

Human Rights Commission Meeting Minutes

August 11, 2025

1. Call to Order

Sarah Zoen called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM.

2. Roll Call

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

3. Acceptance of Minutes

a. Minutes for previous meeting

Sarah Zoen made a motion, seconded by Susan Musinsky, to approve the minutes for the previous full HRC meeting as well as the minutes for the prior Immigrant Rights Committee & Action Plan Committee meetings. The Commission voted nine to zero to approve the motion.

4. Committee Reports

a. Action Plan Committee: Update on Needs Assessment & Focus Groups, Approval of Minutes

Sarah Zoen shared that Consultant Liz Peck has been continuing to work on the needs assessment. She also asked that the Commission approve a budget for the needs assessment to cover the following items:

- Stipends for focus group participants (up to fifty \$20 gift cards)
- Same gift cards for up to five volunteer facilitators
- Food for the focus group event
- Two babysitters (\$100 total)
- Compensation for Perkins School for the Blind facilitation
- Spanish language translation for promotional flier (\$100)

Liz Aeschlimann made a motion, seconded by Sarah Zoen, that the Human Rights Commission budget \$2,000 to support the focus groups within the needs assessment. The Commission voted nine to zero to approve the motion. Sarah Zoen as Chair then opened the meeting for public comment. Resident and City Councilor John Gannon then spoke and encouraged the Commission to feel free to ask for a larger budget for the next fiscal year. Captain Dan Unsworth of the police department then shared that when the department was translating its flier on immigration enforcement it had support from World in Watertown .

- b. Immigrant Rights Committee: Update on statement, potential forum with Watertown Police Department; Immigrant rights/food justice event for the fall; Approval of minutes

Elizabeth Brusie shared that the Committee is hoping to have a forum with the Watertown Police Department and others on immigration enforcement. Captain Unsworth said that he would bring that request to the Chief. He added that WPD had not planned to have such an event but if the HRC will provide clear goals for one he is happy to bring it to the Chief. He further clarified that WPD has no impact on the activities of ICE and could face legal repercussions for impeding them.

Corey Barr then informed the Commission that she no longer has the ability to lead the planning of an event on immigrant rights and food justice for the fall. She then suggested postponing the event.

The Committee then discussed updating its statement on immigration enforcement which has already been published. Corey Barr presented her draft edits which included editing the title and the first sentence. Sarah Zoen made a motion, seconded by Corey Barr, to approve the edits. The Commission voted nine to zero to approve the motion.

5. Discussion

- a. Statement formation & website posting

This item was taken out of order at the beginning of the meeting. Lisa Laplante presented on an addition to the website which explains the complaint procedure and welcomes residents to the Human Rights Commission's page. The Commission then discussed how the website page should be arranged to be more welcoming and accessible for residents. The Commission also discussed the policy for posting statements to its website such as its recent one on the Republic strike.

- b. Complaint form revisions

Elizabeth Brusie shared that she will bring minor edits to the Complaint Form to the Commission at its next meeting.

- c. Table at Faire on the Square

The Commission will have a table at the upcoming Faire on the Square in September. This will also be discussed in the next meeting prior to the event.

- d. Update on response to Fair Housing report

Doug Newton shared that he and Larry Field of the Planning Department have been discussing a program to train the public on combatting housing discrimination. This event will likely take place in the fall and he will keep the Commission updated. Elizabeth Brusie noted that she has met with Housing for All Watertown about continuing the Commission's work to advocate for affordable housing and against housing discrimination.

- e. Human Rights Commission logo

Dr. Ceronne Daly of the Watertown Public Schools informed the Commission that involving Watertown students in designing a logo wouldn't be problematic and would be a matter of timing. The Commission expressed a desire to offer the opportunity to a

wide variety of students once the school year begins. Dr. Daly asked the Commission to provide a proposal.

f. Human Rights Commission FY26 budget

Doug Newton reminded the Commission that it has a \$6,000 budget for FY26.

6. Public Comment

No member of the public offered further comment.

7. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:35 PM.