



Watertown City Council
Committee on Human Services
Tuesday, May 6, 2025

Members Present: Councilor Tony Palomba, Chair; Councilor Caroline Bays, Vice Chair; and Councilor John Gannon, Secretary. Other individuals present were Gabriel Camacho and Elizabeth Bruise.

The Committee on Human Services held a public meeting on May 6, 2025, at 5:30pm to discuss the following:

- A. Reappoint Gabriel Camacho as a member of the Human Rights Commission for a term expiring April 1, 2028; and
- B. Reappoint Elizabeth Bruise as a member of the Human Rights Commission for a term expiring April 1, 2028.

1. Call to Order

Committee Chair Palomba called the meeting to order at 5:30pm and introduced the other committee members present: Caroline Bays, Vice Chair; and John Gannon, Secretary. Due to a time delay, Councilor Bays moved to vote for a meeting recess, seconded by Councilor Gannon. The motion to recess was approved by a 3-0 vote.

At 5:50pm, Councilor Gannon moved to vote to reconvene the meeting, seconded by Councilor Bays. The motion to reconvene was approved by a 3-0 vote.

2. Consideration of Reappointment of Gabriel Camacho as a member of the Human Rights Commission for a term expiring April 1, 2028

Mr. Camacho's professional career has mainly been with the United Food and Commercial Workers Union. He also spent many years working with American Friends Services Committee, where he was Coordinator of Immigration Programs, and developed strategic plans relative to immigrant issues. He has a degree from SUNY Albany and worked with the American Arbitration Association. He has an extensive career in human rights issues. He stated that he is semi-retired and is a consultant and has more time to contribute to the Watertown community. He has an extensive background in immigrant rights issues. Councilor Palomba asked whether residents come before the Human Rights Commission to address their concerns. Mr. Camacho stated that, so far, the Commission has heard from a few residents on issues concerning disability rights and other topics, but he feels the Commission could do a better job in promoting itself to let people know of its work with the community. He stated that the Commission has created a subcommittee that is creating an action plan related to community outreach. Mr. Camacho would like to see the Commission become more well known.

Action Item: Councilor Gannon made a motion that the full Council vote to approve the reappointment of Gabriel Camacho to the Human Rights Commission for a term expiring April 1, 2028. Councilor Bays seconded the motion. The motion passed by a vote of 3-0.

2. Consideration of Reappointment of Elizabeth Bruise as a member of the Human Rights Commission for a term expiring April 1, 2028

Elizabeth Bruise is a staff attorney on the Massachusetts Commission on Judicial Conduct and has spent time as a legal director for De Novo, a center for justice that has provided a lot of assistance for low-income community members on addressing legal needs, including domestic violence and other family law issues. She has a law degree from the City University of New York. She's been extensively involved in human rights issues. In response to a question from Councilor Palomba, Ms. Bruise commended the collective talent of the Commission. The Commission is working on promoting a celebration of Juneteenth and will be sponsoring a local commemoration in 2026. She is chair of the Commission's Rules Committee. She sees the value of the Commission in serving as a public face for those who feel they need a voice. She stated that local students are designing a logo for the Commission to help promote its service to the community. She would like to see the Commission sponsor more programming in the future. She stated that the Commission has subcommittees dedicated to rules, immigration support, housing, and designing an action plan.

Action Item: Councilor Bays made a motion that the full Council vote to approve the reappointment of Elizabeth Bruise to the Human Rights Commission for a term expiring April 1, 2028. Councilor Gannon seconded the motion. The motion passed by a vote of 3-0.

Councilor Gannon made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Councilor Bays. The motion was approved by a vote of 3-0.

The meeting concluded at 6:32pm.

Minutes prepared by John Gannon

ELECTED OFFICIALS

Anthony Palomba,
Chair

Caroline Bays,
Vice Chair

John G. Gannon,
Secretary