

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.