



Human Rights Commission Meeting

Monday, July 13, 2026 at 6:00 PM

Agenda

ACCESS INFORMATION:

- A. This meeting will be held on Monday, July 13, 2026 at 6:00 PM. Location: Watertown City Hall, Lower Hearing Room
 - 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: jbancroft@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. Acceptance of Minutes
 - A. June 16, 2026 HRC Meeting
 - B. June 17, 2026 HRC Committee Meeting
 - C. July 2, 2026 HRC Special Session
- 4. Public Comment
- 5. Committee Reports
- 6. Co-Chair Report
- 7. Staff Liaison Report
 - A. Assigning Complaints to HRC Members/Committees
 - B. HRC Website Design
 - C. FY26 & FY27 Budget Updates
- 8. WPD & WPS Liaison Reports
- 9. Public Comment
- 10. Discussion
 - A. Identification of HRC Member to Address Recent Complaint

- B. Recommendation of Topics for Rules of Procedure Committee
 - C. Immigration Enforcement Update & HRC Statement on the Supreme Court TPS Ruling and Immigrant Rights
 - D. Farmer's Market: July 22, 2026
 - E. Faire on the Square: September 19, 2026
 - F. Human Rights Day: December 10, 2026
- 11. Public Comment
 - 12. Adjournment

Human Rights Commission Meeting Minutes

June 16, 2026

6:00 PM

1. Call to Order

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

2. Roll Call

Present were Corey Barr, Sarah Zoen, Mel Poindexter, Liz Aeschlimann, Elizabeth Brusie (by zoom), Gabriel Camacho (by zoom), Lisa Laplante (by zoom), and Xin Peng (by zoom). Also present was Doug Newton as staff for the Commission.

3. Acceptance of Minutes

a. Minutes for May 27, 2026

Sarah Zoen made a motion, seconded by Liz Aeschlimann, to approve the minutes. The motion passed seven to zero .

b. Minutes for May 18, 2026

Lisa Laplante made a motion, seconded by Corey Barr, that the minutes be approved with an amendment to reflect that Corey Barr was present at the meeting. The motion was approved seven to zero.

4. Public Comment

One member of the public offered comment urging the Commission to intervene in the relationship between school district leadership and families of students with disabilities.

5. Committee Reports

a. Committee on Communication, Community Inroads, and Engagement

Sarah Zoen described how the Committee has reviewed a document summarizing the Commission's action plan and the work it has conducted so far. This document will eventually be shared with the City Council. The Committee will meet again on June 17th .

6. Co-Chair Report

Sarah Zoen and Mel Poindexter shared that they have been contacted by a School Committee member who is seeking to meet with them regarding the Human Rights Commission's needs assessment and the progress that the Commission has made in implementing it. That meeting will be taking place.

7. Staff Liaison Report

Doug Newton shared that the Human Rights Commission has been approved to table at the farmer's market on Wednesday, July 22nd. He also shared draft powerpoint slides as he had been asked to create by the staff for the School Committee in advance of the Commission sharing its final logo with the Committee on June 22nd. The Commission asked for the slides to be condensed and to include context on the logo process. Doug will edit the slides and re-send them to the School Committee.

8. Public Comment

No member of the public offered comment.

9. Finalizing Human Rights Commission Logo & Announcement on June 22nd

Lisa Laplante made a motion, seconded by Mel Poindexter, that the Commission approve \$100 for the gift card to the winner of the HRC logo contest. The Commission voted seven to zero to approve the motion .

10. Discussion

a. Indigenous People's Day Funding Request

Doug Newton shared the \$1500 invoice that the Commission received to pay for a chef at the Indigenous People's Day sponsored by the Pigsgussett Initiative in October. After a discussion, Sarah Zoen made a motion, seconded by Corey Barr, to approve the full amount. The Commission voted six to one, with one abstaining, to approve payment of the invoice.

b. Reflections on Watertown Pride

All Commissioners in attendance shared that the event was wonderful and that they were proud to march with the new Human Rights Commission banner.

c. Faire on the Square 2026

The Commission confirmed that they do intend to table at Faire on the Square this year, which takes place on Saturday, September 19th at Saltonstall Park.

d. Watertown Farmer's Market- July 22nd

Doug Newton shared that this is the date on which the Commission has been approved to have a table. Commissioners will coordinate as to scheduling time at the table.

e. Human Rights Commission Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Update

Doug Newton shared that there are \$2,287 remaining in the Human Rights Commission's Fiscal Year 2026 budget. This does not count the banner which Gabriel Camacho has purchased for roughly \$130 and for which he will be reimbursed. At a later point in the meeting, Sarah Zoen made a motion, seconded by Corey Barr, to approve up to \$650 for purchases of merchandise featuring the new Human Rights Commission logo. The Commission voted eight to zero to approve the motion.

f. Boards and Commissions Members Appreciation Event

Commissioners discussed their plans to attend this event on June 18th. Xin Peng encouraged Commissioners to wear their HRC-branded shirts.

g. Treaty Day 2026

Lisa Laplante shared that she had a conversation with Erin Rathe in the City's planning department about the Commission's potential involvement in the city's upcoming Treaty Day celebration. She shared a document on a portion of the festivities which will cover "Indigenous Views on the Origins of the American Revolution." This event will be indigenous-led and highlight indigenous perspectives. Gabriel Camacho expressed concern that this and other events may not adequately represent the perspectives of indigenous people. After a discussion, the Commission voted seven to one, with one abstention, to approve the Commission's co-sponsorship.

h. International Association of Official Human Rights Agencies Membership

The Commission discussed how this organization did not provide as much as they suspected it would in terms of resources and events relevant to Watertown. As such, the Commission agreed not to renew its membership for 2026-7.

i. Immigration Enforcement in Watertown and Across the Nation

Captain Dan Unsworth, Human Rights Commission liaison for the Police Department, answered questions from the Commission. He was asked if the POST Commission has taken any stance on Massachusetts law enforcement's involvement in immigration, and Captain Unsworth answered that he was not aware of them doing so nor would he expect them to given their primary role. The Commission also discussed executive orders and guidance recently released by Governor Healey and Attorney General Campbell.

11. Public Comment

No member of the public offered comment.

12. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:37 PM. These minutes were prepared by Doug Newton.

Human Rights Commission on Communication, Community Inroads, and Engagement Meeting Minutes

June 17, 2026

1:00 PM

1. Call to Order

Sarah Zoen called the meeting to order at 1:01 PM.

2. Roll Call

Present (all via zoom) were Committee Members Sarah Zoen, Mel Poindexter, and Lisa Laplante. Also present was Doug Newton as staff to the Human Rights Commission.

3. Acceptance of Minutes

The minutes for the previous Committee meeting had been accepted at the last full Human Rights Commission meeting.

4. Discussion

a. Human Rights Commission Activities and Next Steps

The Committee discussed its participation in the upcoming School Committee meeting on June 22nd. Commissioners present will be able to share with the School Committee the final Human Rights Commission logo which resulted from a contest featuring submissions by Watertown Public Schools students.

b. Action Plan & Next Steps

Lisa Laplante shared a document she has been working on summarizing the work of the Human Rights Commission to this point and its goals for the future. The Committee expressed appreciation to Lisa for being so thorough and taking a significant amount of time to prepare this. The Commission will review this document at its next Commission meeting and consider sharing it with the City Council and other key stakeholders.

c. Upcoming Events & Preparation

The Committee briefly discussed its participation at the Farmer's Market, Faire on the Square, and at the aforementioned School Committee meeting. The Committee also discussed its plan to host a larger scale Human Rights Day event in December.

d. Logo Celebration Planning

The Commission is excited to honor the winning student at the School Committee meeting on the 22nd. The Commission will continue to use the new logo in as much

branding as possible moving forward and will look to build on its partnership with the student body.

5. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 2:00 PM. These minutes were prepared by Doug Newton.

Human Rights Commission Meeting Minutes

July 2, 2026

4:00 PM

[Webinar Recording](#)

- I. Call to Order: Sarah Zoen called the meeting to order at 4:20 PM
- II. Roll Call: Present were Corey Barr, Sarah Zoen, Mel Poindexter, Elizabeth Brusie, and Xin Peng (all by Zoom; meeting was offered by remote participation only). Also present was Jenna Bancroft as staff for the Commission.
- III. Public Comment: None
- IV. Update on Immigration Enforcement Actions and Possible Response
 - a. Corey Barr suggested the HRC address decisions made by the Supreme Court regarding Temporary Protective Status (TPS) and Asylum Seekers, as well as uptick in ICE detainments (New York Times article reports 10,000 arrests in the last 5 days).
 - b. Corey Barr provided information regarding an ICE detainment in Watertown on Saturday 6/27 including the work of Rapid Response Network volunteers offering aftercare and other supports. WPD sent the Jail Diversion Co-Response Clinician to respond and offer additional resources/support to the family.
 - c. All participating members reviewed a [statement made by Cambridge City Council](#).
 - d. Mel Poindexter suggested using the Cambridge statement as a template for the HRC.
 - e. Sarah Zoen suggested the meeting continue onto the next agenda items while she drafted a statement to be reviewed and voted on at the end of the meeting.
 - f. As the last item of the meeting, the statement was presented to the participating members; Corey Barr made a motion, seconded by Xin Peng, to approve the statement.
- V. Public Comment
 - a. One member of the public expressed value in highlighting recent ICE activity in Watertown because residents often say they do not know there is a presence in the community. Referencing the incident could educate the public and show the HRC is aware of the uptick in cases.
- VI. Update on Special Education Developments and Community Discussions
 - a. Mel Poindexter asked the participating members for their ideas around how to respond to the recent complaint to the HRC about Watertown Public Schools Special Education.
- VII. Update on Recent Complaint Filed and Next Steps for the HRC

- a. Mel Poindexter shared the complainant has been contacted to confirm receipt and assurance the complaint will be reviewed by HRC for next steps.
- b. Sarah Zoen asked participating members who could take the lead on responding to the recent complaint.
- c. Corey Barr shared she does not have the capacity to take it; need to be clear with complainant about expectations and update rules/regs to reflect Jenna as liaison.
- d. Mel Poindexter suggests waiting until the next meeting to identify the person who will take the complaint. Sarah agrees. Mel will step in if no one else offers on the 13th.
- e. Jenna Bancroft will speak with other staff liaisons to identify ways the HRC can address complaints without convening the entire group.

VIII. Public Comment: None

IX. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 5:00 PM.

These minutes were prepared by Jenna Bancroft.

Watertown HRC Statement on the Supreme Court Temporary Protected Status (TPS) Ruling and Immigrant Rights

July 6, 2026

The Watertown Human Rights Commission stands in solidarity with our Haitian and Syrian neighbors, and with all community members affected by the recent Supreme Court ruling concerning Temporary Protected Status. We recognize the deep fear, uncertainty, and anxiety that many individuals and families are experiencing as they face the potential loss of protections that have allowed them to live, work, study, worship, and build their lives in our communities.

Our immigrant neighbors are essential members of Watertown's schools, workplaces, faith communities, neighborhoods, and civic life. Their contributions strengthen the fabric of our city and enrich our shared community. At a time when many families are facing uncertainty, we reaffirm our commitment to the dignity, safety, and human rights of all residents, regardless of immigration status.

Watertown remains committed to being a welcoming and inclusive community where everyone is treated with respect and where our community responds with compassion, care, and solidarity. We encourage residents to support their neighbors, share reliable information, and help ensure that those who may be affected are connected to trusted resources and support.

For resources, to contact the Commission, or to file a concern or complaint, please visit:

- [Watertown Human Rights Commission](#)
- [Human Rights Commission Complaints page](#)

Additional resources are available through:

- [Watertown Police Department welcome brochure \(PDF\)](#)
- [Massachusetts Attorney General's Office Guidance on ICE \(PDF\)](#)
- [Massachusetts Immigrant & Refugee Advocacy Coalition \(MIRA\)](#)
- [Massachusetts Access to Counsel Initiative \(MACI\)](#)
- [LUCE Immigrant Justice Network of Massachusetts](#)
- [National Immigration Law Center \(NILC\)](#)
- [National Immigrant Justice Center \(NIJC\)](#)

- [ACLU Immigrants' Rights](#)
- [ACLU of Massachusetts](#)

Together, we can continue to build a community rooted in dignity, safety, compassion, and solidarity for all.