



Human Rights Commission Meeting

Monday, May 12, 2025 at 6:00 PM

Agenda

ACCESS INFORMATION:

- A. This meeting will be held on May 12, 2025 at 6:00 PM. Location: Council Chamber
 - B. The Public may join the virtual meeting online: <https://watertown-ma.zoom.us/j/83935116963>
 - C. This meeting will be broadcast on Watertown Cable Access (WCATV): <http://vodwcatv.org/CablecastPublicSite/?site=3>
 - D. Public may comment through email: dnewton@watertown-ma.gov
 - E. Please Visit the Human Rights Commission Website here: <https://www.watertown-ma.gov/1195/Human-Rights-Commission>
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- 1. Call to Order
- 2. Roll Call
- 3. Acceptance of Minutes
 - A. Minutes for 4.14.25
- 4. Committee Reports
 - A. Action Plan Committee: Recent meeting & needs assessment proposal
 - B. Immigrant Rights Committee: Recent meeting & recent immigration enforcement activity
 - C. Rules Committee: Recent meeting & final draft of rules of procedure and complaint procedure
- 5. Discussion
 - A. Request from Newton HRC for collaboration with neighboring HRC's
 - B. Sanctuary City for LGBT+ Community
 - C. Juneteenth Update
 - D. Watertown Pride Budget Proposal
 - E. Watertown Public Schools Caregiver Talk Series
 - F. Safe Space Campaign with World in Watertown
- 6. Public Comment
- 7. Adjournment

Watertown Human Rights Commission

DRAFT – May 2, 2025 - Needs Assessment - Phase 1 Consultant Scope of Work

Budget: \$2,500–\$3,000

Timeline: May –November 2025

Proposal Launch: May 19, 2025

Application Deadline: June 10, 2025

Review/Interviews: June 16–25, 2025

Hopeful Selection: By June 27, 2025

Background & Purpose

The Watertown Human Rights Commission (WHRC) is undertaking a Phase 1 community needs assessment focused on equity, inclusion, and human rights across the City of Watertown, Massachusetts. WHRC is seeking a consultant to partner with us in designing and launching this foundational work, with an emphasis on reaching those who may feel unheard, underrepresented, or excluded in civic life. A thoughtfully designed needs assessment will provide the Commission with a clearer understanding of current community concerns, barriers to inclusion, and opportunities for improvement. It will help WHRC focus its efforts, inform future programming and recommendations, and build stronger connections with Watertown constituents who have historically been underserved or overlooked. This assessment will also provide a baseline for measuring progress in our work going forward.

Watertown is home to over 35,000 residents, including a significant and growing number of foreign-born individuals (26.5%) and households where a language other than English is spoken at home (31.2%). The community is increasingly diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, age, ability, gender identity, and socio-economic status. Yet not all residents experience Watertown equally — and some communities — including immigrants, LGBTQ+ residents, youth, and individuals with disabilities — may not always feel fully represented in civic conversations or decision-making processes.

This Phase 1 project will lay the groundwork for longer-term work to ensure that all Watertown residents — especially those whose voices are often missing or marginalized — are heard, valued, and able to participate fully in the life of the city. The consultant will collaborate with WHRC members to help identify key populations, engage trusted community partners, and assist in outreach to help identify participants for focus groups and individual conversations. Members of WHRC are happy to participate in parts of the facilitation and reflection process if it is helpful to the consultant and can assist in offering

local context, community relationships, and logistical support that will help ensure the success and reach of the process.

While the budget for this initial phase is modest (\$2,500–\$3,000), the opportunity is significant: to begin building a shared understanding of community needs related to human rights, inclusion, and access and to do so in a way that centers equity and fosters trust.

Phase 1 Objectives

- Design a human-rights-focused needs assessment process, with support from WHRC as requested, rooted in equity and inclusion
- Identify and engage residents who may feel disconnected from or unrepresented in civic life
- Facilitate early listening efforts, including focus groups and one-on-one interviews
- Conduct a scan of similar assessments conducted by other municipalities or community organizations
- Synthesize findings and identify themes and recommendations to inform next steps

Deliverables

- Design and lead several community focus groups in collaboration with WHRC.
- Conduct additional one-on-one interviews with community stakeholders who may not be able to attend a focus group session, to ensure deeper insight and accessibility
- Review existing scans or summaries of models from comparable cities or commissions
- Facilitate a working session with WHRC to reflect on initial findings and shape recommendations
- Produce a summary memo (3–5 pages) that highlights emerging themes, community needs, and recommended next steps

Equity and Accessibility Considerations

WHRC is committed to making this work accessible and inclusive. The consultant will work with the Commission to:

- Ensure language access and translation for outreach and sessions
- Consider interpretation services as needed
- Select physically and digitally accessible venues and formats
- Explore offering child care for selected sessions to support participation

We welcome creative and community-centered strategies to ensure that residents can participate fully and comfortably. WHRC anticipates allocating additional budget resources to support these accessibility elements, such as interpretation, translation, and child care, as needed.

Consultant Qualifications

- Experience with equity-focused needs assessments, particularly in civic or nonprofit contexts
- Skilled in community outreach, facilitation, and qualitative data gathering
- Demonstrated ability to build trust with historically marginalized communities
- Understanding of racial justice, language justice, accessibility, and inclusion
- Familiarity with local government or advisory commissions is a plus

Selection Process

Interested consultants should submit a short proposal by June 10, 2025 that includes:

- A statement of interest and relevant experience
- A 1–2 page proposal outlining their recommended process, timeline, and approach to equity
- A basic budget within the \$2,500–\$3,000 range
- Optional: sample(s) of relevant past work or a brief description of previous projects that reflect similar scope, approach, or community engagement strategies

Finalists will be interviewed between June 16–25, 2025, with hopeful selection by June 27, 2025. Work will begin by August 2025 and conclude by late fall (Thanksgiving), with a public sharing of findings around Human Rights Day (December 10, 2025).

For more information about the Watertown Human Rights Commission, visit:
<https://www.watertown-ma.gov/1195/Human-Rights-Commission>

**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 Watertown residents, employees, visitors and those doing business with or in the City with regard to concerns, complaints, or questions of discrimination, unequal treatment of individuals and other issues included in the Commission's mandate, as further detailed in Section 2 of this Procedure and each subsection thereof. 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 issues, whether civil, political, economic, social, or cultural 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 complainants 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. The Commission may also refer complainants to community-based groups that may provide further assistance. 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) 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.
- 5) **Confidentiality:**
 - 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, including those received at meetings, 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. In furtherance of this purpose, the Commission shall designate one member, on a rotating basis, to be available to meet or speak individually with complainants.
 - 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 or speak to a Commissioner, as provided in Section 4(ii), and/or the City staff liaison. Generally, submissions shall be made through the WHRC Complaint Form, found on WHRC website, within one year of the relevant act or event; however, the Commission may accept submissions outside of that format and timeframe should circumstances so require. Contact information is as follows, and, for written complaints, confirmation 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 [EMAIL?]

By Telephone: 311

- 2) Substance of Written Complaints. Concerns, complaints, and questions will be accepted for filing and can be made anonymously through the required Complaint Form. Written complaints may state the name and address of the person making the complaint but must always 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) Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest. 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. It is the request of the Commission that any Commissioner who identifies a conflict of interest in a particular matter shall recuse themselves from participation in that matter.
- 4) Initial Review/Designation of Complaint Review. If the concern, complaint, or question involves any person other than a Town official or employee, the Chairperson may elect to review the same themselves or designate one or more Commissioners to conduct a Complaint Review.
- 5) Complaint Review Resolution –
 - i. Evidence Suggesting Further Action May be Warranted. If the Complaint Review finds evidence suggesting a further inquiry is appropriate, to be evaluated on a case by case basis, considering the particular facts involved, 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 the results of their initial review 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. No Evidence Suggesting Further Action May be Warranted. If the Complaint Review suggests that insufficient evidence exists to warrant further inquiry into the matter, to be evaluated on a case by case basis considering the particular facts at issue, 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. If the complaint at issue is anonymous, resolution under this section shall instead involve a review as to whether and how the Commission might make resources available to residents of the City generally, based upon the known facts.

- 6) If two or more Commissioners are assigned to review the complaint together, they shall constitute a committee 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.

One such provision, G.L. c. 30A, §21(a)(1), authorizes public bodies to 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, although they can waive the 48 hours notice requirement in writing, 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.

While this section also applies to anonymous complaints, it is recognized that taking action thereon can be difficult due to the lack of verifiable information. Under such circumstances, the Commission may not have enough facts to do more than a preliminary review of the matter at issues, handling the complaint in accordance with the second sentence of Section 7(ii), below. Anonymous complaints may be used for general use by the Commission to identify general issues for further inquiry.

- 7) Report. 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) The Commission shall aggregate the information and resources provided to complainants, or the residents of the City generally during that year in its annual report 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.

Watertown Human Rights Commission Rules of Procedure

Purpose of Commission

The Watertown Human Rights Commission was established by an Ordinance Establishing the Watertown Human Rights Commission, approved on September 26, 2023. 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, including civil, political, economic, social or cultural, are inherent to the dignity of every person. All of these rights all have equal status 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.

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(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) 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 committee 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.

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.

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.

Committees

The Commission may establish such committees as are deemed necessary to carry out the work of the Commission. Committees 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 committee shall report to the full Commission meeting from time to time or at the full Commission's request. [Committees shall create and approve minutes of meetings within the next three \(3\) public body meetings or within thirty \(30\) days, whichever is later, and shall be posted timely to the City website, in accordance with the provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §§ 18-25.](#)

Meetings

Regular meetings: Regular meetings of the Commission shall be held on a regularly monthly basis. A 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 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 and options shall be consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Special meetings: Special meetings may be called from time to time by the Chairpersons or by 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 (48) hours' notice. Notice of the emergency meeting must be given via the public website per Open Meeting laws. A quorum for an emergency 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. 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 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 committee 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 committee, 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 committee from the podium to ensure 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 (3) or more regular meetings during a one (1)-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 committee, a majority of the total number of committee 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(s) 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 committees for each activity
- Resources required for implementation

Development process: The Commission shall annually dedicate at least one (1) 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 committee 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 committees 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; and/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 committee 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 ten (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.

We are calling on the City Council to take a clear and compassionate step forward by designating **Watertown as a sanctuary city for transgender and LGBTQIA+ individuals**—joining other Massachusetts cities like Boston, Worcester, Cambridge, Northampton, North Adams and Greenfield. This designation, in accordance with state and federal law, does not require sweeping new infrastructure or major expenditures. It is a reaffirmation of values we already hold and practices many of our institutions already follow. It's about making sure our policies explicitly reflect our commitment to safety, inclusion, and human dignity.

Becoming a sanctuary city for the LGBTQIA+ community means:

Protecting trans healthcare access by ensuring local providers and organizations have the resources to support gender-affirming care.

Reject discrimination by strengthening anti-bias protections in housing, employment, and public spaces.

Ensuring safe schools where LGBTQIA+ youth can learn without fear of bullying or erasure, and use facilities and engage in co-curriculars that align with their gender identities.

Providing emergency support for trans individuals and families who are fleeing hostile environments without discrimination.

Standing against hate by refusing to comply with any laws or policies that threaten LGBTQIA+ rights.

We call on local officials, businesses, educators, and residents to stand in solidarity with the LGBTQIA+ community by advocating for inclusive policies, supporting trans-led initiatives, and fostering a culture of safety and belonging. We also encourage those in need of resources to reach out to local organizations and allies committed to LGBTQIA+ rights.

Harrison Ford
Co-Chair
Watertown Pride Committee
harrisonford92@gmail.com
617-599-5347

April 13, 2025

Watertown Human Rights Commission
149 Main Street
Watertown, MA 02472

Dear Human Rights Commission,

I am writing on behalf of the Watertown Pride Committee, a volunteer-led group of Watertown residents appointed by the City of Watertown. Our primary objective is to plan and coordinate the City's 4th annual LGBTQIA+ Pride Parade and Festival, known as Watertown Pride, in collaboration with the City's Commanders Mansion events team as our staff liaisons. The event will be held Sunday, June 1st, 2025 with a parade beginning at Moxley Park and culminating in a festival between Saltonstall Field and the Watertown Free Public Library parking lot.

The Watertown Pride Committee is committed to making Watertown Pride a meaningful and multifaceted public event that offers a range of experiences, from education to entertainment, all at no cost to our community. While we operate within the framework of the City, we maintain financial independence from the City's overall budget, except for provisional funds from the City's events team within the Department of Community Development and Planning. While the Committee is supported by City staff, we receive only minimal City funding and must independently raise the majority of our event budget. Consequently, the Committee is actively fundraising to enhance the event's programming.

Our themes for Watertown Pride include visibility, inclusivity, and affirmation of the LGBTQIA+ community and its allies. We strive to create a family-friendly celebration that empowers and honors a diverse cross-section of lived experiences within our broader community.

We are requesting funds in the amount of \$700.00 to hire Chastity Bowick as a speaker for the main stage at Watertown Pride. Chastity is an accomplished activist and transgender health advocate with leadership roles at organizations such as Trans Resistance and the Transgender Emergency Fund of Massachusetts. She has previously spoken at various LGBTQIA+ events across Massachusetts and is regarded for her ability to motivate and inspire audiences. The funds requested are reflective of Chastity's discounted speaking fees for community events that serve young people.

By engaging Chastity, we aim to uplift and affirm our trans and nonbinary youth, who are currently facing unprecedented political challenges and vilification. We believe her presence will not only empower our LGBTQIA+ community but also resonate with the broader audience at Watertown Pride. As a trans woman of color, Chastity's participation is particularly significant given the current political climate and the backlash against transgender and nonbinary individuals. Platforming Chastity at

Watertown Pride will promote visibility for the historically marginalized members of the LGBTQIA+ community. We expect that her participation will increase engagement among youth and spark important conversations around trans visibility in Watertown, which we aim to measure in post-event attendee surveys.

We are also requesting \$300.00 to sponsor two vendor booths at Watertown Pride, specifically to support LGBTQIA+-owned businesses. The City typically charges event fees ranging from \$125 for Watertown-based vendors to \$175 for those outside the City. These funds will allow us to fully subsidize the cost for two queer-owned businesses, removing financial barriers to participation and intentionally prioritizing representation. By investing in diverse, inclusive programming that extends to our vendor area, the Committee affirms the importance of visibility, economic opportunity, and community engagement. These sponsored booths will amplify underrepresented voices and contribute to promoting equity in our local business network.

Thank you for considering our request. Support from the Human Rights Commission would help set a precedent for inclusive public investment, signaling that Watertown values equity and representation in its public events. Please find a copy of our itemized budget enclosed for reference. We are excited about the potential impact of this event and would greatly appreciate your support in making it a reality.

Sincerely,

Harrison Ford

Watertown Human Rights Commission
Funding Request

Budget Period: FY25
Purpose: Watertown Pride Parade & Festival 2025
Requestor: Watertown Pride Committee

Main Stage Programming

Chastity Bowick Speaking Fee

Vendor Booths

Subsidization of Vendor Booths for Two
LGBTQIA+-Owned Businesses

Total

\$ 700.00

\$ 300.00

\$ 1,000.00

**WPS CAREGIVER
TALK SERIES**

**THE
COGNITIVE
SCIENCE OF
SCREENS**

**Ashley McDermott,
Ph.D**

**TALK 3: BUILDING SKILLS THROUGH VIDEO
GAMES**

**5:30PM - 7PM
TUESDAY MAY 13, 2025**

Learn about skills that can be developed through gaming as
well as how to maximize benefits & minimize harm.



LOCATION:

**Watertown Free Public Library
Lucia Mastrangelo Room (2nd floor)
123 Main St,
Watertown, MA 02472**



**SCAN TO
RSVP**



WATERTOWN LAUNCHES “SAFE SPACE” INITIATIVE TO SUPPORT LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY

New Program Encourages Local Businesses to Foster Inclusion and Belonging

WATERTOWN, MA — In a move to strengthen community bonds and promote inclusivity, the Watertown Human Rights Commission and World in Watertown have announced the launch of *Watertown Welcomes All: A Safe Space Project*. This new initiative invites local businesses and organizations to join in creating a network of welcoming spaces for LGBTQ+ individuals across the city.

At the heart of the program is a simple but powerful symbol—a Safe Space sticker. Businesses that choose to participate will display the sticker prominently, signaling to LGBTQ+ residents, customers, and employees that they are entering a respectful, supportive, and non-judgmental environment.

“A Safe Space is more than a sign on the door—it’s a commitment to creating an inclusive atmosphere where everyone, regardless of identity, can feel safe and valued,” said Sarah Zoen, co-Chair of the Watertown Human Rights Commission.

For LGBTQ+ individuals, who disproportionately face discrimination and social isolation, the importance of such environments cannot be overstated. Safe Spaces offer reassurance and visibility, helping to promote mental well-being and social connection.

Participating businesses will not only contribute to a more compassionate community, but they may also see tangible benefits: attracting a more diverse customer base, boosting their reputation, and cultivating a more positive workplace culture. The program highlights that inclusive businesses are increasingly valued by younger consumers and employees alike.

“By displaying a Safe Space sticker, you’re telling the world that your business stands for respect, compassion, and equality,” said Xin Peng, Chair of World in Watertown. “Together, we can ensure that everyone feels like they belong here.”

Local business owners interested in participating can request a sticker by emailing WorldinWatertownCity@gmail.com. The organizers encourage businesses to also engage their staff in ongoing efforts to support LGBTQ+ inclusion.

As Watertown embraces this effort, *Watertown Welcomes All* aims to become more than a program—it seeks to spark a community-wide movement grounded in acceptance and unity.

