

Human Rights Commission Meeting Minutes

May 12, 2025

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 PM.

2. Roll Call

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

3. Approval of Minutes

- a. Mel Poindexter made a motion, seconded by Lisa Laplante, that the minutes be approved. The Commission voted seven to zero to approve the motion.

4. Committee Reports

a. Action Plan Committee

- i. The Committee reported on its scope of work proposal for a consultant to conduct a needs assessment of human rights issues in Watertown. The Commission reviewed the proposal during the meeting. The Commission discussed how to fund the proposal given the end of Fiscal Year 25 nearing.

b. Immigrant Rights Committee

- i. The Immigrant Rights Committee hadn't met since the last Commission meeting. However, they wanted to report on the recent Immigration enforcement activity in Watertown. Xin Peng noted that there had been two recent arrests of individuals in or near Watertown. Captain Unsworth of the police department expressed unease at the activity of ICE in Watertown and noted that sometimes ICE notifies the police department of their upcoming activities but sometimes does not. He reiterated that local police officers cannot enforce civil immigration detainers under the Lunn v. Commonwealth case. He further reiterated that the police department cannot interfere with ICE activity but also does not engage in immigration enforcement activity itself. The Commission agreed to schedule a meeting on an emergency basis to discuss a statement on the recent ICE activity. The meeting was scheduled for Friday, May 16th. Xin Peng made a motion, seconded by Lisa Laplante, to have Xin Peng draft a statement in advance of the meeting. The Commission voted six to zero to approve the motion.

c. Rules Committee

- i. The Rules Committee presented its finalized rules of procedure and complaint procedure for approval. Lisa Laplante made a motion, seconded by Liz

Aeschlimann, to approve the rules of procedure. The Commission voted six to zero to approve the motion. Lisa Laplante made a motion, seconded by Liz Aeschlimann, to approve the rules of procedure. The Commission voted six to zero to approve the motion.

5. Discussion

- a. Request from Newton HRC for Collaboration with Neighboring HRC's
 - i. Doug Newton read an email from the Newton HRC expressing interest in collaborating with Watertown and other neighboring HRC's. Susan Musinsky volunteered to reach out to the Newton HRC on the Commission's behalf. Mel Poindexter made a motion, seconded by Lisa Laplante, to allow Susan Musinsky to collaborate with the Newton HRC. The Commission voted six to zero to approve the motion.
- b. Sanctuary City for LGBT+ Community
 - i. The Commission discussed a statement calling on the City of Watertown to be a sanctuary city for LGBT+ individuals. Lisa Laplante made a motion, seconded by Elizabeth Brusie, to endorse the statement. The Commission voted six to zero to approve the motion.
- c. Juneteenth Update
 - i. Doug Newton conveyed a request for 1-3 people from the Human Rights Commission to attend the Juneteenth event and help with setup. The Commission noted that the flier it had been sent used a different date than had initially been proposed and sought clarity on which date it will take place. Doug Newton expressed that he will reach out to the planners to confirm.
- d. Watertown Pride Budget Proposal
 - i. The Commission discussed the proposal for \$1,000 to support Watertown Pride. This would include funding for a speaker as well as supporting vendor booths. Lisa Laplante made a motion, seconded by Xin Peng, to support the budget request. The Commission voted six to zero to approve the motion.
- e. Watertown Public Schools Caregiver Talk Series
 - i. Dr. Ceronne Daly spoke to the Commission about an event from 5:30 to 7PM on the day after the Commission meeting in support of caregivers in Watertown about the cognitive science of screen activity.
- f. Safe Space Campaign with World in Watertown
 - i. Xin Peng updated the Commission that the campaign is underway and that World in Watertown are still recruiting volunteers to canvas and businesses to display stickers.

6. Public Comment

- a. No member of the public offered comment.

7. Adjournment

- a. Lisa Laplante made a motion, seconded by Mel Poindexter, to adjourn. The Commission voted six to zero to approve the motion. The meeting adjourned at 8:35 PM.