



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
MONTHLY MEETING
JULY 8, 2026
6:30 PM**

PROPOSED MINUTES

Attendance: Co-Chair Salma Kazmi (facilitator) and Co-Chair Elyse Best were present. Commissioners Jason Mackey, Brian Sokol, Christopher Hankle, Jenny Bonham-Carter, Primrose Chakera, and Suelin Chen were present. Commissioners Pao Mendez and Lauren Chapman were absent. Sarah Anders from the Mayor's Office, attended as liaison.

The meeting was called to order at 6:55 PM following a technical delay. Attendance was taken. **Quorum was established.**

Minutes for the June 3, 2026 meeting were unanimously approved.

Note takers: Elyse Best and Sarah Anders

1. Old Business

Human Rights Commission Annual Report

The Commission reviewed the draft Human Rights Commission Annual Report and accompanying public outreach materials. Commissioners discussed distributing the completed report to elected officials and making it

available to the public. The Commission also reviewed proposed social media content intended to highlight the report and increase public awareness of the Commission's work.

Commissioner Mackey noted that while the Human Rights Commission logo had been approved by vote, the current version is missing the full Human Rights Commission designation. He agreed to oversee a final revision to ensure the logo is complete and accurate.

Votes:

Motion: Approve distribution of the Human Rights Commission Annual Report to public officials.

Vote: 7 in favor, 0 opposed.

Result: **Motion passed unanimously.**

Motion: Approve the Commission's social media posts related to the Annual Report.

Vote: 7 in favor, 0 opposed.

Result: **Motion passed unanimously.**

Following discussion and final review:

Motion: Approve the 2025–2026 Human Rights Commission Annual Report.

Vote: 7 in favor, 0 opposed.

Result: **Motion passed unanimously.**

Following approval, Commissioner Sokol asked whether printed copies could be made available for elected officials. Liaison Anders agreed to coordinate printing and distribution to members of the City Council.

2. New Business

Subcommittee Updates:

Information, Advocacy & Engagement Subcommittee

Chair Hankle reported that the subcommittee had not met since the previous Commission meeting. No additional updates were provided.

Compliance & Training Subcommittee

Chair Sokol reported on recent subcommittee activities. Marcy Gelb has offered to provide a Train-the-Trainer Wage Theft program, and at least four individuals have expressed interest in participating.

The subcommittee recently hosted a presentation from Project Shema regarding educational programming for City staff. Members are also evaluating several organizations to provide an Islamophobia training program as part of the Commission's continuing education efforts.

Promotion of City Diversity Subcommittee

Chair Bonham-Carter reported that the subcommittee had not met since the previous Commission meeting and had no additional updates.

Rights Violation Response Subcommittee

Chair Mackey reported no subcommittee meetings since May and outlined ongoing work on complaint/investigation data and confidentiality requirements; Co-Chair Kazmi noted City feedback on the draft investigation protocol.

Key Points:

- Complaint and investigation data are being compiled and will be distributed to members when complete.
- Commissioners participating in complaint investigations must execute Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs) before accessing confidential materials.
- The City will provide comments on the Commission's draft investigation protocol, which will be incorporated into future revisions.

Administration Subcommittee

Co-Chair Kazmi presented the report on behalf of Chair Elyse Best, who was temporarily disconnected due to a technical issue.

The Commission received an update on the draft Human Rights Commission Advisory Council proposal, including revisions developed by

the Administration Subcommittee and anticipated next steps for Commission review and future implementation.

HRC Investigation Procedures and Complaints Data Records Request

Co-Chair Kazmi presented the proposed investigation procedures and complaint intake framework. The Commission discussed the need for a consistent and transparent process for receiving, documenting, reviewing, and referring complaints, with legal review still pending. Members reviewed 2024–2025 complaint data to identify patterns and inform future procedure development. The matter was referred to the Rights Violation Response Subcommittee for further development and later full Commission review.

Key Points:

- The draft includes intake, documentation, review, referral, mediation or dialogue, transformative justice, findings, appeal, and possible subpoena use.
- The process must remain flexible because many complaints may involve unknown or unresponsive respondents.
- Commissioners discussed the role of transformative justice and the importance of victim-centered care.
- The Commission considered broader responses such as community education, trainings, and public statements about recurring issues like online harassment.
- Complaint data from 2024–2025 was reviewed to help identify community patterns and guide next steps.

3. Commissioner Announcements

Commissioner Christopher Spicer-Hankle announced the upcoming Disability Pride Flag Raising, scheduled for the following day, and encouraged participation. He also acknowledged Commissioner Bonham-Carter’s ongoing work on immigration rights initiatives.

Note: Agenda items were discussed in a different order than listed on the agenda by agreement of the Commission. All agenda items were addressed.

4. Documents and Exhibits Reviewed and Discussed:

- Visual Complaints Process and Stats. PowerPoint.
- Social Media Posts (Quotes) document.
- HRC Investigation Procedures Draft.
- Human Rights Commission (HRC) Annual Report.
- Human Rights Commission (HRC) logo.
- Advisory Council Draft.

Adjournment: 7:40 p.m.

Next Meeting: July 29, 2026, 6:30 PM

Minutes prepared by Elyse Best.