

**CITY COUNCIL MEETING
CITY OF WATERTOWN
May 2, 2022
7:00 p.m.**

Mayor Jeffrey M. Smith Presiding

Present: Council Member Patrick J. Hickey
Council Member Clifford G. Olney III
Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce
Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero
Mayor Jeffrey M. Smith

Also Present: Kenneth A. Mix, City Manager
Robert J. Slye, City Attorney

City staff present: Matthew Timerman, James Mills, Brian Phelps, Michael Delaney, Michael Lumbis

The City Manager presented the following reports to Council:

- Resolution No. 1 - Appointment to the Board of Assessment Review, Lisa M. Carr
- Resolution No. 2 - Appointment to Community Action Planning Council, William Kimball
- Resolution No. 3 - Reappointment to the Transportation Commission, Suzanne Morrow
- Resolution No. 4 - Approving the 2020-2022 Tentative Agreement Between the City of Watertown and the Watertown Professional Firefighters' Association
- Ordinance No. 1 - An Ordinance Authorizing the Issuance of \$785,000 Bonds of the City of Watertown, New York, to Pay the Cost of the Purchase of a New Fire Pumper Truck and Apparatus, in and for Said City
- Ordinance No. 2 - Changing the Approved Zoning Classification of the Western Section of 108 Flower Avenue East, Parcel Number 11-12-127.000 from Residence B to Neighborhood Business
- Proposed Local Law No. 1 of 2022 - A Local Law Overriding the Tax Levy Limit Established by New York General Municipal Law §3-c
- Tabled Resolution Proposing an Open-Door Employee Policy
- Public Hearings for 2022-23 Operating Budgets and 2022-23 through 2026-27 Capital Budget

Complete Reports on file in the office of the City Clerk

Meeting opened with a moment of silence and Mayor Smith asked that it be in remembrance of Richard Gaffney and John O'Donnell, who recently passed away.

Pledge of Allegiance was given.

The reading of the minutes of the regular meeting of April 18, 2022, and work session of April 26, 2022, was dispensed and accepted as written by motion of Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero, seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

COMMUNICATIONS

An email was received from Linda Dittrich, Flower Avenue West, requesting Council vote against the proposed zoning change at the corner of Washington Street and Flower Avenue East due to her concerns about traffic and property values.

Above communication was placed on file in the office of the City Clerk.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Jonathan Phillips, 735 Mill Street, suggested an idea for fixing potholes, which did not use hot patch or cold patch technique. He distributed information to Council Members (not on file in the City Clerk's Office). He also mentioned that a vehicle drove through Public Square from Arsenal Street and continued onto State Street, and it was leaking diesel fuel and fumes. He expressed his concern with a police car being behind it, but the vehicle was not pulled over.

Jason Traynor, 424 Arsenal Street, reported concerns about the activities occurring at 306 Gotham Street. He spoke of the drug issues in the City and his issues with the mask mandate on the bus system.

Mary Ellen Blevins, 719 Washington Street, spoke of her opposition to the proposed zone change for the Stewart's Shop on the corner of Washington Street and Flower Avenue East. She expressed concern with traffic, noise and change in the character of the neighborhood. She also mentioned a meeting that occurred with the representatives of Stewart's and various Council Members and expressed her concerns with the change in thoughts on the SEQRA process after these meetings.

Tony Augliano, 332 Broadway Avenue, spoke of a dispute that he has had with a neighbor that lives around the corner in regard to the 330 Brett Street and how he feels has been harassed by this person. He noted that his situation is similar to a recent situation in which Mr. McWayne purchase a paper street adjacent to him that his building overlapped. He also quoted from various minutes in regard to him purchasing 330 Brett Street and asked why he has not had the first right to purchase it since he is an adjacent property owner.

RESOLUTIONS

Resolution No. 1 - Appointment to the Board of Assessment Review, Lisa M. Carr

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

RESOLVED that the following individual is appointed to the Board of Assessment Review effective immediately to fill the vacant term expiring on September 30, 2025

Lisa M. Carr
146 Willow Street
Watertown, New York 13601

Seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce and carried with all voting yea.

Resolution No. 2 - Appointment to Community Action Planning Council, William Kimball

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

RESOLVED that the following individual is hereby appointed to the Jefferson County Community Action Planning Council to fill the vacant term expiring on December 31, 2023:

William Kimball

253 Thompson Boulevard
Watertown, NY 13601

And,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the following individual is hereby the official designee of Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero, in his appointment to the Jefferson County Community Action Planning Council.

Seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce and carried with all voting yea.

Resolution No. 3 - Reappointment to the Transportation Commission, Suzanne Morrow

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

RESOLVED that the following individual is reappointed to the Transportation Commission for a three-year term, such term expiring on April 1, 2025:

Suzanne Morrow
142 Mechanic Street, Apt 102
Watertown, NY 13601

Seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce and carried with all voting yea.

Resolution No. 4 - Approving the 2020-2022 Tentative Agreement Between the City of Watertown and the Watertown Professional Firefighters' Association

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS the 2016-2020 Employment Contract between the City of Watertown and the Watertown Professional Firefighters' Association expired on June 30, 2020, and

WHEREAS the parties have agreed to a Tentative Agreement which will cover the period of July 1, 2020 thru June 30, 2022,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Watertown that it hereby ratifies the Tentative Agreement between the City of Watertown and the Watertown Professional Firefighter's Association, a copy of which is attached and made a part of this resolution.

Seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce

Prior to the vote on the foregoing resolution, Council Member Ruggiero noted that negotiations had gone much better than on previous occasions and added she liked the fact that the insurance premiums had been increased by .5%.

Council Member Olney commented that he agreed with the Councilwoman and added that this brought the department back up to date in preparation to start the next round of negotiations.

Mayor Smith agreed that the contract had been brought to date and resolved six years of conflict but then offered reasons why he could not support the contract. First, he indicated that the firemen had wanted everything the police department received and had received the same 2.75% but the sticking point had been for a \$3,000 increase to their shoe allowance, when the department already has the

highest shoe allowance in the City. He mentioned that after the election they backed off the request but added that the negotiations always seem one-way and one-sided.

At the call of the chair, a vote was taken on the foregoing resolution and carried with all voting yea except Mayor Jeffrey M. Smith noting nay.

ORDINANCES

Ordinance No. 1 - An Ordinance Authorizing the Issuance of \$785,000 Bonds of the City of Watertown, New York, to Pay the Cost of the Purchase of a New Fire Pumper Truck and Apparatus, in and for Said City

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS, all conditions precedent to the financing of the class of objects or purposes hereinafter described, including compliance with the provisions of the State Environmental Quality Review Act to the extent required, have been performed; and

WHEREAS, it is now desired to authorize the issuance of bonds of said City to finance costs of said class of objects or purposes; NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT ORDAINED, by the Council of the City of Watertown, Jefferson County, New York, as follows:

Section 1. For the specific object or purpose of paying the cost of the purchase of a new fire pumper truck and apparatus for use by the Fire Department, in and for the City of Watertown, Jefferson County, New York, including incidental expenses in connection therewith, there are hereby authorized to be issued \$785,000 bonds of said City pursuant to the provisions of the Local Finance Law.

Section 2. It is hereby determined that the maximum estimated cost of the aforesaid specific object or purpose is \$785,000 and that the plan for the financing thereof is by the issuance of the \$785,000 bonds of said City authorized to be issued pursuant to this bond ordinance.

Section 3. It is hereby determined that the period of probable usefulness of the aforesaid specific object or purpose is twenty years, pursuant to subdivision twenty-seven of paragraph a of Section 11.00 of the Local Finance Law.

Section 4. Subject to the provisions of the Local Finance Law, the power to authorize the issuance of and to sell bond anticipation notes in anticipation of the issuance and sale of the bonds herein authorized, including renewals of such notes, is hereby delegated to the City Comptroller, the chief fiscal officer. Such notes shall be of such terms, form and contents, and shall be sold in such manner, as may be prescribed by said City Comptroller, consistent with the provisions of the Local Finance Law.

Section 5. The faith and credit of said City of Watertown, Jefferson County, New York, are hereby irrevocably pledged for the payment of the principal of and interest on such obligations as the same respectively become due and payable. An annual appropriation shall be made in each year sufficient to pay the principal of and interest on such obligations becoming due and payable in such year.

Section 6. Such bonds shall be in fully registered form and shall be signed in the name of the City of Watertown, Jefferson County, New York, by the manual or facsimile signature of the City Comptroller and a facsimile of its corporate seal shall be imprinted thereon and may be attested by the manual or facsimile signature of the City Clerk.

Section 7. The powers and duties of advertising such bonds for sale, conducting the sale and awarding the bonds, are hereby delegated to the City Comptroller, who shall advertise such bonds for sale, conduct the sale, and award the bonds in such manner as he shall deem best for the interests of the City; provided, however, that in the exercise of these delegated powers, he shall comply fully with the provisions of the Local Finance Law and any order or rule of the State Comptroller applicable to the sale of municipal bonds. The receipt of the City Comptroller shall be a full acquittance to the purchaser of such bonds, who shall not be obliged to see to the application of the purchase money.

Section 8. All other matters, except as provided herein relating to such bonds, including determining whether to issue such bonds having substantially level or declining annual debt service and all matters related thereto, prescribing whether manual or facsimile signatures shall appear on said bonds, prescribing the method for the recording of ownership of said bonds, appointing the fiscal agent or agents for said bonds, providing for the printing and delivery of said bonds (and if said bonds are to be executed in the name of the City by the facsimile signature of the City Comptroller, providing for the manual countersignature of a fiscal agent or of a designated official of the City), the date, denominations, maturities and interest payment dates, place or places of payment, and also including the consolidation with other issues, shall be determined by the City Comptroller. It is hereby determined that it is to the financial advantage of the City not to impose and collect from registered owners of such bonds any charges for mailing, shipping and insuring bonds transferred or exchanged by the fiscal agent, and, accordingly, pursuant to paragraph c of Section 70.00 of the Local Finance Law, no such charges shall be so collected by the fiscal agent. Such bonds shall contain substantially the recital of validity clause provided for in section 52.00 of the Local Finance Law and shall otherwise be in such form and contain such recitals in addition to those required by section 52.00 of the Local Finance Law, as the City Comptroller shall determine.

Section 9. This ordinance shall constitute a statement of official intent for purposes of Treasury Regulations Section 1.150-2. Other than as specified in this ordinance, no monies are, or are reasonably expected to be, reserved, allocated on a long-term basis, or otherwise set aside with respect to the permanent funding of the object or purpose described herein.

- Section 10. The validity of such bonds and bond anticipation notes may be contested only if:
- 1) Such obligations are authorized for an object or purpose for which said City is not authorized to expend money, or
 - 2) The provisions of law which should be complied with at the date of publication of this ordinance are not substantially complied with, and an action, suit or proceeding contesting such validity is commenced within twenty days after the date of such publication, or
 - 3) Such obligations are authorized in violation of the provisions of the Constitution.

Section 11. This ordinance, which takes effect immediately, shall be published in full in the Watertown Daily Times, the official newspaper, together with a notice of the City Clerk in substantially the form provided in Section 81.00 of the Local Finance Law.

Seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce

Motion for unanimous consent moved by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero, seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

Council Member Ruggiero asked if the City would have funds in the fund balance to pay for this rather than bond for it.

City Comptroller James Mills offered his recommendation that Council adopt this bond ordinance because he is not borrowing the money immediately and a decision can be made once the City's financial situation is known after the budget process is completed. He explained the bonding process and schedule, noting that he combines the bonds approved through the year and does the borrowing all at once.

Mayor Smith asked for clarification on which fire apparatus this bond was for and then noted that he had asked for this vehicle to be moved up in the budget last year because the bond rates were low. He asked what the current bond rate is.

Mr. Mills stated that he is seeing between 2.5% and 2.75%.

At the call of the chair, a vote was taken on the foregoing ordinance and carried with all voting yea.

Ordinance No. 2 - Changing the Approved Zoning Classification of the Western Section of 108 Flower Avenue East, Parcel Number 11-12-127.000 from Residence B to Neighborhood Business

Introduced by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce

WHEREAS Stewart's Shops Corporation has made an application by petition filed with the City Clerk, pursuant to Section 83 of the New York General City Law to change the approved zoning classification of the western section of 108 Flower Avenue East, Parcel Number 11-12-127.000, from Residence B to Neighborhood Business, and

WHEREAS the Planning Board of the City of Watertown considered a previous version of this zone change request that sought to rezone the entire parcel at its October 5, 2021 meeting and adopted a motion recommending that City Council approve the originally submitted zone change request, and

WHEREAS a public hearing was held on the proposed zone change on March 21, 2022, after due public notice, and

WHEREAS the applicant subsequently revised the zone change request to include only a portion of Parcel Number 11-12-127.000, as defined by the metes and bounds description identified below, and

WHEREAS the City Council has made a declaration of Negative Findings of the impacts of the proposed zone change according to the requirements of SEQRA, and

WHEREAS the City Council deems it in the best interest of the citizens of the City of Watertown to approve the requested zone change,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT ORDAINED that the approved zoning classification of the western section of 108 Flower Avenue East, Parcel Number 11-12-127.000, commencing at a point located at the intersection formed by the easterly line of Washington Street with the southerly line of East Flower Street; thence from said point of commencement and along said East Flower Street, South 87°12'09" East, 97.88 feet to the point of beginning; thence from said point of beginning and along said southerly line of East Flower Street, South 87°12'09" East, 17.67 feet to a point; thence through along the division line between Tax Map Parcel 11-12-127, South 18°42'36" East, 88.19 feet to a point; thence along the division line between Tax Map Parcel 11-12-127 & Tax Map Parcel 11-12-126, the following two courses: 1) North 87°12'09" West, 50.00 feet to a point and 2) North 02°47'51" East, 82.05 feet to the point or place of beginning, shall be changed from Residence B to Neighborhood Business, and

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED that the Zoning Map of the City of Watertown shall be amended to reflect the zone change, and

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED this amendment to the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Watertown shall take effect as soon as it is published once in the official newspaper of the City of Watertown, or otherwise printed as the City Manager directs.

Seconded by Council Member Patrick J. Hickey

Motion for unanimous consent moved by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce, seconded by Council Member Patrick J. Hickey and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

Council Member Ruggiero began discussion by addressing the Privilege of the Floor suggestion that there had been secret meetings held with Stewart's. She stated that she and other Council members had met with Stewart's to see their proposed changes to the design. She noted there was nothing secret as it was held inside a Stewart's and a lot of people were coming and going throughout. She then provided a lengthy explanation of her thought processes in weighing the pros and cons in order to make her decision. She noted she had spoken with many people and there were about five times as many people against the plan than were for the plan and observed that it appeared the people who most supported the plan were the ones who lived farthest away from the location. She commented that it is her belief that she was elected to Council to serve the interests of the people of Watertown and for that reason she could not support it.

Council Member Pierce stated that this had been a very difficult decision for her as she had family who lived in the affected area on Flower Avenue East. She noted that not everyone would be happy with any decision made by Council but indicated it was her experience that more people supported the plan than opposed it. She advised the current appearance of the vacant lot where the proposed Stewart's would go lacked character and was not a good overall look for the City. She pointed out that compared to other gas stations, Stewart's worked hard to maintain their buildings and provide attractive landscaping. She also noted that Stewart's had made all the modifications requested of them and she felt it was Council's obligation to work with them. She stated that allowing a Stewart's in that location was better than leaving it an empty lot.

Council Member Hickey agreed that Stewart's had been very flexible and had made many changes to lessen the impact on the neighborhood.

Council Member Olney noted he used the “Ben Franklin” approach to list all the pros and cons. He also indicated that the majority of people he talked to supported the plan, adding that he is pro-growth and pro-development. He also pointed out on the provided map (on file in the City Clerk’s office) that the lot where Stewart’s wishes to locate does not extend as far back into the block as the adjacent properties. Regarding concerns about increased traffic, he agreed that it would increase traffic but that the traffic would be from people in the neighborhood going to take advantage of the new Stewart’s Shop.

Mayor Smith advised that he had not been invited to any meetings with Stewart’s. He noted his primary concerns were with safety, mentioning a recent gas spill in Evans Mills and with what he feels would be a fundamental change to the character of Washington Street. He explained that currently there are no retail establishments on Washington Street until Thompson Boulevard and this resolution introduces the potential for more retail to locate in the area. He advised that in his time on Council and as Mayor zoning is the most difficult issue to address because no matter what is decided, someone is unhappy.

At the call of the chair, a vote was taken on the foregoing ordinance and carried with all voting yea except Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero and Mayor Jeffrey M. Smith voting nay.

LOCAL LAW

Proposed Local Law No. 1 of 2022 - A Local Law Overriding the Tax Levy Limit Established by New York General Municipal Law §3-c

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

A local law to override the tax levy limits established by New York General Municipal Law §3-c.

WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of Watertown desires to override the limit on the amount of real property taxes that may be levied by the City of Watertown pursuant to General Municipal Law §3-c, and to allow the City of Watertown to adopt a budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2022 and ending June 30, 2023 that requires a real property tax levy in excess of the “tax levy limit” as defined by General Municipal Law §3-c; and

WHEREAS, such override is authorized by the provisions of subdivision 5 of General Municipal Law §3-c, which expressly authorizes the City Council to override the tax limit by adoption of a local law approved by a vote of at least sixty percent (60%) of the City Council.

WHEREAS a public hearing on this was held on May 16, 2022, at 7:15 p.m. in the City Council Chambers;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT ENACTED by the City Council of the City of Watertown, New York, as follows:

Tax Levy Limit Override: The City Council of the City of Watertown, County of Jefferson is hereby authorized to adopt a budget for the fiscal year 2022-2023 that requires a real property tax levy in excess of the amount otherwise prescribed in General Municipal Law §3-c.

Severability: If any clause, sentence, paragraph, subdivision, or part of this Local Law or the application thereof to any person, individual, firm or corporation, or circumstance, shall be adjudicated by any court of competent jurisdiction to be invalid or unconstitutional, such order or judgment shall not affect, impair, or invalidate the remainder thereof, but shall be confined in its operation to the clause, sentence, paragraph, subdivision, or part of this Local Law or in its application to the person, individual, firm or corporation or circumstance, directly involved in the controversy in which such judgment or order shall be rendered.

Effective Date: This local law shall take effect immediately upon filing with the Secretary of State.

Seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce

Motion was made by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero to schedule a Public Hearing on the foregoing local law for Monday, May 16, 2022 at 7:15 p.m. Motion was seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

OLD BUSINESS

Resolution Proposing an Open-Door Employee Policy. *(Introduced on April 18, 2022; tabled; appears in its entirety in the 2022 Minutes Book on page 19-20 of the 4/18/2022 minutes).*

Motion was made by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero to remove the foregoing resolution from the table. Motion was seconded by Council Member Clifford G. Olney and carried with all voting yea.

Mayor Smith indicated that all of Council had been informed of Attorney Slye's opinion on this Resolution but asked him to give Council and the public a brief summary.

Attorney Slye explained that the City Charter gave a certain amount of power to the City Manager for appointments and terminations. He noted the Charter had been in effect for 99 years and had been adopted by Local Law. He stated that in his opinion, this change could not be made by resolution but would have to be changed by Local Law which would, in turn, require a referendum. He noted that this could make for a tight timeline. He explained to get the referendum on the November ballot would require approval by the first week of August and, to get approval, a public hearing would have to be held first. He further explained that this could be done and he would help Council accomplish it, but it could not be done by a resolution.

Council Member Olney stated that this resolution is not designed to take away power from the City Manager but was just to allow an employee to speak to Council without fear. He added that he was not suggesting changing the power structure.

Attorney Slye informed Council Member Olney that, whether or not that was his intent, that, in effect, is what this alteration would do. He compared this to what is called upbraiding in the military, which is going over your supervisor's head. He explained that the City Manager has to be in charge and, if Council does not like the way the Manager is doing his job, Council may fire him.

Council Member Olney stated he had received an alternate legal opinion on this.

Attorney Slye asked to be put in touch with that person.

Council Member Olney added that he had a call in to the Attorney General.

Lengthy debate continued about what the wording of this resolution said versus what it the words actually meant.

Motion was made by Council Member Patrick J. Hickey to table the foregoing resolution. Motion was seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce and carried with all voting in favor thereof except Council Member Clifford G. Olney III and Mayor Jeffrey M. Smith voting nay.

Council Member Ruggiero asked if there was a different way to resolve this issue without this going through the Local Law/Referendum process and offered the possibility of adding something to the employee handbook.

Mayor Smith suggested discussing this under New Business.

STAFF REPORTS

Public Hearings for 2022-23 Operating Budgets and 2022-23 through 2026-27 Capital Budget

Motion was made by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero to schedule a Public Hearing regarding the 2022-23 Operating Budgets and 2022-23 through 2026-27 Capital Budget for Monday, May 16, 2022 at 7:15 p.m. Motion was seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

NEW BUSINESS

Open Door Policy Discussion

Council Member Ruggiero asked if there was a simpler way to handle what this resolution intended. She asked whether or not an employee was allowed to speak to a Council Member.

Mr. Mix stated he did not have a problem with an employee speaking to Council but he felt this resolution set forward a path for an employee to go over his head on a job-related complaint.

Council Member Ruggiero suggested there could be a more positive spin put on this, as it would allow an employee to discuss a potential project or idea for the City with a Council Member and share information.

Mr. Mix noted he had no issue with that as long as he was informed of what was discussed.

Mayor Smith commented that the Council should not be involved in the day-to-day workings of the City.

Council Member Olney cited as an example of his intention for this policy the situation that arose last winter when he wished to speak to DPW about flooding the pavilion. He indicated that the current

policy has him go through Mr. Mix and then Mr. Mix contacts Mr. Keenan and then Mr. Keenan contacts Mr. Monaco and then it has to come all the way back through those steps. He described this as awkward and klutzy chain of command. He noted again that his intention was not to bypass the City Manager.

Attorney Slye noted that the proposed resolution did not mention this type of scenario but was all about an employee coming to Council with issues.

Recent Meetings and Upcoming Events

Council Member Hickey detailed a list of meetings and events he had recently attended including: Human Trafficking webinar and Food Policy Council meeting on April 21; Beaver River and Black River WebEx meeting, Watertown Area Rescue Mission Warming Center meeting and Yvonne Reff's retirement party on April 27; Watertown Local Development Corp, Friends of Thompson Park, Pivot Prevention and Starbuck Neighborhood meeting on April 28; Arbor Day tree planting and Youth Court on April 29, and Tree planting and Dunk the Mayor and Cliff at Thompson Park on April 30.

He then listed some upcoming meetings including:

Cannabis Control Board Virtual Meeting, Zoning Re-Write meeting, and Solar Eclipse meeting on May 5; Little League Opening Ceremony May 7, Public Land Auction May 10, Thompson Park Workday May 14, Alliance for a Better Community meeting May 17, JCC Commencement May 20 and the Armed Forces Day parade May 21.

He also listed upcoming budget sessions for City Council.

Mrs. Whalen's Concerns

Council Member Hickey mentioned that Mrs. Whalen had contacted him regarding her concerns about the traffic light on the corner at Arcade Street and a lack of police presence.

Flags over City Buildings

Council Member Hickey noted the Supreme Court recently ruled that Boston had violated First Amendment rights by not allowing a Christian flag to be flown to commemorate Constitution Day. He added that Boston had approved more than 280 flag raisings and refused only one.

Council Member Olney commented that one of the intentions of the third flagpole in front of City Hall was to raise the City flag.

Mayor Smith responded that there was no official City flag and Mr. Mix confirmed that to be true.

Council Member Olney suggested that raising the different flags was appropriate in this day and age when there was so much diversity and so much conflict.

High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Designation for City

Council Member Hickey presented statistics regarding overdoses and deaths in the City and County and commented that more law enforcement personnel were needed to get this under control.

Youth Court Town Meeting and Social Media Platforms

Council Member Hickey informed Council about the Youth Court meeting held at Watertown High School and listed some of the ideas and concerns the students brought forth.

Council Member Pierce offered her support of hosting more of these meetings to engage more with youth.

Council Member Ruggiero described the meeting as eye-opening and added that, once they became comfortable, the kids had a lot of ideas and there were a lot of hands in the air to express their thoughts.

One concern Council Member Hickey mentioned that arose from the Youth Court Town meeting was that young people are not being informed by social media because the City and Council only use Facebook and young people use other platforms.

Council Member Olney agreed that Facebook is like the AARP of social media and suggested Council attempt Tik Tok.

Mayor Smith concurred that Facebook was not being used by kids.

Alliance for a Better Community Bags

Council Member Hickey distributed goody bags provided by the Alliance and noted that the items are available to anyone by request.

Adopt A Spot

Council Member Olney displayed a packet and offered his support of the program and encouraged involvement.

Council Member Pierce noted that this program was not quite ready yet and that packet has not yet been approved for distribution.

Council Member Olney stated he had already met with developers in the downtown area who want to work on beautifying Public Square.

Black River Gorge

Council Member Olney passed out a flyer to members of Council (not on file in the City Clerk's office) regarding maximizing the Black River as an asset to be developed and noting a future concert to be held called "Rock in the River."

Warming Center

Council Member Olney informed Council that Seth Buchman would like to speak to Council for around 15 minutes regarding the future warming center.

Solar Eclipse Meeting

Following up on Council Member Hickey's mention of the upcoming Solar Eclipse meeting, Council Member Pierce noted the meeting would be held in Council Chambers at 3 p.m. on May 5.

330 Brett Street

Council Member Pierce offered her support for selling the property to an abutting neighbor as long as all the neighbors were in support as well.

Council Member Ruggiero expressed her desire to keep the property in the list for auction as she had heard from another adjacent homeowner who wished to bid on the property.

Mr. Mix clarified there was a difference between adjacent and abutting and commented that he would look into the matter further.

Library Director Suzanne Renzi-Falge

Council Member Pierce welcomed Ms. Renzi-Falge, who was in attendance, and offered congratulations to retired director Yvonne F. Reff.

Council Member Ruggiero added her congratulations to Ms. Renzi-Falge.

Arbor Day

Council Member Ruggiero noted the weather was excellent for the annual tree planting, this year held in front of the library.

Seward Street Reconstruction Neighbors Meeting

Council Member Ruggiero noted she had attended this meeting and felt they had answered a lot of questions for the residents about the upcoming street work.

Dunking Booth

Council Member Ruggiero informed Council that the dunking booth held over the weekend at the Zoo, which featured the opportunity to dunk the Mayor or Council Member Olney, had been a success and raised quite a bit of money for the zoo, leading organizers to suggest doing it again during Brew at the Zoo.

Little League Opening Day

Council Member Ruggiero invited members of Council to opening day May 7 at 10 a.m. at Rand field.

Armed Forces Day Parade

Mayor Smith noted there would be a run from Memorial to Memorial in conjunction with the annual parade and challenged other Councilmen to participate.

Tree Planting/Cleanup in Thompson Park

Mayor Smith offered a shoutout to the tree planters in Thompson Park over the weekend and commended the crews that came from Fort Drum for cleanup. He further noted that there was a larger benefit in that many of the people who participated had no idea the park existed before that day. He stated he could not thank the crews, as well as the staffs of Parks and Recreation and DPW for the work that had been done in the Park.

Motion was made by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero to move into Executive Session to discuss proposed, pending, or current litigation.

Motion was seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

Council moved into Executive Session at 9:07 p.m.

Council reconvened at 9:15 p.m.

The following resolution was offered:

Resolution – To Settle Proceeding to Review Real Property Assessment Challenge at 253 Clinton St, Watertown, NY 13601, Parcel No. 10-08-115.000

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS, certain premises owned by Raymond J. Amyot, in the City of Watertown at 253 Clinton St, Parcel No.: 10-08-115.000 is assessed for the following tax years:

2020 – 2022 Parcel #: 10-08-115.000 \$372,100

And,

WHEREAS, Mr. Amyot, has heretofore instituted in the Supreme Court proceedings to review the assessment for tax year 2020, and

WHEREAS, the parties have agreed that the assessment for the following years shall be reduced and set as:

2022 Parcel #: 10-08-115.000 \$300,000

And,

WHEREAS, Mr. Amyot and the City agree to be bound to the provisions of RPTL §727 limiting the ability to challenge or change future assessments for tax years 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026 or 2027, and

WHEREAS, a compromise and settlement of the aforesaid proceedings upon the above basis is deemed in the best interest of the City,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Watertown, New York that the City attorneys of the City of Watertown be and are hereby authorized, empowered and directed to enter into a formal Stipulation & Order of the aforesaid proceedings with counsel for Mr. Amyot on the following terms and conditions:

1. The total assessment of the subject property shall be set for the following years as follows:
 2022 \$300,000
2. That the above adjustment may result in rebates for taxes paid in excess of the amounts that would have been due based on the adjusted assessments.

3. That an Order of the Supreme Court shall be made and entered settling the aforesaid proceeding to review said assessment without costs to either party as against the other and upon the terms and conditions set forth above, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the City Assessor and all other municipal officers, agents or employees be and they hereby are directed to do such acts and things as may be necessary to give full force and effect to the aforesaid settlement, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, this Resolution shall take effect immediately.

Seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce

Rules waived by Motion of Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero, seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

At the call of the chair, a vote was taken on the foregoing resolution and carried with all voting yea.

A D J O U R N M E N T

At the call of the chair, meeting was duly adjourned at 9:17 p.m. by motion of Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero, seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

Lisa M. Carr

Deputy City Clerk