

**CITY COUNCIL MEETING
CITY OF WATERTOWN
October 05, 2026
7:00 p.m.**

Mayor Pro Tem Robert O. Kimball Presiding

Present: Council Member Shane A. Garrabrant
Council Member Douglas E. Osborne, Jr.
Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen
Mayor Pro Tem Robert O. Kimball

Not Present: Mayor Sarah V.C. Pierce

Also Present: Eric F. Wagenaar, City Manager
Joseph V. Frateschi, Harrison Beach Murtha, City Attorney

City staff present: Erica Anderson, James Mills, Michael Lumbis, Aaron Harvill, Erica LeClerc

The City Manager presented the following reports to Council:

- City of Watertown 2024 Community Development Block Grant Annual Action Plan Amendment Public Hearing
- Resolution No. 1 - Accepting a Flexible Spending Account Administrator Proposal from HealthEquity
- Proposed Local Law of 2026 - A Local Law Amending the Code of the City of Watertown, Chapter 301: Water
- Scheduling a Public Hearing on the Proposed Strategic Plan
- Proposed City of Watertown Social Media Policy
- NYS Retirement System 2028 Employer Contribution Rate

Meeting opened with a moment of silence to honor Former Mayor Joseph Butler Sr. who recently passed and asked that the public remember his family.

Pledge of Allegiance was given.

The reading of the minutes of the regular meeting of September 21, 2026, was dispensed and accepted as written by motion of Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen, seconded by Council Member Council Member Shane A. Garrabrant and carried with all present voting in favor thereof.

COMMUNICATIONS

An email was received from Alena and Markus Martin, 330 Flower Avenue West, requesting denial of the proposed zone change at 465 Flower Avenue West.

An email was received from Cliff Olney, 847 Washington Street, supporting the proposed Social Media Policy but requesting revisions to the proposed draft before adoption.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Patrick Hickey, 394 Pawling Street, thanked the Watertown Police Benevolent Association and Northern New York Community Foundation for their donations toward the purchase of 15 Neighborhood Watch street signs. He reported that 30 new members joined Neighborhood Watch during the past month. Mr. Hickey also discussed the history of the Black River and questioned the City's role in plans for recreation and development, as well as review of proposed changes to other facilities FERC Licenses.

Jessica Griffin, Volunteer Director of Powerplay Sports, addressed Council regarding recent allegations concerning unused ice time at the Watertown Municipal Arena. She requested that future unused ice time be offered to Powerplay Sports or allocated fairly, consistent with the process previously established in a meeting held by Parks and Recreation Department.

Jonathan Phillips, 735 Mill Street, talked about safety concerns with e-bikes sharing the road. He reported that street lights near the Fairgrounds were out, creating additional risks for pedestrians. He also discussed shopping carts being taken from local businesses.

Hambone, National Alliance and Homelessness, informed Council he recently attended a meeting in Washington, D.C. and provided resources for Council to review.

James Davis, 113 West Main Street, addressed the chair regarding safety and health concerns related to excessive vehicle exhaust noise. He submitted a petition with approximately 12 signatures and three requested actions.

James Brooks, 142 Mechanic Street, expressed concerns regarding recent violations of the CitiBus policy and stated that he plans to provide supporting documentation for Council's review. He requested that Council review and reverse the denial of his prior grievance, noting that other residents with disabilities have experienced similar issues. He also expressed concerns regarding the Arsenal Street schedule change and requested further review.

PUBLIC HEARING

At 7:15 p.m. Mayor Pro Tem Kimball asked the Deputy City Clerk to read the notice of Public Hearing concerning the City of Watertown 2024 Community Development Block Grant Annual Action Plan Amendment.

Mayor Pro Tem Kimball declared the hearing open at 7:15 p.m.

Jonathan Phillips, 735 Mill Street, requested that the City look at redoing the sidewalks on the Northside, including Mill and Cooper Street. He talked about the work previously done on Mill Street and asked that it be redone by the contractors who recently completed Burlington Street.

Mayor Pro Tem Kimball declared the hearing closed at 7:17 p.m.

RESOLUTIONS

Resolution No. 1 - Accepting a Flexible Spending Account Administrator Proposal from HealthEquity

Introduced by Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen

WHEREAS the City of Watertown offers a voluntary Flexible Spending Account program to its full-time employees as part of its employee benefits package, and

WHEREAS the City's agreement with its current administrator, OneDigital, expires on December 31, 2026, and OneDigital has advised the City that it will not renew the agreement, requiring the selection of a new administrator for the 2027 plan year, and

WHEREAS Mercer, the City's benefits broker, conducted a request for proposals process on the City's behalf and received five proposals from Clarity, HealthEquity, TASC, WEX, and HSA Bank, and

WHEREAS following a panel review of the proposals and interviews with the three (3) finalist vendors, staff recommends accepting HealthEquity's proposal based on its competitive pricing and services, ease of use, and customer support,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown, New York, hereby accepts the proposal from HealthEquity, attached hereto and made part of this resolution, to administer the City's Flexible Spending Account program beginning January 1, 2027, and ending December 31, 2029, with automatic renewals for additional 12-month terms thereafter, subject to either party's right to terminate following the initial term upon 90 days' prior written notice in accordance with the agreement, and

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

Seconded by Council Member Shane A. Garrabrant and carried with all present voting yea.

LOCAL LAWS

Proposed Local Law of 2026 - A Local Law Amending the Code of the City of Watertown, Chapter 301: Water

Introduced by Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen

A Local Law Amending the Code of the City of Watertown, Chapter 301: Water.

WHEREAS the City of Watertown owns and operates a Water Treatment, Filtration and Distribution System, and

WHEREAS the Code of the City of Watertown, Chapter 301: Water, contains provisions pertaining to the management and operations of the Water Treatment, Filtration and Distribution System, and

WHEREAS it is necessary to revise certain sections in Chapter 301 of the Code of the City of Watertown in order to comply with current plumbing codes for the health and safety of the residents of the City, and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT ENACTED that § 301-1 of the Code of the City of Watertown is amended as follows:

§ 301-1. Definitions.

When used in this chapter, unless otherwise expressly stated, the following words and terms shall have the meanings indicated:

APPROVED – Accepted for use in connection with water service by the Superintendent.

CONSUMER – A person owning and/or occupying real property who is receiving water for use thereon from the municipal mains. This can include a property manager or designated agent with written consent to sign for fees outlined within this Chapter of the Code.

CURB STOP – The outside control valve on the water service.

CURB-STOP-TO-METER SERVICE – That portion of the water service line lying between the curb stop or outside gate valve and the water meter.

DEPARTMENT – There shall be a Department of Water.

FIRE SERVICE – The service pipe and all required appurtenances from the street main to the outlets inside the consumer's building, intended and to be used solely for fire-protection purposes. That portion from the main to the property line of the consumer shall be known as "main-to-line fire service" and that portion from the property line to the outlets shall be known as "line-to-outlet fire service."

GALVANIZED WROUGHT IRON PIPE – Steel or iron pipe coated with a protective layer of zinc to prevent rust and corrosion. Restricted to non-potable water lines due to aging, internal rust, and potential leaching contaminants. While galvanized pipes are not made of lead, they are categorized as "requiring replacement" due to the potential health hazard (under the LCRI: Lead and Copper Rule Improvements).

INSPECTOR – An inspector from the Department of Water having such authority as may be conferred upon him by the Superintendent of the Water Department in conformity with this chapter.

LEAD SERVICE – A water pipe made entirely or partially of lead that connects a building's internal plumbing to a public water main. Service Lines with any component being made of lead are categorized as "requiring replacement" due to the potential health hazard (under the LCRI: Lead and Copper Rule Improvements).

MAIN – Any water main owned by the city and supplying or capable of supplying water to more than one consumer.

MAIN-TO-CURB-STOP SERVICE – That portion of water service from the supplying street main to the curb stop.

SUPERINTENDENT – There shall be a Superintendent who shall be in charge of water, wastewater, and hydroelectric generation.

WATER SERVICE – The service pipe and all required appurtenances from the street main to the first stop cock or valve inside the consumer's building.

And,

BE IT FURTHER ENACTED that § 301-4 of the Code of the City of Watertown is amended as follows:

§ 301-4. Costs of main-to-curb stop and fire services.

- A. The consumer shall pay the following charges for the installation or renewal of main-to-curb-stop service or fire service:

Size of Service Pipe (inches)	Charge
3/4	\$1,750
1	\$1,850
1 1/2	\$2,250
Larger than 1 1/2	Actual cost

- B. A tapping charge will be added to the above charges for main-to-curb-stop service or fire service, whenever a new tap is required. The consumer shall pay the following tapping charges, when required:

Size of Service Pipe (inches)	Charge
3/4	\$112.50
1	\$150
1 1/2	\$225
2	\$300
Larger than 2	\$150 per inch of tap size

- C. When employees of the Department perform this service for a contractor or developer, the contractor or developer shall be charged \$150 per inch of tap, plus actual costs for labor, equipment, and materials provided in the performance of this service.
- D. The term "actual cost," as used in this section, shall mean all reasonable costs associated with the installation or renewal of the main-to-curb-stop service or fire service, or the tapping of a water main, including but not limited to labor, materials, equipment, road repairs, and curbing repairs.

BE IT FURTHER ENACTED that § 301-6 of the Code of the City of Watertown is amended as follows:

§ 301-6. Installation and safeguarding of meter.

- A. Meters for all water services within the city, except fire service, shall be furnished and installed by the Department.
- B. The consumer shall be responsible for the safeguarding of the meter. If the meter is not safeguarded, the "Consumer" shall be responsible for the fees associated with the replacement, including but not limited to labor, materials, and equipment.
- C. If so required by the Department, the meter shall be housed at the expense of the consumer.
- D. When service is temporarily discontinued, the Department will, when so requested in writing, remove, store and reset the meter without expense to the consumer.
- E. Meters must be in an accessible location for the purpose of servicing and ascertaining the quantity of water used and the manner of its use.
- F. The Department shall be allowed to install receptacles and related appurtenances on or inside the consumer's building, structure, or premises to accommodate the use of remote-reading-type water meters.

And,

BE IT FURTHER ENACTED that § 301-8 of the Code of the City of Watertown is amended as follows:

§ 301-8. Size and type of service pipe.

- A. For water service lines two inches in diameter and smaller, the pipe shall be type K soft copper water tube.
- B. For water service lines larger than two inches in diameter, the pipe shall be cement-lined ductile iron pipe class 52.
- C. Replacements or renewals of existing service lines shall be made with appropriate materials as outlined in Subsection A or B, above, or as otherwise directed by the Department.

And,

BE IT FURTHER ENACTED that § 301-12 of the Code of the City of Watertown is amended as follows:

§ 301-12. PVC and plastic pipe.

PVC pipe and pipe made of polyethylene or other plastic materials crosslinked polyethylene (PEXa): for curb stop to meter sections of the water service. Must be run with a tracer wire and have a minimum bury depth of 66 inches (5 foot 6 inches of cover).

And,

BE IT FURTHER ENACTED that this Local Law shall take effect immediately upon being filed with the New York Secretary of State.

Seconded by Council Member Shane A. Garrabrant

Motion was made by Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen to schedule a Public Hearing on the foregoing local law for October 19, 2026 at 7:15 p.m. Motion was seconded by Council Member Shane A. Garrabrant and carried with all present voting in favor thereof.

STAFF REPORTS

Scheduling a Public Hearing on the Proposed Strategic Plan

A report was available for review with the recommendation of holding a public hearing for Monday, October 19, 2026, at 7:15 p.m. to hear public comments on the proposed Strategic Plan.

Motion was made by Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen to schedule a Public Hearing on the foregoing local law for October 19, 2026 at 7:15 p.m. Motion was seconded by Council Member Shane A. Garrabrant and carried with all present voting in favor thereof.

Proposed City of Watertown Social Media Policy

A report was available for review.

NYS Retirement System 2028 Employer Contribution Rate

A report was available for review.

NEW BUSINESS

Social Media Policy

Council Member Garrabrant expressed support for the proposed Social Media Policy, noting that it would help keep residents informed. He recommended disabling comments on the City's social media page to reduce unnecessary commentary and utilize proper channels of communication.

Response to Privilege of the Floor- Mr. Hickey's Comments

Council Member Garrabrant thanked Mr. Hickey for the update on the Neighborhood Watch program.

Response to Privilege of the Floor- Mr. Davis' Comments

Council Member Garrabrant stated he was interested to see what Mr. Davis submitted, noting he has also observed similar concerns in his own neighborhood.

Community Events

Council Member Garrabrant highlighted recent events in the City, including Harvest Festival and the Halloween Event at the Library, mentioning that both events were successful in showcasing the City and providing families with something fun to do.

Council Member Osborne mentioned that he also attended the Harvest Festival and gave kudos to Parks and Recreation staff for a successful event.

Christmas Parade Fund

Council Member Osborne reminded residents that the Christmas Parade Fund was accepting donations.

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

Council Member Osborne asked whether any complaints had been received regarding street lights being out.

Mr. Wagenaar stated that he has not seen any complaints but noted that DPW reports street light outages to National Grid.

Response to Privilege of the Floor- Mr. Davis' Comments (continued)

Council Member Osborne agreed that the concerns raised were a nuisance and asked whether the issue was being tracked.

Mr. Wagenaar stated that the issue is currently monitored and could be discussed with the new Police Chief.

Response to Privilege of the Floor- Mr. Brooks' Comments

Council Member Osborne expressed interest in reviewing how enforcement concerns relating to CitiBus were being addressed.

Mr. Wagenaar noted that a transit update is scheduled for the next work session.

Response to Privilege of the Floor- Ms. Griffin's Comments

Council Member Osborne asked about the status of the investigation regarding the complaints made by Powerplay sports.

Mr. Wagenaar stated that the issue is being addressed and that an upcoming discussion would determine how it would be handled moving forward.

Council Member Shoen expressed frustration with reoccurring discussions regarding ice time and suggested reviewing policies for allocating unused ice time.

Christmas Parade Fund (continued)

Council Member Shoen reported that he dropped off a check from Harriengers, in the amount of \$5000, as a donation to the Parade Fund. He said that he would contact individuals who had previously expressed interest in donating to the fund.

Response for Privilege of the Floor- Mr. Brooks' Comments (continued)

Council Member Shoen noted the number of CitiBus complaints and requested that the Director attend a meeting to answer questions and provide an update.

Mr. Wagenaar stated that the Director would attend the October 12 work session to provide an update.

Community Events (continued)

Council Member Shoen informed Council that this upcoming Sunday at the Italian American Civic Association at noon, there would be a flag raising to celebrate Columbus Day.

Christmas Parade Fund (continued)

Mayor Pro Tem Kimball stated that Mayor Pierce advised him by email that she had spoken with the Northern New York Community Foundation today and that the fund currently held \$300. He encouraged anyone still interested in donating to the parade to reach out.

Response to Privilege to the Floor-Mr. Brooks' Comments (continued)

Mayor Pro Tem Kimball addressed concerns regarding residents requiring special accommodations for medical issues. He agreed that requests should be carefully reviewed and approved as needed. He also supported Mr. Shoen's recommendation to review CitiBus procedures.

Motion was made by Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen to move into Executive Session to discuss collective bargaining and 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.

Motion was seconded by Council Member Shane A. Garrabrant and carried with all present voting in favor thereof.

Council moved into Executive Session at 7:46 pm.

Council reconvened at 8:13 pm.

A D J O U R N M E N T

At the call of the chair, meeting was duly adjourned at 8:13 p.m. by motion of Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen seconded by Council Member Douglas E. Osborne, Jr. and carried with all present voting in favor thereof.

Jessica L. Leroux
Deputy City Clerk