

**BOARD OF ETHICS MEETING
CITY OF WATERTOWN
December 12, 2025
9:00 a.m.**

Present: **Stephen A. Jennings**
 Cary J. Parker
 Yvonne F. Reff
 Suzanne C. Renzi-Falge
 Donald W. Rutherford

Chairman Stephen Jennings opened the meeting and roll call was done.

The meeting minutes from December 8, 2025 was adopted and accepted as written by motion of Suzanne C. Renzi-Falge, seconded by Donald W. Rutherford, and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Jennings explained that charts were created to graph the emails included in the complaint and that copies of those will become part of the record.

Motion was made by Donald W. Rutherford to move into Executive Session. Motion was seconded by Yvonne F. Reff and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

The Board of Ethics moved into Executive Session at 9:02 a.m.

The Board of Ethics returned to Council Chambers and reconvened at 9:10 a.m.

Motion was made by Yvonne F. Reff to move out of Executive Session. Motion was seconded by Donald W. Rutherford and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

Mr. Jennings apologized for not announcing the reason for the Executive Session within the previous motion and clarified for the record that the Executive Session was held 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. He asked if there was any opposition from the Board for going into Executive Session for that reason.

No members of the Board expressed opposition.

Mr. Jennings indicated the Board of Ethics will be providing two Advisory Opinions in regard to the November 18, 2025 complaint against Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero and Council Member Clifford G. Olney III.

Mr. Jennings read the following:

**BOARD OF ETHICS ADVISORY OPINION IN THE MATTER OF: CITY COUNCIL
MEMBER LISA A. RUGGIERO**

The City of Watertown Board of Ethics finds no conclusive evidence from a complaint filed November 18, 2025, whereby Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero violated the City Code of Ethics. Accordingly, the Board of Ethics issues no finding and considers the matter in reference to Council Member Ruggiero closed.

Motion was made by Cary J. Parker to adopt the foregoing Advisory Opinion. Motion was seconded by Suzanne C. Renzi-Falge and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

Mr. Jennings read the following:

**BOARD OF ETHICS ADVISORY OPINION IN THE MATTER OF: CITY COUNCIL
MEMBER CLIFFORD G. OLNEY III**

The City of Watertown Board of Ethics finds no conclusive evidence from a complaint filed November 18, 2025, whereby Council Member Clifford G. Olney III clearly breached the City Code of Ethics, however, the act of forwarding and blind-copying city-related emails to a certain external party on more than thirty occasions creates the appearance of impropriety which raises serious questions of Council Member Olney's independence. Accordingly, while no definitive violation is found, the Board of Ethics deems the conduct by Council Member Olney inconsistent with best ethical practice.

Motion was made by Yvonne F. Reff to adopt the foregoing Advisory Opinion. Motion was seconded by Donald W. Rutherford and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

A D J O U R N M E N T

At the call of the chair, meeting was duly adjourned at 9:12 a.m. by motion of Suzanne C. Renzi-Falge, seconded by Donald W. Rutherford and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

Ann M. Saunders
City Clerk