



Human Rights Commission Meeting

Monday, September 14, 2026 at 6:00 PM

149 Main Street, Watertown, MA 02472

Agenda

ACCESS INFORMATION:

- A. This meeting will be held on Monday, September 14, 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: hrc@watertown-ma.gov.
 - E. Please Visit the Human Rights Commission Website at <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. HRC Meeting on August 10, 2026
 - B. HRC Committee on Communications, Community Inroads, and Engagement on September 2, 2026
 - C. HRC Committee on Urgent Issues, Underserved Needs, and Accessibility on September 9, 2026
- 4. Public Comment
- 5. Committee Reports
- 6. Guest Speaker: City Council Vice President, Vincent Piccirilli
- 7. WPD & WPS Liaison Reports
- 8. Co-Chair Report
- 9. Staff Liaison Report
 - A. Budget Update
 - B. HRC Commissioner Appointment Update
 - C. State Ethics Rule Review
- 10. Public Comment

11. Discussion
 - A. Action Plan Review
 - B. Next Steps: HRC Student Advisors
 - C. Next Steps: Responses to Immigrant Support Letter
 - D. Request from Helen Robinson Wright Fund
 - E. Faire on the Square: Saturday, September 19, 2026
 - F. Indigenous Peoples Day Event: Sunday, October 11, 2026
 - G. Human Rights Day: Thursday, December 10, 2026
12. Public Comment
13. Adjournment

Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes
August 10, 2026
Lower Hearing Room, Watertown City Hall
6:00 PM

1. Call to Order

Sarah Zoen called the meeting to order at 6:04 PM.

2. Roll Call

Present in-person were Mel Poindexter, Sarah Zoen, Xin Peng, Lisa Laplante, Gabriel Camacho, Liz Aeschlimann, Susan Musinsky, Corey Barr, Elizabeth Brusie, and staff liaison, Jenna Bancroft.

3. Acceptance of Minutes: July 13 HRC Meeting, July 28 Immigrant Rights Committee, August 6 Committee on Urgent Issues, Underserved Needs and Accessibility

Sarah motioned to accept all minutes, Corey seconded. Motion passed nine to zero.

4. Public Comment: None

5. Committee Reports

A. Committee on Communications, Community Inroads, and Engagement

Plan to meet in early September to continue discussion around Human Rights Day planning and the action plan draft. Committee on Urgent Issues, Underserved Needs, and Accessibility was encouraged to review the document in their next committee meeting.

B. Immigrant Rights Committee

Discussed PROTECT Act and desire for state, local and other agencies who are supporting immigrant communities to speak with HRC about the new act.

C. Committee on Urgent Issues, Underserved Needs, and Accessibility

Meeting on September 9 to review action plan and next steps on urgent community needs identified in the Needs Assessment. Also discussed

sending a letter to the School Committee in support of a proposed public hearing for families impacted by recent SPED allegations.

Mel made a motion to send the letter to School Committee as amended; Sarah seconded. The motion passed nine to zero.

6. Co-Chair Report

Sarah prepared the HRC presentation content and Jenna is putting it into a presentation format to be presented to the full committee in September or October.

7. Staff Liaison Report

- A. FY27 Budget Update: Currently \$5,316.85 available for use.
- B. Complaint Process: Jenna reminded the HRC members to send their areas of expertise so complaints can be assigned accordingly for follow-up.
- C. Subcommittee Logistics: Jenna reminded the commission to send agenda items by the assigned deadlines. Each subcommittee was also asked to identify a member who can facilitate the Zoom meeting if Jenna is not available.

8. WPD & WPS Liaison Reports

- A. Watertown Police Department: Lt. Civetti updated the HRC on immigration enforcement activity known to WPD; not made aware of any activity since June 27th. Discussed incident on July 18th of reported hate crime against an individual who was assaulted and the victim of antisemitic comments. Commissioners questioned the age of the people involved, if the case was reported to the FBI, and if there is additional police data on hate crimes in Watertown. Lt. Civetti will connect with Cpt. Unsworth, HRC liaison to WPD, for answers to those questions.
- B. Watertown Public Schools: Nnamdi Okaka, Student Leadership Development Coordinator discussed the plan to engage student advisors to the HRC this upcoming school year. Ideas included allowing participation to satisfy community service requirements, assistance planning Human Rights Day and other events, and getting a sense of needs for youth in the community. Also discussed idea for youth internship program. Jenna will send Nnamdi content for an advisor posting for students in September.

9. Public Comment : None

10. Discussion

- A. HRC Representative for the Watertown Film Festival Planning Group: Susan Musinsky will fulfill this role.
- B. Reviewed HRC statement about TPS to include additional resources. Motion passed to update the statement nine to zero.
- C. Reviewed HRC letter for Watertown elected officials to encourage action and support for the immigrant community. Suggestions included attaching brochure created in partnership with WPD and HRC, and noting the recent termination of TPS. Susan offered to create a list of recipients including State and Local elected officials. Lisa made a motion to approve the letter and Corey Barr seconded. Motion passed nine to zero.
- D. Human Rights Day on December 10th: To be discussed at the next Committee on Communications, Community Inroads, and Engagement meeting.

11. Public Comment: None

12. Meeting adjourned at 8:10 PM.

Human Rights Commission
Committee on Communication, Community Inroads, and Engagement
Meeting Minutes
September 2, 2026
2:30 PM
Remote Participation Only

1. Call to Order

Sarah Zoen called to order at 2:35 PM.

2. Roll Call

Present were Sarah Zoen, Lisa Laplante, Mel Poindexter, and staff liaison, Jenna Bancroft.

3. Acceptance of Minutes: None

4. Public Comment: None

5. Discussion

A. Action Plan Update and Next Steps: The Committee on Urgent Issues, Underserved Needs, and Engagement received the Action Plan Template and will review at their meeting on September 9, 2026.

B. Human Rights Day, Thursday, December 10th

- Sarah shared World in Watertown is interested in partnering with HRC and is open to what that will look like.
- Lisa reminded the group that first step is to engage the new youth advisors on the planning process when they are assigned.
- Sarah will connect with World in Watertown that the timeline will be end of Sept/early Oct to share ideas; Lisa will connect with WPS students; all will report back in October HRC Meeting.

C. Other Business

- HRC Presentation: Members provided feedback on the visual feel of the presentation. Plan to show the full HRC in October.
- HRC Agenda Items for September 14: Action Plan Review, October 11 Indigenous Peoples event, Faire on the Square
- Open HRC Commissioner Position: Timeline and next steps; Can HRC provide FAQ and/or discuss with RAC? Jenna will report to full HRC on September 14.

- Faire on the Square: activity for the table, stickers; blank logo to print for kids to color; foam board to set up the poster
- Discussed next meeting date; Jenna will coordinate.

6. Public Comment: None

7. Meeting adjourned at 3:30 PM.

Human Rights Commission
Committee on Communication, Community Inroads, and Engagement
Meeting Minutes
September 9, 2026
1:00 PM
Remote Participation Only

1. Meeting called to order at 1:06 PM.
2. Present were Gabriel Camacho, Liz Aeschlimann, Susan Musinsky, Elizabeth Brusie and staff liaison, Jenna Bancroft.
3. Public Comment: none
4. Discussion
 - A. The committee reviewed the HRC Needs Assessment Goals 3 & 5 and discussed whether the approach to need areas should be broad or if the HRC should narrow its focus. Pros and cons of each strategy were discussed and the group decided maintaining a broad approach is best at this time. Next steps include building community relationships, identifying liaisons within the HRC to focus on an agreed upon list of community needs (with help from Human Services), and to continue spreading HRC's mission and raising awareness.
 - B. Review of the Watertown HRC Action Plan Template: Agreed to request Committee on Communications to present the Action Plan to the full HRC at September 14 meeting.
 - C. Next Steps: HRC Letter to Officials for Immigrant Support: This will be added to the September 14 agenda and committee members can make suggestions at that time.
5. Public Comment: None
6. Meeting adjourned at 2:05 PM.

Watertown Human Rights Committee Action Plan

Draft 5.31.26

I. Introduction

The Watertown Human Rights Commission (WHRC) is committed to promoting dignity, equity, and inclusion for all residents. This Action Plan outlines a coordinated set of initiatives designed to strengthen human rights awareness, foster community engagement, support inclusive practices across local institutions, and respond to emerging concerns. The plan is grounded in the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and reflects the needs and aspirations of our community.

II. Mission and Mandate

The Human Rights Commission (HRC) works to ensure that all persons enjoy equal opportunity to participate in local affairs, including but not limited to housing, employment, education, public accommodation, access to City services regardless of race, color, ancestry, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, citizenship, age, religion, disability, health status, marital or familial status, military or veteran status, socioeconomic status, ex-offender status, genetic and/or protected class status. The Commission promotes human rights in Watertown through outreach, dialogue, educational forums, the development of an Action Plan, serving as a resource to persons with concerns of discrimination within the City, recommending policies or resolutions for adoption by the City Council, City Manager or other City departments, boards, councils or commissions. The Commission provides an annual written report to the City Council and City Manager and holds an annual public forum.

The Human Rights Committee advances the rights and well-being of all residents by:

- Promoting public understanding of human rights principles
- Supporting inclusive and equitable practices in schools, businesses, and municipal institutions
- Providing accessible avenues for residents to raise concerns and complaints
- Advising town leadership on human rights issues and policy implications
- Building partnerships that strengthen community cohesion and respect

III. Strategic Priorities

The Committee will pursue four interconnected priorities:

1. **Education and Awareness Raising:** Expand human rights learning opportunities across schools, libraries, and community spaces.
2. **Community Engagement and Dialogue** Create structured, inclusive forums for residents to share experiences and shape priorities.
3. **Inclusive Practices in Local Institutions** Support businesses and municipal departments in adopting human rights-aligned practices.
4. **Responsive Action and Advisory Work** Address concerns, identify patterns, and provide informed recommendations to town leadership.

IV. Annual Goals for 2026-2027

- Launch a Human Rights Day (December 10) program in at least one school
- Host two community film or documentary events with facilitated discussions
- Develop and distribute a “Human Rights for Local Businesses” guide
- Convene at least two thematic community hearings based on resident feedback
- Produce an annual public report summarizing activities, findings, and recommendations

Commented [LL1]: Listed some ideas but could be different!

V. Program Strands and Activities

A. Supporting and Co-sponsoring City Events and Programs

[We can add here the annual events that we will always be involved with and a short description if it is a financial or just our being present; we can then share the general criteria we developed for deciding what future or on off events we might support]

*social media strategy?

B. Schools & Youth Education Strand

Goal: Build a sustainable, age-appropriate pipeline of human rights education across grade levels.

1. Human Rights Day in Schools

- Pilot a Human Rights Day event in one school, featuring a speaker, interactive activity, or student showcase
- Expand to additional schools in subsequent years

- Optional: town-wide art or essay contest on human rights themes

2. Curriculum Collaboration with Teachers

- Offer ready-to-use mini-modules on topics such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, children’s rights, disability rights, and anti-discrimination principles
- Share simple activity ideas (e.g., “What human rights mean to me” mural, pledge wall, or story circle)
- Co-develop lesson plans with social studies, civics, ELA, and art teachers
- Provide professional development workshops on integrating human rights into curriculum; resource lists
- Offer a teacher roundtable to learn what they already teach and what support they want
- Coordinate guest speaker series (local activist, scholar, community leader)
- Help teachers integrate local human rights history (e.g., immigration, housing, policing, disability access)

Advanced collaboration

- Develop a semester-long elective or unit
- Partner with the superintendent to embed human rights into the district’s civics curriculum
- Offer professional development workshops for teachers [Watertown resident Mishy Lesser has done this with school districts in Connecticut and elsewhere]

3. Peer-to-Peer Human Rights Education

- Train high school “Human Rights Ambassadors” to teach younger students
- Facilitate cross-age workshops on inclusion, standing up for others, and recognizing bias
- Encourage student-produced videos, podcasts, or art projects

4. Partnerships with School-Based Groups

- Collaborate with student councils, GSAs, cultural clubs, and service-learning programs

- Integrate youth leadership into community events and public programming

C. Community Film & Documentary Series

Goal: Use film as an accessible entry point for community learning, dialogue, and reflection.

1. Program Structure

- Monthly or quarterly screenings at the public library or community center
- Each event includes a brief introduction, film screening, guest speaker, and facilitated discussion

2. Thematic Focus Areas

- Civil rights and racial justice
- Disability rights and accessibility
- LGBTQ+ rights
- Immigration and refugee experiences
- Environmental justice
- Youth activism and global human rights defenders
- Indigenous rights
- Human rights defenders around the world

3. Guest Speakers and Facilitators

- Local scholars, activists, community leaders, or filmmakers
- Panels featuring residents with lived experience
- Youth participation through introductions or short student films

5. Youth Connection

- High school students introduce the film
- Student-made short films shown before the main feature
- Youth-led panel discussions
- Collaboration with film or media classes

- “Human Rights Youth Critics Circle” to write short reflections

6. Library Partnership

- Co-curated film selections (Licensing and screening rights)
- Book displays aligned with film themes
- Joint promotion through newsletters and social media
- Promotion through newsletters and social media
- Providing space and equipment
- Co-hosting discussions
- Curating book displays tied to the film themes
- Strengthens the library’s role as a civic learning hub.

D. Local Business Engagement Strand

Goal: Help local businesses understand their human rights responsibilities, strengthen inclusive practices, and become active partners in building a respectful, equitable community; Support local businesses in understanding and practicing human rights principles in their daily operations.

Program Rationale

Local businesses shape daily life: employment, customer interactions, accessibility, safety, and community culture. Even small businesses can meaningfully contribute to:

- Non-discrimination
- Accessibility and disability inclusion
- Fair treatment of workers
- Respectful customer service
- Safe and inclusive spaces
- Community well-being

1. Awareness and Outreach Campaign

- Develop a one-page “Human Rights for Local Businesses” guide
- Conduct outreach visits to introduce the program
- Create a mailing list for updates and invitations
- Offer a window decal (or logo sticker) for participating businesses

2. Workshops and Training

- Provide short or long in person or virtual workshops on topics such as:
 - Inclusive customer service
 - Preventing discrimination and bias incidents
 - Accessibility and disability inclusion
 - Responding to harassment or hate incidents
 - Fair and respectful employment practices
 - Responding to harassment or hate incidents
 - Human rights and small business responsibilities [connect to UNGPs]

3. Partnerships

- Collaborate with the Chamber of Commerce or Business Improvement District
- Co-host events with the library or community center

4. Model Business and Human Rights City

- Identify and collaborate with NGO focusing on Business and Human Rights (BHR) in small and medium sized companies.
- Develop strategy for the City of Watertown
- Recruit partner businesses to pilot program
- Expand to more businesses
- Document and share experience

7. Recognition Program

- Annual Human Rights Leadership Award
- “Human Rights Friendly Business” designation
- Public recognition at a Town Council meeting

- Spotlight features on social media or the town website

[could add another strand: Partnerships with cultural, faith-based, and advocacy groups]

D. Community Hearings & Listening Sessions

Goal: Create structured, trauma-informed public forums where residents can share concerns, identify emerging human rights issues, and help shape the Committee’s priorities.

Purpose & Rationale

Community hearings allow the Committee to:

- Understand lived experiences of discrimination, exclusion, or inequity
- Identify patterns or emerging issues
- Build trust with marginalized groups
- Provide a safe, respectful space for residents to speak
- Inform policy recommendations and program design

1. Thematic Hearings

Focus areas may include:

- Disability access
- LGBTQ+ inclusion
- Housing discrimination
- Youth experiences in schools
- Racial justice
- Immigrant and refugee concerns
- Policing and public safety
- Racial justice
- Gender-based harassment

2. Neighborhood-Based Sessions

- Rotate locations to ensure geographic accessibility
- Partner with community organizations to reach diverse groups

3. Population-Specific Hearings

- Youth
- Seniors
- Immigrant communities
- LGBTQ+ residents
- People with disabilities

4. Rapid-Response Hearings and information gathering

- Convened when a major incident or community concern arises
- Online surveys
- Suggestion boxes at the library, schools, and town hall
- Outreach through community partners
- Listening sessions with local organizations

6. Reporting

- Summaries of themes and concerns
- Integration into annual HRC report
- Recommendations for policy or programmatic action

VI. Incident Response Framework

The Committee will maintain a clear, trauma-informed process for:

- Receiving concerns from residents
- Referring matters to appropriate authorities
- Supporting affected individuals
- Tracking patterns or recurring issues

- Reporting trends to town leadership

VII. Policy and Advisory Work

The HRC will:

- Review town policies for equity and human rights implications
- Advise the City Council on human rights issues
- Offer trainings and workshops for municipal employees and leadership
- Collaborate with other City committees working on issues that relate to human rights concerns (eg housing, environment etc.)
- Recommend improvements in accessibility, inclusion, and non-discrimination
- Provide guidance to schools, businesses, and municipal departments

VIII. Evaluation and Reporting

- Data collection
- Track participation, feedback, and outcomes for each program strand
- Produce an annual public report summarizing activities, findings, and recommendations
- Adjust priorities based on community needs and hearing themes

IX. Annual Timeline [THIS NEEDS MORE WORK!]

Fall

- School planning
- Business outreach
- Launch film series

Winter

- Workshops and curriculum collaboration
- First community hearing

Spring

- Peer-to-peer programs
- Second community hearing
- Community events

Summer

- Review and evaluation
- Planning for next year