

**CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION  
CITY OF WATERTOWN  
June 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

**City staff present:** Erica Anderson, Geoff Urda, Cristin Lyon, Mike Lumbis, Aaron Harvill

**DISCUSSION**

**E-Bike Safety Initiative**

Erica Anderson, Assistant to the City Manager, began the presentation by informing Council that the committee had met several times and committee members also included City Engineer Thomas Compo, Code Enforcement Supervisor Dana Aikins, Planning and Community Development Director Michael Lumbis and Superintendent of Public Works Brian MacCue. She advised that E-Bike usage has increased throughout the country and not just in Watertown.

Joe Bova, representing Samaritan Medical Center Trauma, explained that data is just beginning to be compiled, but the hospital had seen nine E-Bike injuries during the last year. He noted that head injuries were in six of those accidents due to the riders not wearing helmets.

Ms. Anderson added that most of the accidents with E-Bikes occur on the rider's first or second ride, due to inexperience with bicycles and the rules of the road. She thanked Samaritan Medical Center for their partnership on this initiative.

Senior Planner Geoff Urda commented that the committee hopes to also develop a partnership with Watertown City School District. He noted that many of the users of E-Bikes are using them for transportation and some riders may have never been on a bike before, so education is key. He also stated that it is illegal for anyone under the age of 16 to operate an E-Bike.

Ms. Anderson drew Council's attention to the Quick Guides and explained that the State had provided a few for free, but 1,000 more had been printed, of which Samaritan Medical Center contributed 500, and they would be distributed. She also advised she was working with Leslie DiStefano, Director of Communications and Public Relations at Samaritan Medical Center, to create radio and public service spots and she mentioned there would be a TV appearance this Wednesday.

Noting that visible messaging would encourage safe riding, Ms. Anderson displayed signs that would be placed in various locations.

Displaying those locations on a map, Mr. Urda explained the placement of the signs and he noted they were focused on Public Square where they would capture the attention of in-bound traffic to the busiest part of the City where bikes, cars and trucks all share the same space. He also indicated potential alternate routes that would avoid Public Square.

Ms. Anderson said the draft of the Local Law, which is available for Council to review, mirrors New York State Law 1242 and addresses regulation and enforcement.

Police Captain Cristin Lyon stated that police officers will be able to address issues with E-Bikes as they see them and that staff has already organized details to focus on safety and encourage the use of helmets. She mentioned the focus is on Public Square, but they have also hit different areas of the City. She noted the goal is to bring the growing issue to a more manageable level.

Ms. Anderson indicated that there may be additional permanent signage strategically placed in other areas of the City.

Mr. Urda informed Council that he had recently attended a conference which featured discussion of the growing E-Bike concerns and mentioned that one issue is that there is deceptive and inaccurate marketing of E-Bikes. He noted that Class 3 E-Bikes are fully illegal and that the only legal E-Bikes outside of New York City are Class 1 and 2 E-Bikes, which do not exceed 20 mph. He stressed that many riders are new to bicycling as they are using E-Bikes for transportation rather than recreation, and do not know the laws for bicyclists, such as yielding for pedestrians. He noted that education is key and reiterated his hope to partner with Watertown schools and Parent Square.

Mr. Bova informed Council that the youngest injured rider at Samaritan was 17 and the oldest was 76, making this an issue that spans generations. He added that pedestrians can also be injured in E-Bike accidents, not just the riders.

Mayor Pierce thanked the committee and asked whether parents should be concerned about letting their young children ride their non-electronic bicycles on the sidewalk, since it is against the law.

Captain Lyon said that there is no age limit specifically addressed within the law, adding it is up to the municipality. She added that the City's law says no one is permitted to ride a bike on the sidewalk.

City Manager Eric Wagenaar commented that when it comes to enforcement, the police are focusing on the busy areas like Public Square and not residential areas.

Council Member Osborne complimented the committee on their comprehensive presentation and said it was a tremendous start to addressing a constantly evolving issue. He asked if the media outreach could be expanded to include the Watertown Daily Times.

Council Member Kimball commented that he had seen E-Scooters on the sidewalks as well.

In response to Council Member Garrabrant's question of whether the proposed Local Law clarifies the City's bicycle regulations, Ms. Anderson confirmed that it adds E-Bikes and E-Scooters.

Council Member Garrabrant asked if the helmet requirement is new.

Ms. Anderson said it was new and was added due to input from Samaritan Medical Center.

Responding to Council Member Shoen's question regarding E-Scooters, Ms. Anderson said the intention is to cover E-Bikes and E-Scooters as they are both motorized two-wheel vehicles.

Council Member Shoen asked how those exceeding 20 miles per hour could be penalized especially without any form of ID.

Captain Lyon said that police could issue a ticket to anyone regardless of whether they had a driver's license.

In response to Council Member Shoen's question of how many tickets police had issued so far, Captain Lyon said she did not have an exact number but stressed that they have given many verbal warnings which can be very effective.

Council Member Shoen suggested compelling E-Bike users to register with the City to add a layer of responsibility.

### **Local Waterfront Revitalization Program**

Planning and Community Development Director Michael Lumbis presented Council with an update and a brief history of the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP).

Senior Planner Geoff Urda explained that the LWRP is a plan for the entire Black River Corridor and, once adopted, it carries the weight of a plan, meaning any development must comply with the plan. He reviewed the various attempts to create an LWRP over the last 40 years and noted that completing one will open up grant opportunities.

Mr. Lumbis listed the completed redevelopment projects along the riverfront including Waterworks Park, Newell Street Waterfront District and the JB Wise parking lot improvements. He noted that Newell Street is the best example of what can be done as that is now a vibrant, mixed-use district.

Mr. Lumbis informed Council of the status of the current LWRP, noting what has been completed and what is left to be done. He advised that although the contract with the Department of State has expired, they will help to complete the adoption of the program. He asked if Council was willing to go forward in completing the LWRP.

Mayor Pierce asked how much time would be needed to complete a final draft and review.

Mr. Lumbis said he believed there would be three or four weeks of staff time required.

In response to Mayor Pierce's question about a consistency review, Mr. Urda responded that any project undertaken by the City using grant funding or a project submitted by a developer would require a consistency review to ensure that the project meets the goals set out by the LWRP. He noted staff had just been through an informal consistency review with the Black River Trail extension.

Council Member Kimball summarized that his understanding is that an LWRP is not a statement to the State or to the public that the City is going to do anything, but instead it outlines a plan for the City to pursue development, while also allowing the City to apply for potential grants. He added that his understanding is that without the plan the State would not grant the City any money.

Mr. Urda said that all of that is accurate.

Council Member Kimball said he supported completing the LWRP.

Council Member Garrabrant asked to see a copy of the current draft and Council Member Shoen asked for a printed copy.

Mr. Lumbis agreed to provide digital and paper copies to Council.

Mayor Pierce commented that it makes sense to finalize this plan.

### **Settled Water Line Replacement (Pre-Treated Water Main)**

Water Superintendent Aaron Harvill reminded Council of a leak that occurred in the City's settled water line discovered in November, 2025. Temporary repairs were made but, he advised that the pipe dated from the 1890s and was beyond its useful service life. He noted the City engaged Wright-Pierce to prepare a primary engineering report and there are two options for replacing the pipe.

Mr. Harvill said that Option One consists of installing a new 36-inch HDPE water main and anchoring that to the riverbed aligned with the old main, while Option Two consists of installing 42-inch HDPE transmission mains crossing beneath NYS Route 3 and utilizing the bridge to support two 20-inch mains. He listed the costs and pros and cons for each alternative.

Council Member Kimball asked how this plan would align with a new settlement basin.

Mr. Harvill said the design would be coordinated with the settling basin.

In response to Council Member Kimball's question of what the "useful life" of the pipe should be, Mr. Harvill said it was 120 years.

Council Member Shoen asked if there was a duplicate water line still in place.

Mr. Harvill said there was and the new line would follow it but noted that there should not be an open discussion about capacity.

Council Member Shoen proposed using two 20-inch pipes rather than one 42-inch pipe, suggesting costs might be less and parts more available.

Mr. Harvill commented that this could be investigated but it would mean doubling material.

In response to Council Member Shoen's question of why the line should not be replaced with cast iron since the life span is 120 years, Mr. Harvill replied it was due to cost. He further noted that the proposals are preliminary and not set in stone.

Council Member Shoen proposed waiting until the settlement basin was in place before constructing the new water line since the current one is repaired and functional.

Mr. Harvill replied that it is partially repaired but is still leaking. He also noted that the proposed line will be in the same corridor where it will be once the settlement basin is constructed and he does not see an advantage either way.

City Manager Wagenaar indicated that the City is working with GHD and perhaps the grant funding will cover contingencies.

**City Manager's Update**

City Manager Wagenaar informed Council that the final response had been submitted to FERC, and he feels the City is in a good spot.

He also advised that staff had been concentrating heavily on the obtaining grants for the Western Outfall Trunk Sewer (WOTS), mentioning a potential \$2.5 million New York State Community Resiliency Flood grant and a \$20 million FEMA BRIC grant. He said a lot of energy is going into minimizing the impact of these repairs.

City Manager Wagenaar asked Council to consider a request from DJs at the Park to extend park hours during the World Cup Soccer tournament on June 12, 19 and 25th, noting this has been done before on other special occasions.

Council agreed to extend the hours.

City Manager Wagenaar said he would let DJs know and he would advise the City police of the change in hours.

**E-Bike Local Law**

Council Member Shoen asked if there could be a change to City regulations to allow children under the age of 10 to ride their bicycles on the sidewalk as it is not safe to have young children on their bikes in the road and he does not want to see five-year-olds getting citations. He added that the children and parents should yield to pedestrians.

City Manager Wagenaar said it could be an added factor.

Work session ended at 8:19 p.m.

*Lisa M. Carr*  
Deputy City Clerk

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