



Human Rights Commission Meeting

Friday, March 28, 2025 at 12:00 PM

Agenda

ACCESS INFORMATION:

- A. This meeting will be held on Friday, March 28th at 12:00 PM. Location: ZOOM ONLY
 - B. The Public may join the virtual meeting online: <https://watertown-ma.zoom.us/j/85055123857>
 - 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
 - A. Minutes for previous meeting
- 4. Discussion with City Attorney
 - A. Rules of Procedure and Complaint Procedure for Human Rights Commission
 - B. Guidance on Open Meeting & Public Records Laws
- 5. Public Comment
- 6. Adjournment

Human Rights Commission Rules Committee Meeting Minutes

March 10, 2025

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:33 PM.

2. Roll Call

Doug Newton called the roll. Present (all via zoom) were Elizabeth Brusie, Corey Barr, Lisa LaPlante.

3. Acceptance of Minutes

Elizabeth Brusie made a motion, seconded by Lisa LaPlante, to approve the minutes. The Subcommittee voted three to zero to approve the motion.

4. Discussion

a. City Attorney's Feedback to Rules

Subcommittee members began by discussing the disagreements and concern that they had with some of the city attorney's feedback to the rules. It was also noted that there was no feedback on the complaint form. The subcommittee agreed to share their screen of the attorney's edits to the rules of procedure and complaint procedure and make comments in advance of its discussion with the attorney. After doing so, Doug Newton offered to share their questions with the city attorney in advance of their discussion with him the next Thursday. The subcommittee agreed that doing so could be helpful.

5. Public Comment

No member of the public offered comment.

6. Adjournment

Corey Barr made a motion, seconded by Elizabeth Brusie, to adjourn the meeting. The subcommittee voted unanimously to approve the motion and the meeting was adjourned at 6:35.

**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.

**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 possibleappropriate, the complaint shouldmay 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 emailAll 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 failingSimilarly, 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.

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

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- 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.
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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.

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
- 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. Prior to this meeting, Commissioners shall review the previous year's Action Plan and progress and consider human rights issues then affecting the City. The Commission shall endeavor to engage and collaborate with local stakeholders, including through surveys, public forums, or other means. The Commission may designate a 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:

- 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.

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. 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.