



# Human Rights Commission Meeting

Monday, May 18, 2026 at 6:00 PM  
149 Main Street, Watertown, MA 02472

## Agenda

### ACCESS INFORMATION:

- A. This meeting will be held on Monday, May 18th, 2026 at 6:00 PM. Location: City Council Chamber
  - B. This is an in-person meeting - any remote access is provided solely as a courtesy and may not be relied upon as alternative access. Therefore, any interruption in remote access technology shall not interrupt the meeting, and the meeting will proceed accordingly in person. In the event of such interruption, in-person attendance is available and encouraged.
  - C. The Public may join the virtual meeting online: <https://watertown-ma.zoom.us/j/83935116963>
  - D. Public may comment through email: [dnewton@watertown-ma.gov](mailto:dnewton@watertown-ma.gov)
  - E. Please visit the Human Rights Commission website here: <https://www.watertown-ma.gov/1195/Human-Rights-Commission>
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- 1. Call to Order
- 2. Roll Call
- 3. Public Comment
- 4. Acceptance of Minutes
  - A. Human Rights Commission Minutes April 13, 2026
  - B. Logo Committee Meeting Minutes March 9, 2026
- 5. Human Rights Commission FY26 Budget Update
- 6. Discussion of Immigration Enforcement and Sharing of Relevant Data with Watertown Police Department Liaison
- 7. Co-Chair Report
  - A. Human Rights Commission Community Event for Sharing of Needs Assessment, Honoring Logo Contest Participants, and Sharing Action Plan Priorities
  - B. Co-Chair Public Service Announcement and Logo Promotion
  - C. Review Draft of Co-Chairs' Outline of Activities and Priorities from Sept. 2024 to May 2026 for Potential Presentation to City Council
- 8. Committee Reports
  - A. Immigrant Rights Committee on its May 13, 2026 meeting
- 9. Public Comment

10. Discussion
  - A. Human Rights Commission Final Logo
  - B. Funding Request: Indigenous People's Day 2026
  - C. Human Rights Commission Participation in "Watertown Walks"
  - D. International Association of Official Human Rights Agencies (IAOHRA) Membership Renewal
  - E. Future Procedure for Human Rights Commission Statements
  - F. Thank You Event for Members of Boards and Commissions
  - G. Update on Conversation with Community Engagement Team Regarding Human Rights Commission Promotion
  - H. Human Rights Commission Participation in Watertown Pride Parade
11. Public Comment
12. Adjournment

# Watertown Human Rights Commission Update

Slide Presentation Outline

**Commented [SZ1]:** Once this outline is finalized, I will move it to a PowerPoint presentation.

**DRAFT**

Achievements and Priorities: **September 2024 to April 2026**

Prepared by Sarah Zoen (HRC Chair) and Mel Poindexter (HRC Vice-Chair)

Approved by the HRC: **Date TBD**

## Overview

In its first 19 months, the Watertown Human Rights Commission moved from formation to action: building governance, creating resident access points, supporting visible community initiatives, responding to urgent rights concerns, and grounding its next phase in a community-informed needs assessment.

## Full Slide Outline

### Slide 1: Cover

- Watertown Human Rights Commission
- Achievements and Priorities
- September 2024 to April 2026
- Subtitle: From formation to action

### Slide 2: Overview

The Watertown Human Rights Commission works to promote dignity, inclusion, equity, and respect for human rights across the community.

Since beginning regular meetings in September 2024, the Commission has focused on:

- Building its operating/governance structure
- Creating resident-facing processes
- Supporting community events and education
- Responding to urgent human rights concerns
- Developing an action plan grounded in resident input
- Subtitle: We use the HRC Ordinance as our foundation for this work

### Slide 3: Meet the Commission

- 9 Commissioners
- 3 Student liaisons (worth noting: the Commission added three Watertown High School student liaisons in 2025, strengthening youth engagement and connection with the student body)
- 1 City staff liaison
- Key liaisons and partners: Watertown Police Department, and Watertown Public Schools

### Slide 4: Commission Priorities

6 priority areas, which could expand:

- Governance and Resident Access
- Community Engagement and Education
- Immigrant Rights and Urgent Issues
- Youth and Civic Participation
- Accessibility and Underserved Needs
- Housing, Schools, and Community Partnerships

### Slide 5: Current Committees and Working Groups

- Rules and Procedures
- Immigrant Rights

- Action Plan
- Logo and Student Engagement
- Communication, Community Inroads, and Engagement (Action Plan Group 1)
- Urgent Issues, Underserved Needs, and Accessibility (Action Plan Group 2)

**Slide 6: Governance and Resident Access**

What we're doing	What we plan to do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developed rules of procedure and complaint procedures</li> <li>• Reviewed legal issues with the City Attorney and KP Law</li> <li>• Addressed public comment, Open Meeting Law, Public Records Law, confidentiality, anonymity, and intake procedures</li> <li>• Continued improving complaint form accessibility and public-facing website information</li> <li>• Began building a more visible and accessible process for residents to understand and engage with the HRC (e.g., tabling at events across the city, PSA video, Meet Your HRC event at the library, other community events, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue refining complaint intake and resident feedback processes to make it more user-friendly and accessible</li> <li>• Improve public understanding of how residents can contact and engage with the HRC</li> <li>• Strengthen website, email, and public-facing resources</li> <li>• Make the HRC's role clearer to residents and community partners</li> </ul>

### Slide 7: Community Engagement and Education

What we're doing	What we plan to do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participating in community events including Unity Breakfast, Faire on the Square, Pride, Juneteenth, and Indigenous Peoples' Day</li> <li>• With World in Watertown, participated in a "Get to know your HRC" event at the Watertown Library</li> <li>• Supporting public education events with community partners</li> <li>• Working with city communications and WCATV to raise awareness of the HRC (i.e., PSA video)</li> <li>• Developing clearer criteria for event participation and sponsorship</li> <li>• Exploring tabling materials and stronger outreach tools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build a stakeholder map of key Watertown organizations and partners (in collaboration with World in Watertown, the Watertown City Communications Department, and other stakeholder groups)</li> <li>• Develop clearer criteria for HRC participation in events</li> <li>• Strengthen outreach to residents who may not typically engage with city government</li> <li>• Continue supporting signature community events while staying realistic about Commission capacity</li> </ul>
<p><b>Featured public education example</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Democracy Talks: A Migrant Family's Search for Home in MA</li> <li>• February 19, 2025 event featuring WBUR journalist Simón Rios discussing reporting on migrant families in Massachusetts amid changing shelter policies and shifting political conditions.</li> <li>• Co-sponsored with the Watertown HRC</li> <li>• Metric: 109 Watertown residents registered; 212 total attendees.</li> </ul>	

Reference: [Event listing](#)

### Slide 8: Immigrant Rights and Urgent Issues

What we're doing	What we plan to do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Created an Immigrant Rights Subcommittee</li> <li>• Approved and published an immigrant rights statement</li> <li>• Worked with Watertown Police and community partners on public information related to immigration enforcement</li> <li>• Helped distribute immigrant rights and police policy pamphlets</li> <li>• Updated public statements on ICE activity and community impact in light of 2026 events in the city</li> <li>• Raised concerns related to Flock Safety and license plate camera data sharing</li> <li>• Supported public dialogue on emerging human rights concerns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue providing accurate information and resources to residents</li> <li>• Strengthen coordination with city partners and community organizations</li> <li>• Support public education around immigrant rights and local policies</li> <li>• Respond carefully to urgent human rights concerns as they arise</li> </ul>
<p><b>Promoting the WPD/World in Watertown/HRC Brochure:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1,000+ pamphlets distributed</li> <li>• 2,000 additional pamphlets ordered</li> </ul>	

### Slide 9: Youth and Civic Participation

What we're doing	What we plan to do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Added three Watertown High School student liaisons</li> <li>• Partnered with Watertown Public Schools on a student logo contest</li> <li>• Received 36 student logo submissions</li> <li>• Reviewed submissions with Commissioners and outside evaluators</li> <li>• Advanced finalist logos through a public review process</li> <li>• Selected a final logo to use in future HRC promotional materials</li> <li>• Discussed a public recognition event to celebrate student participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Celebrate student participation and the final logo (possibly use other submitted logos for HRC promotional materials)</li> <li>• Continue building student engagement opportunities</li> <li>• Explore youth service, school programming, and advisory opportunities</li> <li>• Strengthen the connection between the HRC and Watertown students (using the 2025 HRC Needs Assessment as a helpful guide)</li> </ul>

### Slide 10: Accessibility, Housing, and Underserved Needs

What we're doing	What we plan to do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identified a HRC Commissioner to serve as a permanent liaison related to housing concerns</li> <li>• Engaged with fair housing concerns and the Metro West fair housing report</li> <li>• Identified housing insecurity, disability voice and access, immigrant communities, and school-based discrimination/SPED concerns as priority issues</li> <li>• Connected with Human Services to understand where city work is already underway</li> <li>• Included accessibility considerations in needs assessment presentations, including ASL interpretation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus action planning on immigrant communities, housing, SPED/school discrimination, disability voice, and access</li> <li>• Identify where city agencies and community partners are already working</li> <li>• Use the HRC role to support coordination, visibility, and resident access to information</li> <li>• Strengthen collaboration with Human Services, schools, housing partners, and accessibility-focused groups</li> </ul>

### Slide 11: Needs Assessment and Action Plan

What we're doing	What we plan to do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developed the scope for a human rights needs assessment</li> <li>Selected Liz Peck / Peck Policy Strategies</li> <li>Conducted stakeholder outreach, interviews, and focus groups in the fall 2025</li> <li>Focused outreach on communities including immigrants, Spanish-speaking immigrants, the Armenian community, and people with disabilities</li> <li>Presented focus group findings with ASL interpretation to improve accessibility</li> <li>Heard positive feedback about Watertown's welcoming nature, along with concerns about discrimination and the broader national human rights environment, especially immigration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Publish a report on the accomplishments to date and key priorities going forward (this presentation)</li> <li>Finalize and implement the HRC action plan</li> <li>Organize work through two 2026 working groups</li> <li>Translate needs assessment findings into concrete priorities, partnerships, and public-facing actions</li> </ul>

#### Needs assessment areas of opportunity:

- Communication, listening, and education
- Events and initiatives
- Immigrant communities
- Public schools and special education
- Disability priorities and proactive inclusion
- Affordable and accessible housing

### Slide 12: Human Rights Commission Collaborations

What we're doing	What we plan to do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Watertown Public Schools</li> <li>Watertown Police Department</li> <li>Watertown Free Public Library</li> <li>World in Watertown</li> <li>Affordable Housing Trust</li> <li>Human Services Department</li> <li>Commission on Disability</li> <li>Watertown Pride</li> <li>Pigsgusset Initiative / Indigenous Peoples' Day partners</li> <li>With neighboring HRCs, co-sponsored a 2-part training on effective tools for community conversations, facilitated by Essential Partners</li> <li>Massachusetts Association of Human Rights Commissions</li> <li>International Association of Official Human Rights Agencies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build a comprehensive stakeholder map</li> <li>Clarify criteria for partnerships and sponsorships</li> <li>Strengthen coordination with city departments and community partners</li> <li>Use partnerships to expand reach without overextending Commission capacity</li> <li>Any follow up with Essential Partners, Watertown Community Conversations and/or other HRCs after the Essential Partners training?</li> </ul>

Commented [SZ3]: For Mel and Liz A?

Commented [SZ2]: Mel, anything more we want to say here?

### Slide 13: Thank You / Contact

- HRC chair/vice-chair “signatures”
- List of Commissioners
- Staff liaison contact
- HRC webpage
- General HRC email
- Meeting schedule or public participation information

Commented [SZ4]: Use our new logo!