

Human Rights Commission Meeting Minutes

October 20, 2025

1. Call to Order

Sarah Zoen called the meeting to order at 6:08 PM.

2. Roll Call

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

3. Acceptance of Minutes

a. Minutes 9.8.25

Sarah Zoen made a motion, seconded by Corey Barr, to approve the minutes. The Commission voted eight to zero to approve the motion.

4. Public Comment

No member of the public offered comment.

5. Discussion

a. Watertown Public Schools/Human Rights Commission Collaboration

This item was combined into the below.

b. HRC Representative at Elementary School Speaking Events: November 12th, January 7th, March 4th from 3-4 PM

Xin Peng shared that the three elementary schools would be hosting a series of events at the above dates featuring guest speakers as part of its "Equity Speaker" series. The Rapid Response Network along with the Watertown Human Rights Commission have been designated as a speakers. The topic will be *Supporting students and families impacted by homelessness, food insecurity, and immigration issues*. Xin Peng sought to know if any Commissioners would be willing to attend and/or speak. Commissioners including Lisa Laplante, Elizabeth Brusie and Gabriel Camacho expressed interest.

c. Indigenous People's Day Event Update

The event went well and the Commission's sponsorship funds are being sent to the Commission's contact with the Pigsgussett Initiative.

d. Human Rights Day- December 10

The Commission discussed various possibilities for this event including involving the Watertown Student Body, having a guest speaker, or having Consultant for the Needs Assessment Liz Peck speak to the audience at the event. Locations such as the library, city hall, or Hosmer Elementary School were considered.

e. Promotion of Human Rights Commission's Work

Doug Newton shared that he has communicated the Commission's desire for its work to be shared as far as possible to the communications team with the city, who will continue to promote the Commission's work and events as they come up.

f. International Association of Official Human Rights Agencies

Doug Newton shared that the Commission's payment of membership dues has now successfully processed and the Commission is now an official member of the IAOHRA. He will follow up with the IAOHRA via email to ensure that the Commission is being kept up to date.

- g. Program at Watertown Free Public Library to show film “America’s Family” including a discussion with the filmmaker & other community leaders
Susan Musinsky shared that a friend of hers has produced the film “America’s Family” and would be willing to screen it in Watertown with the Human Rights Commission’s collaboration. Susan Musinsky made a motion, seconded by Lisa Laplante, that the Human Rights Commission co-sponsor a screening at the library some time in the winter with a panel discussion to accompany. The Commission voted eight to zero to approve the motion.
- 6. Public Comment
No member of the public offered comment.
- 7. Committee Reports
 - a. Action Plan Committee: Update on Needs Assessment; Focus Groups; Commission Logo; Acceptance of Minutes
The Action Plan Committee thanked Consultant Liz Peck, all volunteers, and all residents who participated in its recent focus groups. Liz Peck will present on the focus groups and her needs assessment as a whole at the next Commission meeting.
 - b. Rules Committee: Revised Complaint Form; Acceptance of Minutes
Elizabeth Brusie shared her revisions to the Commission’s complaint form, which are meant not to change the form substantively but to make it more accessible for residents. After reviewing her edits Sarah Zoen made a motion, seconded by Lisa Laplante, to approve the new form. The Commission voted eight to zero to approve the motion.
- 8. Fair Housing Event Update: October 23
Doug Newton shared that on October 23rd the Human Rights Commission in collaboration with the Affordable Housing Trust will be hosting a fair housing training for tenants who have faced or feel they may face housing discrimination. Emily Cortes of Suffolk University Law School will present, as will Elizabeth Brusie from the Human Rights Commission, Cliff Cook from the Affordable Housing Trust, and Human Services Director for the city Jenna Bancroft. This will be followed by a similar presentation in November for landlords and housing providers.
- 9. Public Comment
No member of the public offered comment.
- 10. Adjournment
The meeting adjourned at 7:42 PM.