

Human Rights Commission Meeting Minutes

April 13, 2026

1. Call to Order

Sarah Zoen called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM in the City Council Chamber.

2. Roll Call

Present were Corey Barr, Elizabeth Brusie (by zoom), Lisa Laplante, Xin Peng (by zoom), and Sarah Zoen. Mel Poindexter and Susan Musinsky (by zoom) joined the meeting after the roll call.

3. Acceptance of Minutes

a. March 9th Human Rights Commission Meeting Minutes

Corey Barr made a motion, seconded by Lisa Laplante, to approve the minutes. The Commission voted five to zero to approve the motion.

b. March 17th Committee on Communication, Community Inroads, and Engagement Meeting Minutes

Corey Barr made a motion, seconded by Lisa Laplante, to approve all remaining meeting minutes on the agenda. The Commission voted five to zero to approve the motion.

c. April 6th Committee on Communication, Community Inroads, and Engagement Meeting Minutes

d. March 17th Committee on Urgent Issues, Underserved Needs, and Accessibility Meeting Minutes

e. April 30th Logo Committee Meeting Minutes

4. Committee Reports

a. Logo Committee: Selection of Final Logo, Process for Announcements, Honoring All Submissions

Lisa Laplante reported on behalf of the Committee. She shared that the Committee had shared the final selected logo with Matt Jatkola of the Mosesian Center for the Arts who has worked pro bono to make final edits. Doug Newton shared the potential variations of the edits that have been discussed with the winning student, Chelsea Riley. Susan Musinsky made a motion, seconded by Lisa Laplante, to approve the logo designed by Chelsea Riley while giving the Logo subcommittee the rights to finalize the logo in consultation with Matt Jatkola. The Commission voted seven to zero to approve the motion.

b. Committee on Communication, Community Inroads, and Engagement: Recent meeting, potential initiatives discussed

Sarah Zoen spoke on behalf of the Committee. She shared that the Committee re-considered criteria on which the HRC can decide how to engage in events and the level of engagement to take. She also shared that the Committee discussed stakeholder mapping and ensuring that no key stakeholders are missed throughout that process. The Committee further discussed the needs assessment and hosting an event to publicize it as well as the Commission's other work. The Committee then shared the draft criteria for events and discussed ensuring that the community at large is aware of the events that the Commission is hosting and participating in. As part of future events, the Commission agreed it would be ideal to have tabling materials to better display the HRC and its work. Corey Barr made a motion, seconded by Lisa Laplante, to spend up to \$200 on such supplies. The Commission approved the motion seven to zero.

- c. Committee on Urgent Issues, Underserved Needs, and Accessibility: Recent meeting, potential initiatives discussed

Elizabeth Brusie spoke on behalf of the Committee. She discussed how the Committee was able to meet with Human Services Director Jenna Bancroft and discuss how her work overlaps with the Commission. The Committee further discussed how the Human Rights Commission could refer individuals to Jenna in the future. Elizabeth then shared that there could be an opportunity to work with Jenna on the issue of affordable housing and housing discrimination.

5. Public Comment

6. Discussion

- a. Massachusetts Human Rights Commission Updates

Lisa Laplante shared that once she is done teaching for the semester she will be able to attend the Massachusetts Commission's meeting moving forward.

- b. Leveraging Global Human Rights to Protect Our Cities Webinar Report

- c. Human Rights Commission Email and Public Service Announcement

Doug Newton shared that there is now an established email: hrc@watertown-ma.gov, in which residents can email the Human Rights Commission. Doug will make it his practice to share emails received with Sarah Zoen as HRC Co-Chair.

- d. Potential Expenditure of Funds for Tabling Materials

This matter was discussed during the Committee Reports portion of the agenda.

- e. Mother's Day Walk for Peace

Sarah Zoen shared information on the upcoming Mother's Day Walk for Peace which she will be attending. Some Commissioners expressed that they are unsure if the Commission should be officially involved in the event. While the Commission will not be formally involved, the Commission expressed that the Walk is a great event.

- f. Immigration Enforcement in Watertown and the United States

This item was taken out of order earlier in the meeting. Mel Poindexter shared that he has had another conversation with District Attorney Marian Ryan who suggested that a task force may be created in the future with a potential opportunity for Human Rights Commission participation. Corey Barr shared her understanding of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) activity on the previous Friday in which an individual in Watertown was detained. Captain Dan Unsworth of the Watertown Police Department then spoke. He shared that the Police Department is aware of the incident on the past Friday. He added that he is concerned about Watertown residents feeling potentially unsafe. He added that an officer with a clinician went to the address in question to offer support to the family. He also added that every situation is unique and that it appears to him that there are some incidents across the country in which ICE is taking individuals in custody in a way that is, in the opinion of some, overboard. There are also instances in which ICE is detaining individuals who have significant backgrounds and histories that could be a concern to a community. The police department did consider this particular situation and does have some such concerns regarding community safety, but is not at liberty to discuss it further at this point. The Commission then discussed the possibility of sending a letter to the City Council as well as a potential statement on recent ICE activity and agreed to schedule a meeting of the Immigrant Rights Committee to discuss both matters.

g. Screening of Film “America’s Family” in Watertown

This item was taken out of order earlier in the meeting. Susan Musinsky shared that conversations continue about scheduling a screening of “America’s Family” with a possibility of an event in the first week of May.

7. Staff Liaison Report

Doug Newton shared that she has had conversations with the Community Wellness staff and was made aware of an opportunity for the Human Rights Commission to participate in a “Watertown Walks” event and share the work of the Commission. More detail will be provided on this at an upcoming meeting. He also shared that the Commission can have a table at one date on the upcoming Watertown Farmer’s Market and need not commit to multiple dates.

8. Public Comment

No member of the public offered comment.

9. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:09 PM.