

**CITY COUNCIL MEETING
CITY OF WATERTOWN
July 6, 2026
7:00 p.m.**

Mayor Sarah V.C. Pierce Presiding

Present: Council Member Shane A. Garrabrant
Council Member Robert O. Kimball
Council Member Douglas E. Osborne, Jr.
Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen
Mayor Sarah V.C. Pierce

Also Present: Erica Anderson, Assistant City Manager
Joseph V. Frateschi, Harrison Beach Murtha, City Attorney

City staff present: Aaron Harvill, Brian MacCue, Amber Fowler, Thomas Compo, Michael Lumbis, Daniel Van Kouwenberg, James Scordo

The City Manager presented the following reports to Council:

- Resolution No. 1 - Accepting Proposal for RFP #2026-07 - Community Forestry Tree Pruning Project – Round 1, Michael Grimm Services Inc.
- Resolution No. 2 - Authorizing the Sale of Surplus Pollution Control Facility (PCF) Equipment
- Resolution No. 3 - Accepting Change Order for Trickling Filter Pump Repair Project – 2025 – Blue Heron Construction Company LLC
- Resolution No. 4 - Authorizing the City to Enroll in GroupGolfer
- Resolution No. 5 - Approving the Official Name of the Watertown Municipal Arena as the Northern Credit Union Community Arena (Pursuant to RFP No. 2026-04)
- Resolution No. 6 - Accepting Donations from Northern New York Community Foundation to Cover Pool Admissions and Amending City Fees and Charges Schedule
- Ordinance No. 1 - Changing the Approved Zoning Classification of 647 Flower Street, Parcel Number 4-19-101.000 from Residential to Industrial
- Tabled Local Law - A Local Law Amending §91-17: Riding on Sidewalks, Adding §91-25: Helmet Requirement for Bicycles with Electronic Assist and Electric Scooters, Adding §91-25.1: Other Requirements for Bicycles with Electric Assist and Electric Scooters, and Amending §91-26: Penalties for Offenses of the Code of the City of Watertown to Regulate the Operation of Bicycles, Bicycles with Electric Assist and Electric Scooters
- Staff Report - Sale of Surplus Hydro-electricity – May 2026
- Staff Report - Sales Tax Revenue – May 2026
- Staff Report - Policy on Employee Notification of Disciplinary Records Request Under the Freedom of Information Law (FOIL)

Meeting opened with a moment of silence.

Pledge of Allegiance was given.

The reading of the minutes of the regular meeting of June 15, 2026 was dispensed and accepted as written by motion of Council Member Robert O. Kimball, seconded by Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

COMMUNICATIONS

An email was received from Cliff Olney, 847 Washington Street, requesting Council pause the adoption of the ebike Policy and expressing his concerns with the proposed law as written.

An email was received from Cliff Olney, 847 Washington Street, requesting a complete legal, engineering and public-safety review of the proposed local law pertaining to ebikes.

An email was received from Patrick Hickey, 394 Pawling Street, on behalf of the residents of Pawling Street, requesting the City address water quality concerns in that area.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Patrick Hickey, 394 Pawling Street, offered his support of Resolution 6, but asked that Council clarify the amount received in donations. He also spoke about the water conditions on Pawling Street and advocated for residents by requesting the City do something about the issues on the street.

Patricia Oatridge, Watertown, addressed Council regarding the local law and particularly her opposition to the helmet requirement. She also complained about the lack of bike lanes throughout the City and mentioned that there is a lack of consideration for bikes by those driving vehicles. She further listed issues such as potholes, manholes and rocks in the City's available bike lanes.

Jonathan Phillips, 735 Mill Street, informed Council of a parking issue he noticed during the Mount Carmel Feast. He suggested City police officers do a better job with parking enforcement. He also cited his frustration with Citibus rules regarding carts.

Ginger Sherill, President of the Watertown Hockey Association, addressed Council regarding concerns about ice time and provided clarification on policies for ice usage. She noted that her organization did not object to the rate increase and were paying the same rate as everyone else. Ms. Sherill indicated that the organization had willingly given up some of its ice time for the Watertown Wolves. She also noted that they were a not-for-profit organization and offered scholarships.

Paul Trimper, Power Play Sports, asked Council to consider a bidding process for ice time, noting that the current policy favors the organizations who have used the ice in previous years, making it difficult for a new organization to get into the discussion. He indicated that his group is driving to Canton to use ice there due to the lack of accessibility to the ice in Watertown. Mr. Trimper stated that his organization also offers scholarships and supplies hockey equipment at no cost to players.

PUBLIC HEARING

At 7:15 p.m. Mayor Pierce asked the Deputy City Clerk to read the notice of Public Hearing concerning A Local Law Amending §91-17: Riding on Sidewalks, Adding §91-25: Helmet Requirement for Bicycles with Electronic Assist and Electric Scooters, Adding §91-25.1: Other Requirements for Bicycles with Electric Assist and Electric Scooters, and Amending §91-26: Penalties for Offenses of the Code of the City of Watertown to Regulate the Operation of Bicycles, Bicycles with Electric Assist and Electric Scooters

Mayor Pierce declared the hearing open at 7:15 p.m.

Robert Schorr, Leray Street, commended Council for proposing this law and suggested that the fines for the first offense be reduced.

Mayor Pierce declared the hearing closed at 7:18 p.m.

R E S O L U T I O N S

Resolution No. 1 - Accepting Proposal for RFP #2026-07 - Community Forestry Tree Pruning Project – Round 1, Michael Grimm Services Inc.

Introduced by Council Member Robert O. Kimball

WHEREAS the City desires to contract with a qualified tree care professional to conduct priority tree pruning throughout the City, and

WHEREAS the Purchasing Department advertised and received one (1) sealed proposal for the Community Forestry Tree Pruning Project – Round 1, and

WHEREAS on June 23, 2026, at 11:00 a.m. the proposal received was publicly opened and read, and

WHEREAS Purchasing Manager, Tina Bartlett-Bearup reviewed the proposal received with the City Forester, Daniel VanKouwenberg, and Superintendent of Public Works, Brian MacCue, and it is their recommendation that the City Council accept the proposal submitted by Michael Grimm Services Inc., and

WHEREAS the pruning project will be fully funded by the Community Forestry grant from the NYS DEC,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby accepts the proposal received from Michael Grimm Services Inc. in the amount of \$80,895.00, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Manager, or their designee is hereby authorized and directed to execute the Agreement on behalf of the City of Watertown

Seconded by Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen

Prior to the vote on the foregoing resolution, Council Member Shoen expressed disappointment that only one bid had been received and suggested, in a situation like this, perhaps the City could reach out a second time.

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

Resolution No. 2 - Authorizing the Sale of Surplus Pollution Control Facility (PCF) Equipment

Introduced by Council Member Robert O. Kimball

WHEREAS the City of Watertown's Pollution Control Facility has surplus equipment, the description of which is attached and make part of this resolution, and

WHEREAS the surplus equipment may have some value best determined by an online auction,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown, New York, hereby authorizes the sale, by online auction of the surplus equipment as described in the attached listing, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that final acceptance of such bids shall constitute acceptance of the same by the City Manager or their designee.

Seconded by Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen

Prior to the vote on the foregoing resolution, Council Member Kimball asked for the value of the pump that is to be sold.

Water Superintendent Aaron Harvill replied that the pump is worth \$50,000.

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

Resolution No. 3 - Accepting Change Order for Trickling Filter Pump Repair Project – 2025 – Blue Heron Construction Company LLC

Introduced by Council Member Robert O. Kimball

WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of Watertown included in the 2025-26 Adopted Budget an operating expense for the Trickling Filter Pump Repair Project in order to repair two Trickling Filter Recirculation Pumps, and

WHEREAS, Blue Heron Construction Company, LLC was awarded a contract in the amount of \$97,000.00 for the 2025 Trickling Filter Pump Repair Project, and

WHEREAS, during the repair of Trickling Filter Recirculation Pump No. 4, it was determined that the bowl assembly was heavily worn and beyond repair,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby authorizes a change order with Blue Heron Construction Company, LLC in the amount of \$9,775.00 for the replacement of the bowl assembly on Trickling Filter Recirculation Pump No. 4, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Manager, or their designee is hereby authorized and directed to execute the attached agreement on behalf of the City of Watertown.

Seconded by Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen

Prior to the vote on the foregoing resolution, Council Member Garrabrant inquired whether this type of repair had been required in the past and whether this expense was predictable.

Superintendent Harvill informed Council that this occurs occasionally and that a piece of equipment can only be serviced so many times before repair is no longer an option.

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

Resolution No. 4 - Authorizing the City to Enroll in GroupGolfer

Introduced by Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen

WHEREAS at the request of Councilman Garrabrant, City Staff explored various daily-deal golf programs aimed at promoting the Thompson Park Golf Course, and

WHEREAS GroupGolfer operates as a short-term promotional platform that generates exposure for golf courses while providing upfront revenue through the sale of prepaid rounds, and

WHEREAS Participating courses are featured as a showcase promotion for approximately 48 to 72 hours. During this period, golfers may purchase rounds at a discounted rate, and

WHEREAS the Thompson Park Golf Course will provide GroupGolfer with daily tee times dedicated solely for the purpose of this program, and

WHEREAS the Thompson Park Golf Course will receive 75% of the revenue generated from GroupGolfer,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Manager and City Staff are hereby authorized to enroll with GroupGolfer.

Seconded by Council Member Robert O. Kimball

Prior to the vote on the foregoing resolution, Council Member Garrabrant acknowledged that this program is not a risk-free venture and expressed his hope that it would be worth it for the course exposure. Noting that he wished it could have been implemented earlier in the season, he asked when the course would be able to start using it.

Parks and Recreation Program Manager James Scordo stated that they could begin using it right away.

Mayor Pierce indicated that although she does not know much about it, she hoped the program would draw interest to the golf course.

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

Resolution No. 5 - Approving the Official Name of the Watertown Municipal Arena as the Northern Credit Union Community Arena (Pursuant to RFP No. 2026-04)

Introduced by Council Member Robert O. Kimball

WHEREAS, the City of Watertown issued Request for Proposals (RFP No. 2026-04) seeking proposals for the naming rights of the Watertown Municipal Arena, and

WHEREAS, pursuant to the RFP, the City Council awarded the naming rights partnership to Northern Credit Union, and

WHEREAS, the RFP further provides that the proposed name of the arena shall be subject to approval by the City Council, and

WHEREAS, Northern Credit Union has proposed that the facility be named Northern Credit Union Community Arena, and

WHEREAS, the City Council has reviewed the proposed name of Northern Credit Union Community Arena and finds it to be appropriate,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby approves the official name of the City's arena as Northern Credit Union Community Arena, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Manager, or his designee, is hereby authorized to take all actions necessary to implement the approved name in accordance with the naming rights partnership, including execution of any documents necessary to effectuate this approval.

Seconded by Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen

Prior to the vote on the foregoing resolution, Council Member Kimball commented that the resolution does not indicate when the contract expires.

City Attorney Joseph Frateschi indicated that this is a five-year contract.

Mayor Pierce thanked Northern Credit Union for their sponsorship and for their enthusiasm for working with the City.

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

Resolution No. 6 - Accepting Donations from Northern New York Community Foundation to Cover Pool Admissions and Amending City Fees and Charges Schedule

Introduced by Council Member Robert O. Kimball

WHEREAS on May 21, 2026 the City Council passed a resolution adopting the Budget for Fiscal Year 2026-27, of which \$61,715,140 was appropriated for the General Fund which was funded in part with estimated pool fee revenue of \$50,000, and

WHEREAS the Northern New York Community Foundation has been accepting donations to cover the pool admission fees,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Watertown that it officially accepts the donations from the Northern New York Community Foundation for pool fees, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Fees and Charges Schedule attached and made a part of this Resolution for FY 2026-27 is amended to eliminate all pool-related fees for the remainder of the 2026 season.

Seconded by Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen

Prior to the vote on the foregoing resolution, Council Member Osborne thanked Northern New York Community Foundation for putting this together and thanked the donors for their generosity.

Mayor Pierce added her thanks to everyone involved in fundraising.

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

ORDINANCES

Ordinance No. 1 - Changing the Approved Zoning Classification of 647 Flower Street, Parcel Number 4-19-101.000 from Residential to Industrial

Introduced by Council Member Robert O. Kimball

WHEREAS Scott Phelps General Contracting, LLC 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 647 Flower Street, Parcel Number 4-19-101.000 from Residential to Industrial, and

WHEREAS the Planning Commission of the City of Watertown considered the zone change request at its June 9, 2026 meeting and adopted a motion recommending that City Council approve the zone change, and

WHEREAS a public hearing was held on the proposed zone change on July 20, 2026, after due public notice, 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 647 Flower Street, Parcel Number 4-19-101.000 shall be changed from Residential to Industrial, 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 Benjamin P. Shoen and carried with all voting yea.

Motion was made by Council Member Robert O. Kimball to schedule a Public Hearing on the foregoing ordinance for Monday, July 20 at 7:15 p.m. Motion was seconded by Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

OLD BUSINESS

The Local Law Amending §91-17: Riding on Sidewalks, Adding §91-25: Helmet Requirement for Bicycles with Electronic Assist and Electric Scooters, Adding §91-25.1: Other Requirements for Bicycles with Electric Assist and Electric Scooters, and Amending §91-26: Penalties for Offenses of the Code of the City of Watertown to Regulate the Operation of Bicycles, Bicycles with Electric Assist and Electric Scooters. (Introduced on June 15, 2026; public hearing held this evening; appears in its entirety in the 2026 Minutes Book on pages 12-14 of the 6/15/2026 minutes).

Prior to the vote on the foregoing Local Law, Council Member Shoen compared ebikes to motorcycles, noting there has been a law on the books for a long time that motorcyclists must wear helmets. He stated that riders should want more safety and commented that no one is going to be harmed by wearing a helmet.

Council Member Kimball indicated that he has ridden a bike in the City of Watertown and mentioned the need for safety equipment, such as rear-view mirrors. He noted that it would be great to have bike lanes on all City streets, but there is an expense involved in widening roads to accommodate them and added that the City installs them where they can. He stated that a helmet is a basic safety requirement, which reduces the risk of death and compared wearing one to wearing a seatbelt in a car.

Council Member Osborne commented that wearing a helmet is just common sense. He clarified that there are already laws covering bicycle usage and that this Local Law is just expanding the rules to address ebikes and escooters. Council Member Osborne also noted his belief that the police would use a level of discretion in enforcing these laws.

Council Member Garrabrant indicated his agreement with members of Council and noted that the law is not meant to be revenue-chasing by fining riders and is not targeting those who are safe users of ebikes. He said the media has misrepresented the law regarding children riding on sidewalks. He clarified that this was meant to be less restrictive than the current law, recognizing that parents would not want their young children riding bicycles in the streets.

Mayor Pierce mentioned that she had received many comments from constituents about the recklessness of ebike riders and stated the importance to crack down on bad behavior. She thanked Samaritan Medical Center for partnering with the City on this initiative. She encouraged drivers and ebike riders to share the road.

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

STAFF REPORTS

Sale of Surplus Hydro-electricity and Sales Tax Revenue – May 2026

Reports were available for Council to review.

Policy on Employee Notification of Disciplinary Records Request Under the Freedom of Information Law (FOIL)

A report was available for Council to review.

NEW BUSINESS

Water Main Break

Council Member Garrabrant informed Council that there was a water main break on Harris Drive near his home and commended staff for their quick response.

Summer Recreation Programs

Council Member Garrabrant indicated that several City summer programs had begun and specifically promoted the swim lessons at Thompson Park, which are inexpensive and offer nearly one-on-one instruction.

Refuse Initiative

Council Member Garrabrant requested staff feedback on the program and asked to discuss implementing changes by August.

250th Birthday of the USA on Fourth of July

Council Member Kimball expressed his wish that everyone had a Fourth of July holiday and noted that 250 years of democracy was a pretty good record.

JB Wise Demolition

Council Member Kimball informed Council that he had driven by the JB Wise site, and the pile of rubble was now quite small and appeared ready for debris removal. He noted he had heard several suggestions for the use of that site including green space and a permanent stage.

Pawling Street Water

Council Member Kimball indicated that he was putting Pawling Street on his to-do list and hoped to attend to their issues soon.

Council Member Osborne agreed that matter should be addressed and requested more information.

Mullin Street Parking

Council Member Osborne informed Council that a resident from Mullin Street had complained about the parking situation and about a homeless person living in a van on the street. He commented that recent curbing on that road may help with the parking situation but asked that law enforcement be aware of the potential homeless person.

Ice Time at the Arena

Council Member Osborne asked for more information on the process of distributing ice time.

Mr. Scordo said that there are several groups who have historically used the arena's ice and they include the Watertown Hockey Association, Figure Skating Association, JCC and Power Play Sports. He noted that when extra ice time becomes available, all the groups are informed but frequently Figure Skating picks up those extra hours.

Council Member Osborne indicated that the process does not seem to be fair.

Mr. Scordo advised that there is a finite amount of available time and there must be time to prepare and repair the ice throughout the day.

Council Member Osborne noted that he was seeking a more equitable distribution process and suggested perhaps there could be a bidding process which may result in the City getting a fair market rate.

Mr. Scordo indicated that nothing had been set in stone for the upcoming year's schedule.

Summer Events

Council Member Osborne commented that the Mount Carmel Feast had been well attended but he was disappointed that the Thompson Park fireworks had been cancelled.

In response to his question about whether they had been rescheduled, Assistant City Manager Erica Anderson said they had not.

Ice Time at the Arena (continued)

In response to Council Member Shoen's question of how many hours of ice time were allotted to the Watertown Wolves, Mr. Scordo indicated the organization uses 15 hours of ice time per week.

Council Member Shoen suggested demand-based pricing, noting that the City has a commodity that people want, and should capitalize on this, perhaps with a different pricing structure. Referring to Mr. Trimper's comments during privilege of the floor about driving to Canton for ice time, Council Member Shoen suggested contacting other arenas to determine how they allot ice time.

Pawling Street Water (continued)

Mentioning that he grew up in the area, Council Member Shoen stated that he was very familiar with water concerns on Pawling Street. He suggested that City staff make this a priority and do the right thing for residents there.

Naming Rights for Arena

Council Member Shoen commented that it was nice to see so much interest in the naming rights and indicated this showed the value of our facility.

North Bathroom Facility

Council Member Shoen informed Council that he has been trying for two months to donate his time, labor and materials to repair the bathroom facility at the North Elementary fields. He expressed his frustration with how slow government works.

Mayor Pierce asked staff to get an answer for Council Member Shoen.

Pawling Street Water (continued)

Mayor Pierce asked for a summary from staff of the issues on Pawling Street and what has been done to date. She requested a memo be sent to Council.

City Engineer Thomas Compo addressed Council saying that staff could look into the issues there but noted there were no funds in this year's budget to address the concerns. He further noted that the Department of Health would have to be consulted for approval. He said he would draft a memo.

Marble Fence at Library

Mayor Pierce asked if the marble fencing in front of Flower Memorial Library could be cleaned as it was looking very dingy.

Summer Recreation Programs (continued)

Mayor Pierce noted that in addition to swimming lessons, the City's playground program started today at North Hamilton playground and would be held Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. She suggested parents take advantage of this program.

Motion was made by Council Member Robert O. Kimball to move into Executive Session to discuss the proposed sale or lease of real property when publicity would affect the value thereof and proposed, pending, or current litigation.

Motion was seconded by Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

Council moved into Executive Session at 8:04 p.m.

Council reconvened at 8:34 p.m.

A D J O U R N M E N T

At the call of the chair, meeting was duly adjourned at 8:34 p.m. by motion of Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen seconded by Council Member Robert O. Kimball and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

Lisa M. Carr

Deputy City Clerk