the complaint, which may include those listed in Annex 1. The Commission shall also endeavor to produce a report with its determinations on the matter and any possible recommendations that may be directed towards the general public as well as relevant town bodies that are either involved in the complaint or otherwise involved in the general subject matter.~~
 - ii. Complaint Review Resolution – No Evidence Suggesting Further Action May be Warranted. If the Complaint Review suggests that insufficient evidence exists to warrant further inquiry into the matter, the Commissioner(s) conducting the complaint review shall notify the complainant, provide information and resources about possible administrative and judicial avenues to pursue the complaint, and provide such additional information as may be appropriate to support the complainant.
 - iii. The Commissioner or Commissioners charged with conducting the Complaint Review shall prepare a report, protecting the names and identifying details of the complainant and any person(s) named in the complaint, summarizing the nature of the complaint, the Complaint Review result, and the information and resources provided.
- 8) As part of the Commission’s Annual Action Plan, the Commission shall aggregate the information and resources provided during that year to complainants so as to make the same information available to all persons without the need for them to first file a complaint.
- 4)9) Nothing set forth herein is intended to~~shall~~ alter or limit the authority of any other municipal employee, officer, board, commission, authority or agent pursuant to any federal,or state ~~or local~~ statute,or regulation or City ordinance.

C. Applicability

- 1) ~~These provisions of this ordinance~~procedures shall be construed liberally for the accomplishment of the purposes of ~~these the Commission’s Rules;~~ and the Ordinance

creating the Commission, ~~and any ordinances or portions thereof inconsistent with any provision of this Ordinance is hereby repealed.~~

- 2) The Human Rights Commission may periodically vote to amend these procedures as warranted necessary for the efficiency and effectiveness of its mission.

**PROCEDURE FOR FILING COMPLAINTS
WITH THE
WATERTOWN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**

Pursuant to the provisions of Ordinance 0-2023-66, § 31.73, the following procedures shall apply to the Commission's receipt and management of human rights complaints so as to "ensure the protection of every individual in the enjoyment and exercise of their human and civil rights and to encourage and bring about mutual understanding and respect among all people who live, work, visit, and travel within the City."

A. Jurisdiction

- 1) The Commission serves as a resource for residents, employees, visitors and those doing business with or in the City, with regard to concerns, complaints, or questions of discrimination or unequal treatment of individuals in the City. The Commission does not have the jurisdiction to investigate or resolve complaints directly between parties to a dispute.
- 2) The Commission may receive concerns, complaints or questions regarding the full range of human rights, whether civil, political, economic, social, or cultural nature in nature, as recognized by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and other related international human rights instruments related to human rights, including but not limited to:
 - i. Perceived withholding, denying, interfering with, threatening or subjecting of any individual to coercion or intimidation concerning equitable access to and/or discrimination in employment, housing, education, recreation, services, public access and accommodation and public area against a person is based upon race, color, religious views, national origin, sex, gender identity or expression, citizenship, age, ancestry, family/marital status, sexual orientation, disability, source of income, military or veteran status; and
 - ii. Perceived acts of prejudice, intolerance, bigotry, bias, unlawful discrimination, threats, coercion, or intimidation based upon an individual's race, color, religious views, national origin, sex, gender identity or expression, citizenship, age, ancestry, family/marital status in any form, sexual orientation, disability, source of income, or military or veteran status.
- 3) Such concerns may implicate the provisions of state and federal laws including but not limited to G.L. c. 151B (the Massachusetts Anti-Discrimination Law), 42 U.S.C. § 3601, et. seq. (the Federal Fair Housing Act), the Americans with Disabilities Act, and other relevant state and federal anti-discrimination laws. As such, the Commission may, after review and as appropriate, refer any such complaints to an appropriate authority having jurisdiction, including but not limited to local, state, or federal law enforcement agencies, social services agencies, the Massachusetts Commission against Discrimination, or the City's Human Resources Department. Whether or not the Commission makes such a

referral, the complainant retains the right to seek any and all remedies available to them in law and in equity, and the failure of the Commission to make such a recommendation in no way reflects a determination by the Commission that such remedies are unavailable or inappropriate.

4) IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR COMPLAINANTS:

- i. The Commission cannot as a matter of law guarantee the confidentiality of any concerns, complaints or questions brought to its attention, as all records received by the Commission, and all meetings of the Commission, are subject to the requirements of the Public Records and Open Meeting Laws.
- ii. In the event a complaint is made to or filed with the Commission outside of a public meeting, the Commission shall, to the extent possible and consistent with law, protect the privacy of the complainant and any person(s) named in the complaint.
- iii. The Commission reserves the right to refer a concern, complaint, or question concerning a potential crime, after notice to the person bringing the same to the attention of the Commission, if possible, to appropriate local, state or federal law enforcement authorities.

B. Directions for Filing a Complaint

- 1) Submissions By Mail, E-Mail, Telephone or In Person. Any person or class of persons with a concern, complaint or question concerning an act or event perceived to be a human rights violation may submit the same to the Commission by mail, e-mail, or telephone; in person at a meeting; or by making an appointment to meet with a Commissioner and/or the City staff liaison. Generally, submissions shall be made within one year of the relevant act or event; however, the Commission may accept submissions outside of that timeframe should circumstances so require. Contact information is as follows, and confirmation of a written complaint will be provided as soon as possible but within seven days:

In Person or By Mail: Human Rights Commission, Watertown City Hall, 149
Main Street, Watertown, MA 02472

By E-mail: Doug Newton at dnewton@watertown-ma.gov

By Telephone:

- 2) Substance of Written Complaints. While anonymous concerns, complaints, and questions will be accepted, written complaints may state the name and address of the person making the complaint and must include a concise description of the events or acts believed to constitute a violation of human rights. When appropriate, the complaint may indicate the person, institution, or company believed to be responsible for the violation.
- 3) All Remedies Available to Commission and Complainant. Neither the filing of a complaint with the Commission, nor the failure to file a complaint, shall bar a complainant from seeking assistance from or relief in any other administrative or judicial forum. Similarly, neither the filing of a complaint nor the failure to file a complaint in any other

administrative or judicial forum bar a complainant from seeking assistance from the Commission.

- 4) Confidentiality. In the event of a complaint made to the Commission outside of a public meeting, the Commission shall, to the extent possible and consistent with law, protect the privacy of the complainant and any person(s) named in the complaint.
- 5) City Employees. If the concern, complaint, or question involves a City employee, the Chairperson shall refer the matter to the City's Human Resources Director for appropriate action. If the alleged violation involves the City Manager or a City Councilor, the Human Resources Director shall consult with the City Council President on next steps. In both cases, consideration may be given to hiring an outside investigator, if necessary.
- 6) Review/Designation of Complaint Review. If the concern, complaint, or question involves any other person, the Chairperson may elect to review the same themselves or designate one or more Commissioners to conduct a Complaint Review. If two or more Commissioners are assigned to review the complaint together, they shall constitute a subcommittee subject to the requirements of the Open Meeting Law, and all meetings shall be held in open session unless one of the executive session purposes in G.L. c. 30A, §21 is applicable.

Pursuant to G.L. c. 30A, §21(a)(1), public bodies may meet in executive session to, "discuss the reputation, character, physical condition or mental health, rather than professional competence, of an individual, or to discuss the discipline or dismissal of, or complaints or charges brought against, a public officer, employee, staff member or individual." Under such circumstances, the individual to be discussed must be provided with written notice at least 48 hours in advance of the session, and that person must be afforded the following rights:

- i. to be present at such executive session during deliberations which involve that individual;
 - ii. to have counsel or a representative of his own choosing present and attending for the purpose of advising the individual and not for the purpose of active participation in the executive session;
 - iii. to speak on his own behalf; and
 - iv. to cause an independent record to be created of said executive session by audio-recording or transcription, at the individual's expense.
- 7) Complaint Review Resolution –
- i. Evidence Suggesting Further Action May be Warranted. If the Complaint Review finds evidence suggesting a further inquiry is appropriate as to whether the act or event at issue constitutes a human rights violation, the Commissioner(s) reviewing the complaint may request an informal, purely voluntary meeting with the complainant to learn more about the facts or to request additional information. Regardless of whether such a meeting is held, however, the Commissioner(s) reviewing the complaint shall notify the complainant of their initial impressions and work with the complainant to provide information and resources about possible

- administrative and judicial avenues to pursue and address the complaint, and, further, to identify, and/or refer the complainant to support from state agencies, nonprofits, or other professionals that may be available resources.
- ii. Complaint Review Resolution – No Evidence Suggesting Further Action May be Warranted. If the Complaint Review suggests that insufficient evidence exists to warrant further inquiry into the matter, the Commissioner(s) conducting the complaint review shall notify the complainant, provide information and resources about possible administrative and judicial avenues to pursue the complaint, and provide such additional information as may be appropriate to support the complainant.
 - iii. The Commissioner or Commissioners charged with conducting the Complaint Review shall prepare a report, protecting the names and identifying details of the complainant and any person(s) named in the complaint, summarizing the nature of the complaint, the Complaint Review result, and the information and resources provided.
- 8) As part of the Commission's Annual Action Plan, the Commission shall aggregate the information and resources provided during that year to complainants so as to make the same information available to all persons without the need for them to first file a complaint.
 - 9) Nothing set forth herein shall alter or limit the authority of any other municipal employee, officer, board, commission, authority or agent pursuant to any federal or state statute or regulation or City ordinance.

C. Applicability

- 1) These procedures shall be construed liberally for the accomplishment of the purposes of the Commission's Rules and the Ordinance creating the Commission.
- 2) The Human Rights Commission may periodically vote to amend these procedures as warranted necessary for the efficiency and effectiveness of its mission.