

**CITY COUNCIL MEETING
CITY OF WATERTOWN
September 8, 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: Eric F. Wagenaar, City Manager
Joseph V. Frateschi, Harrison Beach Murtha, City Attorney

City staff present: James Mills, Erica Anderson, Thomas Compo, Michael Lumbis, Aaron Harvill, Karen Overton, Dana Aikins

The City Manager presented the following reports to Council:

- Resolution No. 1 - Appointment to the Board of Assessment Review, Laurel Zarnosky
- Resolution No. 2 - Authorizing the Sale of Surplus DPW Vehicles and Equipment
- Resolution No. 3 - Readopting Fiscal Year 2025-26 through 2029-30 Capital Fund Budget – Richards Drive Reconstruction
- Resolution No. 4 - Certification of Fiscal Year 2022-23 and Fiscal Year 2023-24 Delinquent Property Taxes for Foreclosure
- Resolution No. 5 - Finding that the Huntington Street Water Main Reconstruction Project Will Not Have a Significant Impact On the Environment
- Resolution No. 6 - Accepting Bid #2026-13 for Huntington Street Watermain Replacement - Highlander Construction Inc.
- Resolution No. 7 - Approving the Amendment Proposal for Construction Administration and Inspection Services for the Huntington Street Water Main Replacement Project, GYMO Engineering
- Ordinance No. 1 - An Ordinance Amending the Ordinance Dated June 16, 2025, Authorizing the Issuance of \$3,250,000 Bonds of the City of Watertown, Jefferson County, New York, to Pay the Cost of the Reconstruction of the Huntington Street Water Main, in and for Said City, to Increase the Estimated Maximum Cost Thereof and the Amount of Bonds Authorized to \$8,925,000 (an Increase of \$5,675,000).
- Ordinance No. 2 - Amending the Code of the City of Watertown, Chapter 293: Vehicles and Traffic
- Proposed Local Law of 2026 - A Local Law Amending the Code of the City of Watertown, Chapter 301: Water
- Sale of Surplus Hydro-electricity – July 2026
- Sales Tax Revenue – July 2026
- Refuse Update – Customers & Financials
- Unsafe Building Demolition – 223 JB Wise Place
- Amending the City of Watertown’s 2024 Community Development Block Grant Annual Action Plan

Meeting opened with a moment of silence.

Pledge of Allegiance was given.

The reading of the minutes of the regular meeting of August 17, 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, expressing his concerns and questions relating to Resolution No. 4 and the adopted process for handling delinquent property taxes for foreclosure.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Frank Battista, Palmer Street, spoke to Council about safety concerns with potholes on Palmer Street, especially because he has seen people from the apartment building on the street riding eBikes. He indicated that he has reported this to DPW several times, but nothing has been done.

Jonathan Phillips, 735 Mill Street, stated he does not feel that the crime rate for the City is decreasing and he expressed his concerns with shopping carts around the City, vandalism to the Riverwalk, safety and handicap accessibility issues on the City buses and sidewalks.

PUBLIC HEARING

At 7:15 p.m. Mayor Pierce asked the City Clerk to read the notice of Public Hearing concerning Proposed Law Local - A Local Law Amending the Code of the City of Watertown, Chapter 301: Water

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

No one spoke.

Mayor Pierce declared the hearing closed at 7:16 p.m.

RESOLUTIONS

Resolution No. 1 - Appointment to the Board of Assessment Review, Laurel Zarnosky

Introduced by Council Member Robert O. Kimball

BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown, New York, hereby appoints the following individual to the Board of Assessment Review, to a five-year term, which term expires September 30, 2031.

Laurel Zarnosky
447 Flower Ave East

Watertown, NY 13601

Seconded by Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen and carried with all voting yea.

Resolution No. 2 - Authorizing the Sale of Surplus DPW Vehicles and Equipment

Introduced by Council Member Robert O. Kimball

WHEREAS the City of Watertown's Public Works Department has surplus vehicles and equipment, the description of which is attached and make part of this resolution, and

WHEREAS the surplus vehicles and 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 vehicles and 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

Council Member Garrabrant asked if the 2019 Ford Explorer, which is on the list, has been cycled out of the fleet.

City Manager Wagenaar confirmed that it had.

Council Member Shoen discussed the Trafcon sign boards on the list and indicated that he researched the company's website regarding the software being obsolete. He said that it is not completely obsolete and there is a solution that could be used. Noting that four new boards were requested at budget time but only two were approved, he wondered if these should be kept in use.

Mr. Wagenaar said he will have staff investigate the software solution.

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

Resolution No. 3 - Readopting Fiscal Year 2025-26 through 2029-30 Capital Fund Budget – Richards Drive Reconstruction

Introduced by Council Member Robert O. Kimball

WHEREAS on June 2, 2025 the City Council adopted the Fiscal Years 2025-26 through 2029-30 Capital Budget, and

WHEREAS included in the Adopted Budget was the project to replace the Richards Drive sanitary sewer at an estimated cost of \$1,200,000, and

WHEREAS staff is recommending expanding the scope of the project to also include the reconstruction of the street, sidewalks, storm sewer, and water main at a revised estimated total project

cost of \$2,800,000,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby re-adopts the Fiscal Year 2025-26 through 2029-30 Capital Budget to add the expanded Richards Drive reconstruction project at a revised estimated total project cost of \$2,800,000.

Seconded by Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen

Council Member Osborne asked why the water main, storm sewer and complete street improvements were not included in the initial estimate.

Mr. Wagenaar explained that the initial project was much simpler, but upon investigation of the project and continued flooding issues, more concerns were discovered and the project grew into a full reconstruction. He responded to Council Member Osborne's inquiry about whether the project costs will be higher since the work will be done next fall, and he noted that this is an estimate based on design.

City Attorney Joesph Frateschi explained, at the request of Council Member Osborne, why his residing on Richards Drive would not create a conflict preventing him from voting.

Council Member Shoen questioned whether adding new curbing to the street was necessary since curbs do not currently exist and adding them would cause more stormwater to enter the catch basins.

Mr. Wagenaar said he would have staff look at this further, but some of the concerns were that stormwater pools on resident's lawns. He also responded to questions from Council Member Garrabrant regarding the debt service.

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

Resolution No. 4 - Certification of Fiscal Year 2022-23 and Fiscal Year 2023-24 Delinquent Property Taxes for Foreclosure

Introduced by Council Member Robert O. Kimball

WHEREAS on May 4, 2026, City Council adopted the In Rem Tax Foreclosure Act, and

WHEREAS Section 159 of the In Rem Tax Foreclosure Act states that the City Comptroller annually shall present to the City Council a list of properties whose delinquent Tax Liens and Acquired Tax Liens have vested in the City and any portion of which are in arrears the requisite period of time stated in Section 155, and

WHEREAS Section 159 of the In Rem Tax Foreclosure Act states the City Council shall review and certify the list for foreclosure,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby has reviewed and certified the attached list, which is made part of this resolution, of delinquent Tax Liens and Acquired Tax Liens that have vested in the City and any portion of which are in arrears the requisite period of time stated in Section 155, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that City Council directs the City Comptroller to foreclose the delinquent Tax Liens and Acquired Tax Liens on such list.

Seconded by Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen

Council Member Osborne stated he is concerned about the number of properties on the list and wondered if any property owners had contacted the City for payment arrangements.

City Comptroller James Mills explained that many people call to inquire about the amount that is owed on the property and about the payment deadline, but not regarding payment arrangements. He stated that taxes must be paid in full all at once, which is the same policy as it was before the foreclosure process was adopted. He further explained the reason why the City was required to change the process to a foreclosure process. He clarified, at the request of Council Member Shoen, the timeline of when property owners would be put on notice to when the property would be foreclosed upon.

Council Member Shoen noted that he has not received any correspondence from anyone that is on this list. He explained the payment plan that is used by the County and made a comparison with the City's policy if a payment plan was implemented. He noted that the property owner would have to have paid the current taxes and be able to make a significant downpayment on the delinquent taxes, or the payment plan would not be offered.

Council Member Kimball said there are probably people on the list who have genuine hardships, but there are a number of people on the list who have multiple properties or businesses and are just not paying their taxes because there was not a program in place to do anything about it while the City was formulating the new foreclosure process. He stressed there is now a program in place, so it is time for the City to try and collect the money that is owed.

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

Resolution No. 5 - Finding that the Huntington Street Water Main Reconstruction Project Will Not Have a Significant Impact On the Environment

Introduced by Council Member Robert O. Kimball

WHEREAS the City of Watertown (the "City") is proposing to undertake the Huntington Street Water Main Project, which consists of excavating and replacing the existing water main underneath Huntington Street, and

WHEREAS the City Council of the City of Watertown has reviewed Part I of the Full Environmental Assessment Form (EAF) completed by GYMO, Architecture, Engineering, & Land Surveying, D.P.C., and

WHEREAS the Project is a Type I Action, pursuant to the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) 6 NYCRR Part 617, and that a coordinated review of the Project has been undertaken, and

WHEREAS the City of Watertown has circulated the Project to all Involved Agencies for 30 days indicating their desire to be Lead Agency in accordance with 6 NYCRR Part 617.6, and no objection was received,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that receiving no objections, the City Council declares itself Lead Agency, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Watertown that:

1. Based upon its examination of the Full Environmental Assessment Form and comparing the proposed action with the criteria set forth in 6 NYCRR Part 617, no significant adverse impact to the environment is known, and the Huntington Street Water Main Replacement Project will not have a significant adverse impact on the environment.
2. The Mayor of the City of Watertown is authorized and directed to execute Part 3 of the Environmental Assessment Form to the effect that the City Council is issuing a Negative Declaration under SEQRA.
3. This Resolution shall take effect immediately.

Seconded by Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen

Prior to the vote on the foregoing resolution, Council considered Part II of the Full Environmental Assessment Form.

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

Resolution No. 6 - Accepting Bid #2026-13 for Huntington Street Watermain Replacement - Highlander Construction Inc.

Introduced by Council Member Robert O. Kimball

WHEREAS the City desires to contract with a qualified vendor to supply all labor, materials, and equipment to construct new watermain, including curb stops, gate valves, hydrants, bypass and other associated work on Huntington Street per departmental specifications, and

WHEREAS the Purchasing Department advertised and received four (4) sealed bids for the Huntington Street Watermain Replacement, and

WHEREAS on August 25, 2026, at 11:00 a.m. the bids received were publicly opened and read, and

WHEREAS Purchasing Manager, Tina Bartlett-Bearup reviewed the bids received with the Water Superintendent, City Engineer, and, in consultation with GYMO Engineers and it is their recommendation that the City Council accept the lowest responsive responsible bid submitted by Highlander Construction, Inc.,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby

accepts the total base bid received from Highlander Construction, Inc. in the amount of \$2,978,760.00 to include bid alternates in the amount of \$4,947,847.40 for a total award in the amount of \$7,926,607.40, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that acceptance of this bid is contingent upon the passing of the bond ordinance to finance the project, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Manager of the City of Watertown, 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

In response to Council Member Shoen's questions, Mr. Wagenaar confirmed that Highlander Construction had not done a project for the City in the past and he indicated that staff had reviewed their credentials.

City Engineer Thomas Compo explained the reason for the project, stressing that the whole project needed to be done, and noted that a phased approach was the reason for the alternates. He explained that it was originally thought the City could save money by using high density polyethylene pipe (HDPE) for a portion of the project instead of ductile iron pipe (DIP), but when the bids were received, there was not a significant cost saving. He added that staff would also have to be trained in working with HDPE. He provided details of the phases, noting there was never an intent to do two projects in place of the whole project.

Further discussion ensued on the types of materials which could be used for this type of work and Mr. Compo provided detailed specifications of the work to be done throughout the whole pipe, the history of the water breaks on this line and the impact on firewater service.

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

Resolution No. 7 - Approving the Amendment Proposal for Construction Administration and Inspection Services for the Huntington Street Water Main Replacement Project, GYMO Engineering

Introduced by Council Member Robert O. Kimball

WHEREAS at its June 16, 2025, meeting, the City Council accepted the proposal from GYMO Engineering for surveying, design, and bidding services for the Huntington Street Water Main Replacement Project in the amount of \$188,510.00, and

WHEREAS the Huntington Street Water Main Replacement bids were opened on August 25, 2026, and the City desires moving forward with construction, and

WHEREAS the City's Engineering Department requested an amendment to GYMO Engineering's original agreed upon proposal for Construction Administration and Inspection Services, and

WHEREAS on August 27, 2026, GYMO DPC submitted their amendment proposal in the amount of \$449,450.00,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby approves the amendment proposal received from GYMO Engineering for Construction Administration and Inspection Services in the amount of \$449,450.00, bringing the total contract cost to \$637,960.00, which is attached and made part of this resolution, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this resolution is subject to approval of the passing of the bond resolution at this evening's City Council meeting, and

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

Seconded by Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen and carried with all voting yea.

ORDINANCES

Ordinance No. 1 - An Ordinance Amending the Ordinance Dated June 16, 2025, Authorizing the Issuance of \$3,250,000 Bonds of the City of Watertown, Jefferson County, New York, to Pay the Cost of the Reconstruction of the Huntington Street Water Main, in and for Said City, to Increase the Estimated Maximum Cost Thereof and the Amount of Bonds Authorized to \$8,925,000 (an Increase of \$5,675,000).

Introduced by Council Member Robert O. Kimball

WHEREAS, by ordinance dated June 16, 2025, the Council of the City of Watertown, Jefferson County, New York (the "City"), authorized the issuance of \$3,250,000 bonds of said City to pay the cost of the reconstruction of the Huntington Street water main, including renewal of service connections, new valves, new water hydrants, street repaving, sidewalks, curbs, landscaping, related right-of-way improvements, and storm sewer, water main and sanitary sewer work along such streets and connecting streets, in and for the City, and including incidental expenses in connection therewith; and

WHEREAS, the Council now wishes to increase the estimated maximum cost and the amount of bonds authorized for the aforesaid project from \$3,250,000 to \$8,925,000 (an increase of \$5,675,000); and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED, by the Council of the City, as follows:

Section A. The title and Sections 1 and 2 of the ordinance of this Council dated and duly adopted June 16, 2025, authorizing the issuance of \$3,250,000 bonds to pay the cost of the reconstruction of the Huntington Street water main, including renewal of service connections, new valves, new water hydrants, street repaving, sidewalks, curbs, landscaping, related right-of-way improvements, and storm sewer, water main and sanitary sewer work along such streets and connecting streets, including incidental expenses in connection therewith, at an estimated maximum cost of \$8,925,000, in and for the City, are hereby amended, in its entirety to read as follows:

AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE ISSUANCE OF \$8,925,000 BONDS OF THE CITY OF WATERTOWN, JEFFERSON COUNTY, NEW YORK, TO PAY THE COST OF THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE HUNTINGTON STREET WATER MAIN, IN AND FOR SAID CITY.

....

Section 1. For the specific object or purpose of paying the cost of the reconstruction of the Huntington Street water main, including renewal of service connections, new valves, new water hydrants, street repaving, sidewalks, curbs, landscaping, related right-of-way improvements, and storm sewer, water main and sanitary sewer work along such streets and connecting streets, in and for the City, and including incidental expenses in connection therewith, there are hereby authorized to be issued \$8,925,000 bonds of said City pursuant to the provisions of the Local Finance Law.

Section 2. It is hereby determined that the estimated maximum cost of the aforesaid specific object or purpose is \$8,925,000 and that the plan for the financing thereof is by the issuance of the \$8,925,000 bonds of said City authorized to be issued pursuant to this bond ordinance; provided however, that the amount of bonds ultimately to be issued will be reduced by the amount of any State and, or federal aid or any other revenue received by the City from other sources for such specific object or purpose, which monies are hereby appropriated therefor.

Section B. 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 C. Upon this ordinance taking effect, the same shall be published in summary in the Watertown Daily Times, the official newspaper of the City, together with a notice of the City Clerk in substantially the form provided in Section 81.00 of the Local Finance Law.

Section D. This ordinance is effective immediately.

Seconded by Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen

Motion for unanimous consent moved by Council Member Robert O. Kimball, seconded by Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

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

Ordinance No. 2 - Amending the Code of the City of Watertown, Chapter 293: Vehicles and Traffic

Introduced by Council Member Robert O. Kimball

BE IT ORDAINED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby amends the City Municipal Code § 293, Vehicles and Traffic as follows, with **bold** text added and struck-through text eliminated:

§ 310-68. Schedule XX: Winter Parking Restrictions.

In accordance with § 293-30A, no person shall park a vehicle at any time between November 1 and April 30 upon any of the streets or parts thereof described below:

Name of Street	Side	Location
Bridge Street	West	From East Main Street to Moulton Street
Bronson Street	Both	From North Rutland Street to Central Street
Emerson Street	South	From High Street to North Rutland Street
Franklin Street	North	From Academy Street to Thompson Boulevard
Glenn Avenue	Both	Entire Length
Hamilton Street South	East	From State Street to Boyd Street
Hillside Avenue	Both	Entire length
Jefferson Street	Both	Entire length
Maywood Terrace Drive	Both	Entire length
Olive Street	South	From Mechanic Street to High Street
Polk Street	Both	Entire length
St. Mary Street	North	From Burlington Street to Mill Street
Starbuck Avenue	West	East Hoard Street to East Division Street
Woodruff Street	North	Entire length

And,

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

Seconded by Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen

Motion for unanimous consent moved by Council Member Robert O. Kimball, seconded by Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

Mayor Pierce explained for the public's awareness that this ordinance would end on-street parking during the winter months on Glenn Avenue.

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

OLD BUSINESS

Proposed Local Law of 2026 - A Local Law Amending the Code of the City of Watertown, Chapter 301: Water. *(Introduced on August 17, 2026; public hearing held this evening; appears in its entirety in the 2026 Minutes Book on page 17-20 of the 8/17/2026 minutes).*

Council Member Shoen expressed his opposition to the proposal for imposing penalties on late payment for water bills. He noted that currently water bills list two different amounts depending on whether the bill is paid by the 20th of the month, so a late fee is already built into the schedule.

Council Member Osborne agreed with Council Member Shoen and expressed his opposition to imposing additional fees.

Superintendent of Water Aaron Harvill explained the reason for proposing late payment penalties, noting that a \$50 reinstatement fee is charged following a service shutoff, in addition to the late fee. He expressed concerns over staffing limitations and employee safety when conducting shutoffs. He stated that the proposed fees would provide the department with additional leverage to encourage timely payment. He reminded Council that the Water and Sewer Funds are enterprise funds which are supposed to be self-sufficient, and when water bills are paid late, it puts the burden on other rate payers. He added that discretion could be exercised, though, with the late penalties when appropriate.

Mayor Pierce supported allowing discretion while emphasizing that customers should pay for the services they receive.

Council Member Shoen favored developing a targeted solution for delinquent accounts, mentioning late fees and possible interest fees. He said some of this is the cost of doing business.

Mr. Harvill agreed that appropriate checks and balances should be established for addressing unpaid water bills.

Council Member Garrabrant expressed his opposition to additional fees and proposed rewriting the fee schedule.

Council Member Shoen expressed his support in changing the proposed law, while also looking at the materials being allowed for pipes due to recent concerns regarding plastics.

Council Member Osborne agreed with Council Member Shoen regarding targeting delinquent water customers before adding blanket penalties for everybody.

There was discussion of whether the local law should be amended or tabled, as well as the procedural requirements when amending a local law.

Attorney Frateschi indicated that an amendment would require an additional public hearing and advised that the local law could be voted upon as is, even if it results in being defeated.

Mayor Pierce requested additional information for Council's consideration so the proposed local law could be revisited in the future.

At the call of the chair, a vote was taken on the foregoing local law and defeated with all voting nay, except for Council Member Robert O. Kimball and Mayor Sarah V.C. Pierce voting yea.

STAFF REPORTS

Sale of Surplus Hydro-electricity – July 2026

A report was available for review.

Sales Tax Revenue – July 2026

A report was available for review.

Refuse Update – Customers & Financials

A report was available for review.

Unsafe Building Demolition – 223 JB Wise Place

A report was available for review.

Amending the City of Watertown’s 2024 Community Development Block Grant Annual Action Plan

A report was available for review.

Motion was made by Council Member Robert O. Kimball to schedule a Public Hearing to solicit public input on the 2024 Community Development Block Grant Annual Action Plan Amendment for Monday, October 5, 2026 at 7:15 p.m. Motion was seconded by Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

NEW BUSINESS

Response to Staff Report- Refuse Update

Council Member Garrabrant thanked staff for preparing the refuse update and asked about including refuse stickers in the Welcome Packet.

Mr. Wagenaar stated that a resolution would need to be prepared for consideration.

Response to Privilege of the Floor- Mr. Battista’s Comments

Council Member Garrabrant asked whether Palmer Street was included on this year’s list of streets scheduled for work under the CHIPS program.

Mr. Wagenaar stated that he would review the list and report back.

Tenant Evictions

Council Member Garrabrant discussed recent evictions throughout the City and the negative impact of belongings being left on the curb. He encouraged landlords to notify Code Enforcement in advance to help expedite removal and minimize the impact on surrounding neighborhoods.

Blight Clarification

Council Member Garrabrant asked about the Anti-Blight Proposal and recommended that it be addressed in an upcoming work session, noting it would give added leverage to Code Enforcement. He further suggested adding a formal definition of blight to the City Code.

Community Events

Council Member Garrabrant commended the organizers of the Sackets Harbor Marathon for the event’s strong participation, which also benefits the City. He encouraged community members to organize events that attract visitors, foster community spirit, and showcase the City.

Recent Ceremonies and Events

Council Member Kimball highlighted several recent ceremonies and events he attended, such as Getting Ahead In the Workplace which recognized and supported individuals pursuing to further their work placement. He also attended an event at Jefferson Community College, which was visited by the SUNY Chancellor who discussed SUNY Reconnect, a program that provides financial assistance to eligible adults who do not have a college degree. In addition, Council Member Kimball talked about the recent shoe giveaway that was put on by Zoo New York and Samaritan Hospital and the success of the last Block Party for the season.

Zoo New York Leadership

Council Member Kimball thanked Mark Irwin for his efforts while serving as Interim Director, including raising funds, welcoming volunteers, and encouraging community support.

Next Week's Work Session

Council Member Kimball stated that he would be unable to attend the next work session due to a medical procedure.

Response to Privilege of the Floor – Mr. Battista's Comments (continued)

Council Member Osborne noted that Mr. Battista made a good point regarding potholes on Palmer Street being a potential risk for more eBike injuries. He suggested having DPW fill the potholes, which might decrease the City's liability.

Response to Privilege of the Floor – Mr. Phillips' Comments

Council Member Osborne commented that he agreed with Mr. Phillips' comments that it does not seem like crime is going down based on recent reported events. He said he knew that the Police Department is doing the best job they can, but wondered if more surveillance on Public Square could be beneficial by acting as a deterrent to excessive criminal behavior. He noted that he finds it troublesome that there are many vacant buildings on the Square with businesses leaving the area. He commented that Public Square is supposed to be the cultural nexus of the City and he would like to see it reinvigorated.

Council Office Hours

Council Member Osborne noted that with summer winding down, he would be interested in holding Council Office Hours into the Fall at the library, noting the great response this had received in the past.

Mayor Pierce agreed and asked Council to discuss a date that would work for everyone.

Refuse Schedule

Council Member Shoen reminded City residents that the refuse pickup schedule this week will be from Tuesday through Saturday due to the Labor Day holiday. He also noted his appreciation for the refuse update report provided to Council this evening.

Tenant Evictions (continued)

Council Member Shoen referred to Council Member Garrabrant's comments regarding the disposal of a tenant's belongings after an eviction and asked whether the State recommends placing the belongings in the margin.

City Attorney Frateschi informed Council that he has represented landlords and he advises that the landlord store the tenant's belongings for a reasonable amount of time, generally 30 days. He said he does not advise putting all the belongings out to the curb.

Council Member Shoen indicated that he understood the landlord's need to clear the property, but having belongings stacked at the curb, particularly on a long weekend, is not ideal and wondered if there could be a requirement to use a container.

Shopping Carts

Council Member Shoen requested the City draft a Local Law or Ordinance banning shopping carts on City streets, noting previous requests he had made regarding this and his concerns that no progress has been made. He commented that other cities have rules regarding shopping carts on their streets and sidewalks, and he indicated it should be the responsibility of the cart's owners to retrieve the shopping carts. He described a recent incident regarding a theft at Kinney Drugs that was thwarted because the Councilman blocked the thief's stolen shopping cart. He requested Council's immediate support for a law or ordinance to ban the use of shopping carts on City streets and sidewalks.

Mayor Pierce said she would support this and indicated that the previous City Attorney had been looking into it. She noted that if a majority of Council was in agreement, the attorney could pick up where previous legal counsel left off.

Council Member Osborne advised that he would be in support, but requested more information regarding logistics and legality. He said he would like to hear the Police Chief's perspective on the issue as well as other legal considerations from the City's attorney.

Council Member Kimball indicated that he was not yet sure if he could support this. He noted that those using the shopping carts have limited income and will seek other means to transport their belongings. He added that, legally, it would be difficult to prove whether the person using the shopping cart stole it or just found it. Council Member Kimball suggested Council consider the results of this ban on the population who are using the carts to store their belongings.

Council Member Shoen stated that being in possession of a shopping cart, whether it was found or stolen, is possession of stolen goods. He noted that other types of push carts would not be banned, just the shopping carts that are stolen property. He commented that other cities make it an additional crime to remove the label indicating the cart's origin. Council Member Shoen stated the purpose of this measure would be to clean up the City.

Signature Event

Council Member Shoen mentioned that the City's Harvest Festival was upcoming and had been successful in its inaugural year. He expressed his wish for the City of Watertown to have a signature event that would draw people into the City and be profitable, similar to the Tupper Lake Brewski Event which takes in substantial funds with limited overhead. He suggested using Thompson Park for a similar event.

Letter from Library Director Suzie Renzi-Falge

Council Member Shoen mentioned that a letter was received from the Library Director and he commended the Flower Memorial Library for its success and its high number of users. He offered

support for continuing the Council Office Hours there and suggested this might drive other users to the Library.

Business Vacancies Downtown

Mayor Pierce expressed her concern about the number of businesses leaving downtown Watertown and mentioned she had a meeting with the head of the Local Development Corporation to discuss ideas to entice more small businesses to locate downtown. She encouraged Council to offer suggestions and ideas to help them in that endeavor.

9/11 Ceremony and Bravo Italiano Festival

Mayor Pierce informed Council that there would be a 9/11 ceremony at the American Legion on Sterling Street at 10 a.m. Saturday, as well as opening ceremonies at 4:30 p.m. on Friday for the weekend's Bravo Italiano Festival at the Italian American Club on Bellevue Avenue. She advised that Council was invited to attend both events.

Response to Privilege of the Floor – Mr. Battista's Comments (continued)

Mayor Pierce informed Mr. Battista that staff would look into where the City stands in its repairs of Palmer Street and Wealtha Avenue.

Local Law To Amend the Code of the City of Watertown, Chapter 301: Water

Mayor Pierce advised that the defeated Local Law would be revisited and requested staff come up with some other options to present to Council.

Harvest Festival

In response to Mayor Pierce's request for the dates of the City's Harvest Festival, City Manager Wagenaar said it would be held the first weekend in October.

Mayor Pierce noted this was a fantastic event last year and encouraged people to attend as it was going to be a bigger and better event this year.

Motion was made by Council Member Robert O. Kimball to move into Executive Session to discuss the employment history of a particular individual or corporation, or matters leading to the appointment, employment, promotion, demotion, discipline, suspension, dismissal, or removal of a particular person or corporation and to discuss collective bargaining.

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

Council moved into Executive Session at 8:34 p.m.

Council reconvened at 9:12 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

At the call of the chair, meeting was duly adjourned at 9:12 p.m. by motion of Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen, seconded by Council Member Douglas E. Osborne, Jr. and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

Ann M. Saunders
City Clerk

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