



Human Rights Commission Meeting

Monday, December 1, 2025 at 1:00 PM

Agenda

ACCESS INFORMATION:

- A. This meeting will be held on Monday, December 1, 2025 at 1:00 PM. Location: ZOOM ONLY
 - B. The public may join the virtual meeting online: <https://watertown-ma.zoom.us/j/85843294034>
 - C. Public may comment through email: dnewton@watertown-ma.gov
 - D. Please visit the Human Rights Commission website here: <https://www.watertown-ma.gov/1195/Human-Rights-Commission>
-

- 1. Call to Order
- 2. Roll Call
- 3. Discussion
 - A. Recent Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Activity in and near Watertown
 - B. Draft Updated Statement on Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Activity
 - C. Chelsea Petition Related to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE): Potential for HRC to Make Similar Asks of Watertown
- 4. Public Comment
- 5. Adjournment

Statement on Protecting our Immigrant Community Watertown Human Rights Commission

The Watertown Human Rights Commission strongly stands for policies that uphold the dignity, rights, and contributions of all residents of our community of Watertown, Massachusetts, regardless of their immigration status. Immigrants enrich our city of Watertown with diverse perspectives, cultures, talents, and skills. They deserve equitable access to housing, education, employment, and public services.

We are committed to advocating for inclusive policies that protect immigrants from discrimination, ensure safety, and promote full participation in civic life. Watertown thrives when all residents, regardless of origin, are treated with respect and afforded equal opportunities to succeed.

The Watertown Human Rights Commission will educate and defend our communities from threats of mass deportation and family separation.

Please share this welcome brochure from Watertown Police Chief Justin Hanrahan and the Watertown Human Rights Commission among your communities. Together, we can build a more inclusive, compassionate, and equitable community for everyone.

Statement on ICE Operations and Enforcement Activities, and the Impacts on Our Community

The Watertown Human Rights Commission is deeply concerned about the continuing escalation exponential increase in of US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detentions activity across Massachusetts in recent months, including in Watertown and neighboring communities. We are particularly troubled by reports of local residents being detained without due process or access to legal protections. In particular, the Commission notes with concern the arrest and detention of our neighbors without due process.

Recent enforcement actions underscore the climate of fear and uncertainty affecting immigrant families in our region. The Commission reaffirms its support for the rights and dignity of all residents regardless of immigration status, and calls for transparency, accountability, and humane treatment in all enforcement actions.

We want to clearly state: In accordance with Massachusetts Law, the Watertown Police Department does not collaborate with ICE to detain individuals based on immigration status. Our community remains committed to being a safe and welcoming place for all. In times like these, we urge residents who are able to offer support: check in on your neighbors, share reliable information, and extend compassion where it is needed.

Together, we can build a community rooted in care, safety, and solidarity. For more information about resources, to file issues or complaints with the Human Rights

Commented [CB1]: I thought about specifically mentioning the Allston raid and the subsequent activity in Watertown, but since we update this so infrequently, I think we should keep it vague.

Commented [CB2]: I recommend to move this into the more general welcoming statement above, as well as the link to the police brochure.

Commented [CB3]: Shall we provide a direct link to the complaints form here or just keep it to the general website link?

Commission, or to contact the Commission, please visit <https://www.watertown-ma.gov/1195/Human-Rights-Commission>.

If you ~~see ICE, please call the LUCE hotline number at 617-370-5023. If you~~ or someone you know has been affected, we encourage you to access available resources:

- [Massachusetts Immigrant & Refugee Advocacy Coalition](#)
- ~~Visit [Luce Immigrant Justice Network of Massachusetts](#), or call their hotline number: 617-370-5023~~

~~[Watertown Police Department Immigration Brochure \(PDF\)](#)~~

Commented [CB4]: I know Xin was looking into additional resources here through the MA HRC. Are there additional links we want to include here?

Executive Summary (full details below)

- 1. ICE OFF municipal property** means no ICE on city property, including the schools, city hall, or their parking lots! Chicago passed a similar ordinance and we can do that here in Chelsea
- 2. “Peaceful transfer” is an excuse** that officials use to justify police compliance with ICE. They tell us that the alternative is chaos on the streets, but we all know that there is nothing peaceful about ICE custody. “Peaceful transfer” invisibilizes the violence our community members are facing, it doesn’t make us safer.
- 3. STOP fingerprinting youth (or anyone) except when state-mandated.** We KNOW that ICE is using this fingerprinting to access records, so continuing to fingerprint people when we don’t have to is essentially delivering them to ICE. We have ways to keep our community safe
- 4. STOP sharing license plate data with FLOCK (license plate reading system).** Similarly to fingerprinting data, flock data is shared with ICE and we can change Chelsea Police Department (CPD)’s contracts so that doesn’t happen!
- 5. Clarify and codify police non-cooperation with ICE.** As you can tell - right now, our “Sanctuary City Ordinance” leaves it up to interpretation that allows a lot of cooperation between city officials and ICE. Getting really clear about what we expect the relationship (or lack thereof) between ICE and our city to look like can help us prevent loopholes from being taken advantage of.
- 6. Pass a resolution calling for state action.** There is a lot more we could be doing as a city, but there’s also a lot that we can do. That’s where state legislation comes in. We’re calling on all our community leaders and members to sign on to this state legislation to increase our protections against the terror of ICE!

Dear Members of Chelsea City Leadership (and anyone who wants to stand with the community of Chelsea)

We are people who live and work in Chelsea. We have seen our community attacked by ICE: anonymous, armed agents kidnapping our neighbors and terrorizing our streets with the very thought of their presence. We believe that the city of Chelsea can and should do more to protect us all, and especially the most vulnerable among us, from ICE’s campaign of physical violence and psychological warfare. We believe it is important that while not everything is in the power of the municipal government, there is more that we can and should do to make the people of Chelsea be safer, and feel safer.

Community members have seen ICE staked out in Chelsea Public Schools parking lots. They have seen ICE vehicles coming out of the Chelsea police station. They have seen ICE agents arriving at incidents minutes after Chelsea police officers. They have seen uniformed Chelsea police officers sipping coffee with known ICE agents in public settings. This undermines trust between the community and Chelsea government that requires transparency and bold action to rebuild.

While we are strong supporters of the City of Chelsea’s Sanctuary City designation, unfortunately, the events of the past 10 months have shown the limitations of “Sanctuary Cities” as a concept. There is no universal definition of Sanctuary City, and there are complex, nuanced, and even hidden ways in which ICE may interact with municipal work, that deserve scrutiny. In short, we believe more explicit, concrete, and codified regulations around ICE are necessary - not just a vague declaration of “Sanctuary.”

Therefore, we ask that you, those who serve or seek to serve in the city government, commit to supporting ordinances that would enact the following policies:

1. Forbid ICE the use of municipal property. As recently as October 15, 2025, federal immigration enforcement was identified using Chelsea Public School parking lots. The City of Chicago has passed an executive order that prohibits the use of city parking lots, vacant lots, and garages for immigration enforcement activities, including as staging areas, processing locations, and operations bases (see <http://bit.ly/chicagoiceordinance>). They also post clear signage that this is the case and direct city employees to enforce the ban. While we have seen how ICE often ignores law and acts with impunity nationwide, such an ordinance would give city officials authority to ask agents to move, and if it is not followed, could result in useful litigation. We call upon the Chelsea City Council to pass a similar ordinance.

2. End so-called “peaceful transfer” practices. Chelsea Police Department (CPD) currently engages in the fiction of “peaceful transfer”: if ICE arrives at the police station, CPD officers will hand over a prisoner in their custody to ICE behind closed doors, when the individual would otherwise be allowed to leave the station. These are people the city of Chelsea has decided should be free, who have not been convicted of any crime or considered too unsafe to the community to be released. Handing them over to be kidnapped at what should be the moment of their freedom is a mockery of justice. The reason given by the city is that if our neighbors were allowed to go out the front door, that ICE agents would simply detain them outdoors, and might hurt or kidnap additional people in the resulting “chaos.” But letting ICE to do its kidnapping quietly, behind closed police station doors, only hides the violence they are doing to our community and allows the implicit threat of the federal government’s recklessness to force us to conceal it. It is exactly the logic that ICE director Tom Holmann uses to criticize the basic idea of a sanctuary cities – that it’s better to cooperate with the abductors, lest they hurt more people doing their work. Either this policy needs to end, and the city resolve to hold ICE alone accountable for any chaos resulting from their actions, or the city needs to publicly commit to shining a spotlight on every instance that this policy is followed so that our community can know the results and extent of ICE’s extortion.

3. Codify into ordinance a prohibition on fingerprinting juveniles and sharing juveniles’ fingerprints with federal law enforcement. In May 2025, multiple Chelsea Public Schools students under the age of 18 were kidnapped by ICE because, upon their arrest and fingerprinting at CPD, the FBI fingerprinting database alerted ICE to their presence at the station. Just this month, the same thing happened in Everett to a child as young as 13 years old, and he was swiftly shipped by ICE out of state. Whether or not CPD is still engaged in the practice of fingerprinting juveniles, it is crucial to codify a prohibition on collecting and sharing of juveniles’ fingerprint data with federal law enforcement so that this practice does not restart any time in the future.

3.5. Direct CPD to limit fingerprinting and sharing of all fingerprints with federal law enforcement. While Chelsea’s children especially deserve to be protected from ICE, other members of our community have also been kidnapped after an interaction with the CPD, despite having been convicted of nothing and being considered safe to release by CPD. To prevent this, city ordinance should direct CPD to refrain from fingerprinting in all cases where discretion is allowed, or prohibit sharing of fingerprint data in any way that would result in federal immigration enforcement being alerted. If prohibiting it entirely is impossible due to state or federal law, we ask that ordinance set CPD policy to delay sharing the data until individuals who are considered safe to release are already returned to the community.

4. Stop sharing license plate reader data with out-of-state and federal agencies. CPD currently uses Flock, a license plate reader system that helps law enforcement identify cars in camera footage. Data sharing agreements, however, enable out-of-state actors to access photo of Chelsea residents' license plates and their locations. The Florida Highway Patrol, for example, explicitly searches the Flock database for immigration enforcement purposes, and as recently as July was observed to have access to Chelsea residents' data. In line with recommendations from the ACLU (see <http://bit.ly/acluflock>), CPD must end our data sharing agreements with out-of-state and federal agencies and redraft contracts with Flock to ensure their department retains full control of all data they collect. CPD must also adopt internal policies requiring that every Flock network search be justified by a specific, documented reason for the inquiry, clarifying to all officers and staff that a non-descriptive entry like "investigation" will not suffice. Whether or not CPD already follows ACLU recommendations, the City Council should also codify them in municipal ordinance.

5. Codify the specific ways the City of Chelsea is prohibited from collaborating with immigration enforcement into ordinance. The City of Providence has proposed concrete amendments to their local laws that prohibit the specific ways that the city is prohibited from collaborating with ICE (see <http://bit.ly/iceprovidence>). Having these spelled out explicitly, and codified in local ordinance, would provide additional transparency and security to the people of Chelsea, and ensure that future leaders do not arbitrarily change practices without democratic oversight. The City of Providence's proposed language, for example, specifies that it will be prohibited...

- "To provide information to federal immigration authorities about arrestees or inmates that is not otherwise available to the public, unless presented with a judicial warrant.
- To use City monies, personnel, or resources to assist in the investigation, interrogation, detention, detection, or arrest of persons exclusively for the purpose of immigration enforcement.
- To allow federal immigration authorities access to their non-public premises unless presented with a judicial warrant, naming a specific individual or evidence.
- To grant federal immigration authorities access to any facial recognition technology used, utilized or managed by law enforcement, such as ALPR technology, unless presented with a judicial warrant, naming a specific individual or evidence.
- To exercise federal civil immigration authority under § 287(g) or 103(a)(10), or similar provisions of the Immigration and Nationality Act or any similar laws authorizing local enforcement of immigration laws.
- To comply with requests to establish traffic perimeters or otherwise control public areas for the exclusive purpose of assisting or complying with immigration enforcement."

6. Direct CPD staff to not interact with ICE agents beyond the absolute minimum required by law and publish records of interactions between city employees and federal immigration enforcement. We have seen CPD officers in uniform sitting in Dunkin' Donuts with confirmed ICE agents, and seen CPD officers and federal immigration enforcement arriving at the same location within short periods of time. This undermines trust between the community and CPD that requires transparency to rebuild. In order

for the public to understand both the protections and limitations of our Sanctuary City policy, we must avoid the appearance of collaboration with ICE whenever necessary, and be transparent about the interactions that occur due to circumstances outside of city control.

7. Pass a resolution calling for state action. the many protections for Chelsea's immigrant families can only be enacted at a state level. We urge the City Council to pass the attached resolution that would call on lawmakers for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to enact key state-level policies that would protect Chelsea community members both within and outside of our municipal borders. Our draft resolution is attached to this letter.