

**CITY COUNCIL MEETING
CITY OF WATERTOWN
September 21, 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: Michael Lumbis, James Mills, Erica Anderson

The City Manager presented the following reports to Council:

- Public Hearing - Community Development Block Grant Program Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report for Program Year 2025
- Resolution No. 1 - Authorizing the Sale of Surplus Parks and Recreation Department Equipment
- Resolution No. 2 - Authorizing the Inclusion of One Complimentary City of Watertown Blue Refuse Sticker to New Customer Water Department Mailings
- Resolution No. 3 - Approving the 2026-2029 Tentative Agreement Between the City of Watertown and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (I.B.E.W.) Local Union 1249
- Resolution No. 4 - Authorizing Home Rule Request of the New York State Legislature to Allow the City of Watertown to Lease Land at the Thompson Park Golf Course
- Resolution No. 5 - Approving the Federal Award Agreement for the Program Year 2026 Community Development Block Grant Program
- Resolution No. 6- Authorizing the City of Watertown Parade Fund Through the Northern New York Community Foundation
- Sale of Surplus Hydro-electricity - August 2026
- Sales Tax Revenue - August 2026

Meeting opened with a moment of silence.

Pledge of Allegiance was given.

The reading of the minutes of the regular meeting of September 8, 2026 and work session of September 14, 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 the status of a Request for Proposal (RFP) for marketing which was approved by a resolution on December 15, 2025, authorizing a marketing and tourism budget of \$50,000 be established.

An email was received from Cliff Olney, 847 Washington Street, requesting clarification on the Duffy Fairgrounds field-use policy.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Jonathan Phillips, 735 Mill Street, stated that his comments at the last meeting seemed to upset several people and he advised that surveillance cameras should be viewed by the Police Department and not just by Citibus staff. He also discussed his thoughts that crime is increasing in the City of Watertown, mentioning a stabbing that occurred this morning in his neighborhood, and his concerns with stolen shopping carts appearing throughout the City. Lastly, he mentioned comments posted on Facebook about the Christmas parade not being held this year.

PUBLIC HEARING

At 7:15 p.m. Mayor Pierce asked the Deputy City Clerk to read the notice of Public Hearing concerning the Community Development Block Grant Program Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report for Program Year 2025.

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 - Authorizing the Sale of Surplus Parks and Recreation Department Equipment

Introduced by Council Member Robert O. Kimball

WHEREAS the City of Watertown Parks and Recreation Department has surplus equipment, the description of which is attached and made a part of this resolution, and

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

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Watertown, New York, that it 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 Osborne questioned whether to keep the surplus equipment as a backup.

City Manager Eric F. Wagenaar responded that he had the same question and was informed that it was having maintenance issues. He said that the recommendation was to get rid of it but that he could look into it more.

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 Inclusion of One Complimentary City of Watertown Blue Refuse Sticker to New Customer Water Department Mailings

Introduced by Council Member Robert O. Kimball

WHEREAS, in May 2026, Council Member Shane A. Garrabrant presented the *Clean Watertown Refuse & Recycling Initiative* and directed the proposal to City staff for review, and

WHEREAS, one of the recommendations included in the initiative was to provide new City customers with one complimentary City of Watertown Blue Refuse Sticker as a way to introduce them to the City's refuse collection program and encourage participation, and

WHEREAS, the proposal was referred to the City Attorney for legal review because municipalities are generally prohibited from providing gifts of public funds for private purposes, and

WHEREAS, the City Attorney advised that the proposal could be implemented because the benefit provided to an individual customer would be incidental to the broader public purpose of increasing awareness of and participation in the City's refuse collection program, and

WHEREAS, the City of Watertown provides curbside collection of refuse and recyclables for residents who purchase City of Watertown Blue Refuse Stickers or rent a City refuse tote, and

WHEREAS, the Water Department periodically sends informational mailings to new customers, including individuals whose names have been added to or changed on a water account, with approximately 30 to 40 such mailings distributed each quarter, and

WHEREAS, including one complimentary Blue Refuse Sticker in these mailings would provide a practical and limited way to introduce new customers to the City's refuse collection program while supporting the goals of the *Clean Watertown Refuse & Recycling Initiative*;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby authorizes the inclusion of one complimentary City of Watertown Blue Refuse Sticker in the Water Department's new-customer informational mailings, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that City staff are authorized to coordinate the procurement, distribution and inclusion of the complimentary stickers in the applicable mailings, consistent with available resources and established departmental procedures, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this resolution shall take effect immediately upon adoption.
Seconded by Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen

Prior to the vote on the foregoing resolution, Council Member Garrabrant thanked staff for reviewing the proposal. He expressed that he was hopeful to see the data moving forward and how it would affect other initiatives in the future.

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

Resolution No. 3 - Approving the 2026-2029 Tentative Agreement Between the City of Watertown and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (I.B.E.W.) Local Union 1249

Introduced by Council Member Robert O. Kimball

WHEREAS the 2023 - 2026 Employment Contract between the City of Watertown and I.B.E.W. Local Union 1249 expired on June 30, 2026, and

WHEREAS the parties have agreed to a Tentative Agreement which will cover the period of July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2029,

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 I.B.E.W. Local Union 1249, and a copy of which is attached and made a part of this resolution, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Mayor is hereby authorized and directed to execute the new employment contract, reflective of the terms in the Tentative Agreement, on behalf of the City of Watertown.

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

Resolution No. 4 - Authorizing Home Rule Request of the New York State Legislature to Allow the City of Watertown to Lease Land at the Thompson Park Golf Course

WHEREAS, the City of Watertown owns the Thompson Park Golf Course, an 18-hole public golf course located within Thompson Park in the City of Watertown, and

WHEREAS, the Thompson Park Golf Course is located on property dedicated to public park and recreational purposes and is therefore subject to New York State's public trust doctrine, and

WHEREAS, the City intends to select a qualified private operator to operate, maintain, and improve the property as a public golf course and recreational facility under a lease with the City, and

WHEREAS, the proposed lease is intended to preserve the continued operation of the golf course, maintain public recreational access, provide for the continued care and improvement of the property, and support the financial and operational sustainability of the facility, and

WHEREAS, because the proposed lease would permit a private entity to operate a facility located on dedicated municipal parkland, specific authorization from the New York State Legislature is required before the City may enter into the lease, and

WHEREAS, the City Council finds that seeking such legislative authorization is in the best interests of the City and will allow the property to continue serving the public as a golf course and recreational facility;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown desires to obtain State legislative authorization specifically permitting the City to lease the Thompson Park Golf Course to a qualified private operator for its continued operation, maintenance, and improvement as a public golf course and recreational facility, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the City Council hereby authorizes the Mayor to request that the City's representatives in the New York State Legislature introduce and support the legislation necessary to authorize the proposed lease, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the City Manager, City Attorney, and other appropriate City officials are authorized to work with the City's State legislative representatives, and any other necessary State agencies to prepare and advance the proposed legislation.

No Introduction given for the foregoing resolution.

Resolution No. 5 - Approving the Federal Award Agreement for the Program Year 2026 Community Development Block Grant Program

Introduced by Council Member Robert O. Kimball

WHEREAS the City of Watertown has completed its Program Year 2026 Annual Action Plan for the Community Development Block Grant Program and submitted it to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and

WHEREAS HUD has approved the City's Annual Action Plan and has prepared a Federal Award Agreement for the grant funding,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby approves the Federal Award Agreement with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for the Program Year 2026 Community Development Block Grant Program, a copy of which is attached and made part of this Resolution, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Mayor, Sarah V. C. Pierce, is hereby authorized and directed to sign the Agreement on behalf of the City Council.

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

Resolution 6 – Authorizing the City of Watertown Parade Fund Through the Northern New York Community Foundation

Introduced by Council Member Robert O. Kimball

WHEREAS funding for the 2026 City of Watertown Christmas Parade was not included in the City budget, and

WHEREAS individuals and organizations have expressed interest in contributing funds to support the Christmas Parade, and

WHEREAS the Northern New York Community Foundation has prepared a Charitable Fund Overview establishing the City of Watertown Parade Fund to receive charitable contributions for the 2026 City of Watertown Christmas Parade, with any funds not used for that parade available to support other parades approved by the City of Watertown, and

WHEREAS the City Council wishes to provide a way for individuals, organizations, and businesses to contribute to these parades,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown authorizes charitable fundraising through the Northern New York Community Foundation's City of Watertown Parade Fund in accordance with the attached Charitable Fund Overview, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City of Watertown is willing to accept distributions from the Northern New York Community Foundation to support the 2026 City of Watertown Christmas Parade and other parades approved by the City of Watertown, as provided in the Charitable Fund Overview, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Manager or their designee is authorized to sign the Charitable Fund Overview for the City of Watertown Parade Fund, attached hereto and made a part of this resolution.

Seconded by Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen

Rules waived by Motion of Council Member Robert O. Kimball, seconded by Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

Council Member Shoen stated that he was surprised by the comments regarding the issue. He reminded Council that the possibility of not having the parade was discussed during budget meetings and emphasized that the intent was not to cancel Christmas. He reiterated that difficult decisions had to be made and expressed concern about the lack of feedback from others at that time. He informed Council that there have been an overwhelming number of people reaching out to support the Parade and he would like to see more feedback given to Council Members. He said that the fund would not only fund the parade this year but could likely fund future parades.

Council Member Kimball agreed with Council Member Shoen's comments and reiterated that the decision was approved as part of the budget. He expressed surprise at the amount of community support for the parade and thanked the organizations which offered assistance.

Mayor Pierce agreed and expressed enthusiasm with the community of people wanting to help with the parade. She explained that it was a difficult budget decision made collectively and emphasized that the intent was not to cancel Christmas, as other children's activities are still planned. She noted that additional funding could help enhance those activities. Mayor Pierce also discussed the Clayton Parade, which is organized by its Chamber of Commerce, and stated that this approach is similar to how other municipalities operate. She said she is hopeful to see how it works out.

Council Member Shoen informed Council that he had contacted the Northern New York Community Foundation. He discussed the organization's contributions and thanked the organization for their support.

Council Member Osborne agreed with Mayor Pierce's comments regarding the Clayton parade and suggested that the City consider using a committee to organize future parades. He acknowledged the feedback from residents who wanted the parade to continue and thanked members of the public who offered to contribute.

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

STAFF REPORTS

Sale of Surplus Hydro-electricity – August 2026

A report was available for review.

Sales Tax Revenue – August 2026

A report was available for review.

NEW BUSINESS

Watermain Breaks – Harris Drive and Morrison Street

Council Member Garrabrant mentioned the watermain breaks occurring over the weekend on Harris Drive, which is where he resides, and Morrison Street. He thanked City staff for their dedication and diligent work in rectifying the situation and he stressed the need for the City to focus on infrastructure as a priority.

Refuse Program Compliment

Council Member Garrabrant stated that he was contacted by a resident whose recycling was not picked up and, after the resident reported this, a DPW supervisor came in a truck to apologize and pick up the recyclables. He said the resident was very impressed and appreciative of this personal touch and effort by the City.

Golf Course Rates

Council Member Garrabrant mentioned that many local golf courses are offering Fall specials, and he suggested several discounts and promotions that the City could offer in an effort to generate more business.

September Work Session

Council Member Kimball explained that he had to miss the last work session due to a minor medical procedure but was able to watch the livestream of it. He thanked City Engineer Thomas Compo for the detailed update on the City's ongoing and upcoming projects. He said the long list of projects was impressive and shows the efforts the staff is making to improve the City, especially with the current staffing levels.

Council Member Kimball also mentioned the presentation given regarding the Comprehensive Plan and Strategic Plan and said it seems reasonable to update the Strategic Plan. He said that he thinks the City should seek input from the public and suggested holding a public hearing.

Mayor Pierce agreed with Council Member Kimball.

Businesses Closing

Council Member Osborne mentioned that two major, long-standing businesses within the City, Paddock Club and Downtown Bistro 108, recently closed. He commended them for their years of service to the community and wished them well in their new endeavors.

Proposed Changes to the Code for Addressing Deteriorating Properties

Council Member Osborne mentioned that he had submitted proposed changes to the Code of the City of Watertown, and after the discussion from the last work session, he plans to make some modification and submit a revised proposal.

Golf Course Rates (continued)

Referring to Council Member Garrabrant's suggestion for offering Fall specials, Council Member Shoen noted that the golf course typically has offered a lower rate for this time of the year.

Shopping Carts

Mentioning his suggestion at the last meeting to ban shopping carts, which are stolen property, Council Member Shoen noted that many people have reached out to him in support of this idea. He said he has also been sent many pictures of shopping carts abandoned on people's properties. He noted that he did not realize the staff at DPW returns abandoned shopping carts that are confiscated to the appropriate store, but he feels the stores should be responsible for picking up their own carts. He stressed this would save DPW staff's time.

Christmas Parade

Council Member Shoen said now that the resolution was approved to accept donations, the Northern New York Community Foundation should be ready to start receiving donations right away.

Watermain Breaks – Harris Drive and Morrison Street (continued)

Council Member Shoen asked how many breaks have occurred on Harris Drive in the past.

City Manager Wagenaar said he was not sure about Harris Drive, however breaks have occurred a couple of times at the same spot on Morrison Street.

Sales Tax and Hydro-electricity Revenue – August 2026

Council Member Shoen noted that, although there has been recent rainfall, the hydro revenue report does not reflect that. He said the increase in sales tax revenue does not make up for the decrease in hydro revenue.

Council Office Hours

Mayor Pierce mentioned that Council Office Hours are tentatively scheduled for October 20 and October 21 at the library, but more information will be distributed once the schedule is finalized.

Snowtown Bucks

Mayor Pierce announced that the Local Development Corporation (LDC) is initiating a program called “Snowtown Bucks” to help promote small businesses in the City. She said an individual can purchase \$25 in “Snowtown Bucks” and the LDC will match the amount so that a \$50 gift certificate is received for a local small business.

Upcoming Events

Mayor Pierce announced that the Library will be hosting a Trick or Treat event on October 3 and the Harvest Festival will be held at the Fairgrounds from October 2 to October 4.

ADJOURNMENT

At the call of the chair, meeting was duly adjourned at 7:36 p.m. by motion of Council Member Robert O. Kimball, seconded by Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

Jessica L. Leroux, Deputy City Clerk and Ann M. Saunders, City Clerk