

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:08 PM.

2. Roll Call

Present were Mel Poindexter, Xin Peng, Corey Barr (by zoom), Sarah Zoen (by zoom), Lisa Laplante, Susan Musinsky, Gabriel Camacho (by zoom), Liz Aeschlimann, and Elizabeth Brusie.

3. Acceptance of Minutes

- a. Minutes 2.10.25

Sarah Zoen made a motion, seconded by Mel Poindexter, to approve the minutes. The Commission voted nine to zero to approve the minutes.

4. City Attorney Mark Reich

- a. Human Rights Commission Rules

City Attorney Mark Reich, joined by colleague Lauren Goldberg, began by giving an overview of what KP Law was looking at in its review of the Human Rights Commission's rules. He also explained his role as City Attorney, specifically what he does and does not advise on. The Commission via its rules subcommittee had made comments on the attorneys' review of the rules which were brought up on a shared screen for review with the attorneys. Key points which came up were a mutual misunderstanding as to the "purpose" section, with the attorneys interpreting that as the purpose of the rules while the rules subcommittee intended it as the purpose of the Human Rights Commission. Some of the edits which were made related to language in the rules which duplicated or were already covered by language from state ethics guidelines as well as laws such as the Open Meeting Law or Public Records Law. The commission and attorneys agreed to have another meeting with the rules subcommittee to finish going over the rules of procedure and complaint procedure.

- b. Information & Q&A

Due to a robust discussion around the rules, there was not sufficient time to have a full discussion of the Open Meeting Law, which Commissioners had expressed interest in learning more about. This was tabled to a future meeting with the attorneys. City Attorney Mark Reich also informed the Commission that he will be conducting a training on the Open Meeting Law in the future and will make sure the commission is sent that information.

5. Introduction of Student Liaisons

Three new student liaisons have been appointed to act as liaisons between the Human Rights Commission and the student body. Each liaison introduced themselves to the Commission and shared their interests and why they wanted to work with the Commission. The student liaisons are Maisie Morgan, freshman at Watertown High School, Amra Ali, senior at Watertown High School, and Gabriele Souza, junior at Watertown High School.

6. Fair Housing Report

It was shared with the Commission that a report on fair housing in the Metro West area had come out recently which identified discrimination based on race and source of income in Watertown as well as in other Metro-West communities. The full report was shared with the Commission and is attached to the agenda. It was also shared that HRC staff contact Doug Newton has been working with Affordable Housing Trust contact Larry Field to plan a panel discussion on the report and fair housing in general for April 30th. Elizabeth Brusie expressed interest in representing the Human Rights Commission on the panel.

7. Committee Reports

a. Action Plan Subcommittee

The action plan subcommittee noted that they need to reschedule their last meeting which was canceled due to illnesses among multiple members.

b. Immigrant Rights Subcommittee

The subcommittee discussed a future meeting as well as drafting a statement on potential incidents that may arise in the community. This will be a topic of a future meeting.

c. Rules Subcommittee

The rules subcommittee acknowledged that its full report had already been covered in the discussion with the City Attorney.

8. Discussion

a. February 19th event at Watertown Free Public Library

Corey Barr highlighted that 109 Watertown residents registered for the event, with 212 people overall attending. She emphasized that it was a great event with excellent turnout.

b. Storywalk Project on Indigenous History in Watertown

Corey Barr informed the Commission that she had a conversation with an expert who would like to help create a Storywalk program. She noted that this is not immediately pressing in terms of time but wanted to flag it for potential inclusion in the action plan. She also shared that perhaps the commission could co-sponsor Indigenous People's Day in Watertown.

c. Juneteenth event for 2025 and future years

Doug Newton noted email correspondence that he has had with Tiffany York, who is still leading the event on June 14th. She asked for clarification on the Commission's support and the Commission re-iterated its support for the event as she described.

d. Watertown Safe Space Campaign with World in Watertown

A board member of World in Watertown proposed that the Human Rights Commission endorse their Safe Space Campaign with a proposed budget of \$500. The program aims to foster visibility and support for LGBTQ+ people in Watertown. It allows businesses and other spaces in the community to signal their support for the LGBTQ+ community with a sticker. Corey Barr made a motion, seconded by Xin Peng, to approve the budget request for \$500. The Commission voted nine to zero to approve the motion.

e. Watertown Pride 2025

Harrison Ford, who shared that he works for Watertown DPW and co-chairs the Watertown Pride Committee, presented to the Commission about Watertown Pride 2025. He shared that their primary objective is to plan the Pride Parade & Festival on

June 1st at Saltonstall Park. He asked the Human Rights Commission to sponsor a speaker at the festival for \$100-200. The Commission suggested that Watertown Pride come back to the Commission with a full itemized budget that they can vote to approve or not at their next meeting.

f. Watertown Juneteenth 2025

The Commission had a continued discussion as to its ability to “own” Juneteenth moving forward. This matter will be discussed as part of the action plan. The Commission further discussed its budget and Liz Aeschlimann made a motion, seconded by Lisa Laplante, to have Doug Newton ask the City Manager for a larger budget. The Commission voted nine to zero to approve the motion.

9. Public Comment

No member of the public offered comment.

10. Adjournment

Mel Poindexter made a motion, seconded by Gabriel Camacho to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM.