

Human Rights Commission Meeting Minutes

July 14, 2025

1. Call to Order

Sarah Zoen called the meeting to order at 6:04 PM.

2. Roll Call

Present were Susan Musinsky, Gabriel Camacho, Mel Poindexter, Xin Peng, Sarah Zoen, Elizabeth Brusie, and Corey Barr. Lisa Laplante and Liz Aeschlimann joined the meeting shortly after the Roll Call was taken.

3. Acceptance of Minutes

a. Minutes 6.9.25

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

4. Discussion

a. Update on Safe Space Project

Xin Peng shared that roughly 30 businesses are displaying the safe space symbol after a round of canvassing.

b. Recruit volunteers for safe space sticker canvassing

Xin Peng added that if anyone is interested in volunteering for the next round of canvassing businesses they should feel free to do so.

c. News releases for Safe Space Project

Xin Peng also shared that World in Watertown put out a news release on the project but didn't name the Human Rights Commission without approval. Xin Peng made a motion, seconded by Corey Barr, for the Commission to give its approval for World in Watertown to list the Human Rights Commission as a co-sponsor of the Safe Space Project and to share its complaint process. The Commission voted eight to zero to approve the motion.

d. 2026 Pride Committee voting member recruitment

Xin Peng told the Commission that he was on the 2025 Pride Committee but cannot serve in 2026 due to a conflict of interest. He asked if anyone on the Commission, particularly if they identify as queer, would be interested in serving for 2026. No member was able to commit to doing so but Xin will share further information.

e. Human Rights Commission logo

Susan Musinsky discussed the possibility of having students from WPS being involved in the logo design process. The Commission agreed that Dr. Daly should be able to offer input on if that would be possible or not.

f. Collaboration with neighboring Human Rights Commissions

Susan Musinsky informed the Commission that she cannot make a meeting of neighboring Human Rights Commissions coming up which took a great deal of time to schedule. She asked if any member of the Commission would be willing to attend. Mel Poindexter volunteered to do so.

g. Recent Forum in Belmont on ICE Activity

Corey Barr told the Commission that a forum recently took place related to ICE in Belmont which she felt shared inaccurate information. She shared a letter from members of various advocacy organizations expressing concern over the forum. Xin Peng made a motion that the Human Rights Commission appoint Corey Barr to reach out to the Belmont Human Rights Commission on behalf of the Watertown Human Rights Commission asking them to retract the information that was shared. A discussion ensued in which multiple Commissioners suggested altering the motion to ask Corey Barr to pass along concern regarding the forum but not to ask for a retraction. Mel Poindexter then made a motion, seconded by Lisa Laplante, that the Watertown Human Rights Commission give Corey Barr approval to make the Belmont Human Rights Commission aware of what was discussed in this meeting and ask for a possible meeting. The Commission voted nine to zero to approve the motion.

h. Republic/IBT Local 25 Strike

Lisa Laplante expressed concern that the Human Rights Commission's recent statement on the Republic/IBT Local 25 Strike was not posted on the website. Doug Newton explained that the administration has discretion on posting statements and that he was told it could not be posted. He added that he is happy to circle back. He further added that the statement was sent to the City Council and shared in the Watertown News.

i. Housing Liaison Update- Elizabeth Brusie

Elizabeth Brusie shared that she met with Housing for All Watertown to brainstorm how they can work together with the Human Rights Commission. She added that she plans to meet with Housing for All Watertown monthly moving forward.

5. Committee Reports

a. Action Plan Committee: Working with Elizabeth Peck for Needs Assessment

Sarah Zoen shared that Liz Peck is working on a draft logic model for her needs assessment as well as planning to host focus groups in the future. The Commission then discussed ways in which they can use their FY26 budget to compensate individuals who participate in these programs with rewards such as gift cards.

6. Public Comment

The Commission asked that future meetings have multiple opportunities for public comment. Susan Musinsky made a motion, seconded by Mel Poindexter, that public comment be taken out of order prior to the discussion to the Housing Liaison update to allow Jacky van Leeuwen to have an opportunity to speak without waiting for the end of the meeting. The Commission voted nine to zero to approve the motion. Jacky van Leeuwen then shared that she would like the Commission's complaint form to be more simplistic and accessible for members of the public. Elizabeth Brusie made a motion, seconded by Mel Poindexter, that she redraft the Complaint Form in more plain language and offer her edits to the Commission at a future meeting. The Commission voted nine to zero to approve the motion.

7. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:02 PM.