

**CITY COUNCIL MEETING
CITY OF WATERTOWN
December 15, 2025
7:00 p.m.**

Mayor Sarah V.C. Pierce Presiding

Present: Council Member Robert O. Kimball (arrived at 7:09 p.m.)
Council Member Clifford G. Olney III
Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero
Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen
Mayor Sarah V.C. Pierce

Also Present: Eric F. Wagenaar, City Manager
Kristen E. Smith, Bond, Schoeneck & King PLLC, City Attorney

City staff present: Erica Anderson, James Mills, Thomas Compo, Michael Lumbis

The City Manager presented the following reports to Council:

- Resolution No. 1 - Re-appointment as City Constable, Patrick T. Connell
- Resolution No. 2 - Re-appointment as City Constable Deputy, Robert D. Connell
- Resolution No. 3 - Establishing a 2026 Marketing and Tourism Promotion Budget and Authorization for Request for Proposals
- Resolution No. 4 - Authorizing Supplemental Agreement No. 6, Contract No. D035666, Massey Street, Coffeen Street, and Court Street Bridge, PIN 775362 – Funding the First Instance 100% of the Federal-Aid and State “Marchiselli” Program-Aid Eligible Costs of a Transportation Federal-Aid Project and Appropriating Funds
- Resolution No. 5 - Authorizing Supplemental Agreement No. 2 with New York State Department of Transportation (NYS DOT) for Contract No. D036015, Pedestrian Signal Improvement Project, PIN 70PS02 – Implementation and Funding Commitment of 100% of the Non-Federal Share of the Costs to Fund the Construction
- Resolution No. 6 - Approving Employment Agreement Between the City of Watertown and Henricus F. Wagenaar for the Position of City Manager
- Resolution No. 7 - Accepting Bid for WTP COAG Pump Station Roof Replacement Project – PTL Contracting Corp.
- Upcoming Oath of Office Ceremony

Meeting opened with a moment of silence.

Pledge of Allegiance was given.

The reading of the minutes of the regular meeting of December 1, 2025 was dispensed and accepted as written by motion of Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero, seconded by Council Member Clifford G. Olney III and carried with all voting in favor thereof except for Council Member Robert O. Kimball who was not present for this vote.

COMMUNICATIONS

An email was received from Jeff Kimball, 267 Ward Street, requesting Council consider a “no direct contact resolution” between any Council Member and certain developers, noting all correspondence should be with the City Manager.

An email was received from Michael LaDue, 320 South Indiana Avenue, requesting information and records regarding the recently concluded ethics complaint.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Chris Tehonica, Carthage, mentioned topics which Council Member Shoen has had concerns with and stated that he has not seen much resolved. In regard to the newly elected Council Members, he said he hopes the new Council does not cut items from the Parks and Recreation budget and he stressed the importance of Council being seen in the community, such as volunteering for the Salvation Army, and working together on the same page.

Adam Ruppe, Butterfield Avenue, thanked the outgoing Council Members for their service and wished the newly elected Council Members well.

Dale Herman, Green Street, said he liked the change to weekly recycling, and he expressed his concerns with the City Manager’s contract expiring at a time when two members of Council are leaving and two new members are joining, as well as the salary increase of 2%. He also discussed his concerns with the handling of the recent ethics complaint.

Jonathan Phillips, Mill Street, discussed his concerns with the recent changes to the refuse pickup schedule, although he noted he did like that recycling is done every week now. He also indicated that he did not see all the members of Council attending the Christmas Parade and stressed the importance of being out in the community and talking to people.

RESOLUTIONS

Resolution No. 1 - Re-appointment as City Constable, Patrick T. Connell

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown, New York, hereby re-appoints the following individual as City Constable, for a 1-year term, which term expires December 31, 2026.

Patrick T. Connell
173 Bowers Ave
Watertown, NY 13601

Seconded by Council Member Clifford G. Olney III and carried with all voting yea.

Resolution No. 2 - Re-appointment as City Constable Deputy, Robert D. Connell

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown, New York, hereby re-appoints the following individual as City Constable Deputy, to a 1-year term, which term expires December 31, 2026.

Robert D. Connell
115 Fairmont Ave
Watertown, NY 13601

Seconded by Council Member Clifford G. Olney III and carried with all voting yea.

Resolution No. 3 - Establishing a 2026 Marketing and Tourism Promotion Budget and Authorization for Request for Proposals

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS, the City of Watertown's largest and most reliable source of annual revenue is its share of Jefferson County sales tax, from which Watertown receives 24% of the county-wide collections after the State of New York retains its share, and

WHEREAS, in 2024 the City of Watertown generated approximately \$25 million in sales tax revenue, supporting essential public services, infrastructure, recreation, and quality-of-life improvements for residents, and

WHEREAS, an estimated 8,000,000 vehicles per year travel along Interstate 81 adjacent to the City of Watertown, representing a significant untapped opportunity to attract travelers, day visitors, and regional tourists into the city's commercial districts and recreational venues, and

WHEREAS, the City of Watertown possesses substantial assets that are attractive to visitors, including historic Thompson Park, the New York State Zoo at Thompson Park, the Black River's nationally recognized whitewater recreation corridor, kayaking, rafting and fishing opportunities, a revitalizing downtown, and year-round cultural and community events, and

WHEREAS, targeted marketing and tourism promotion—including highway signage, billboard placement, digital campaigns, and strategic advertising—have been demonstrated in municipalities across New York State and the Northeast region to increase visitor traffic, local spending, and municipal sales tax revenue, and

WHEREAS, even a modest increase in traveler visitation from Interstate 81 would yield a return that far exceeds the initial investment, generating new revenue for local businesses and expanding the City's sales tax base, and

WHEREAS, the City Council recognizes that professional marketing, branding, and visitor outreach require specialized expertise that can best be obtained through a transparent and competitive Request for Proposals (RFP) process, and

WHEREAS, the City seeks to ensure that any marketing initiative reflects the city's strategic goals, highlights its recreational and cultural assets, and promotes Watertown as a destination for outdoor adventure, family activities, history, and commerce,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby establishes a Marketing and Tourism Promotion Budget of Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$50,000) for Fiscal Year 2026, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the City Manager is hereby authorized and directed to prepare and issue a formal Request for Proposals to qualified advertising agencies, marketing firms, and marketing directors for the development and execution of a comprehensive marketing plan promoting the City of Watertown's attractions, venues, and visitor opportunities, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the RFP shall seek proposals that may include, but are not limited to:

- Highway and billboard advertising along Interstate 81;
- Digital, social, and web-based marketing campaigns;
- Visitor outreach initiatives promoting Thompson Park, the New York State Zoo, the Black River recreation corridor, and other municipal attractions;
- Strategies to increase traveler stop-over, downtown visitation, and local spending, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the City Manager shall present the submitted proposals to the City Council for review, evaluation, and award in accordance with all applicable procurement requirements, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the goal of this initiative is to strengthen the City's economic position, expand sales tax revenue, support local businesses, and enhance Watertown's visibility as a regional destination for recreation, history, and culture.

Seconded by Council Member Clifford G. Olney III

Prior to the vote on the foregoing resolution, Council Member Olney commented that tourism creates a revenue source through sales tax, so it makes sense to promote and market the area. He said that he has always advocated for more marketing of the City and this resolution would be the first step.

Council Member Kimball indicated that some marketing would be beneficial to the City but said it would be better to address this topic during the budget process.

Council Member Shoen mentioned that this should be combined with outreach, noting the County is hiring someone for marketing and the City could possibly work with the County. He said that \$50,000 seems like a reasonable amount.

Council Member Ruggiero agreed, noting it has been talked about for years that more could be done to promote City activities and recreational opportunities. Stating it is important to have something in place moving forward, she suggested possibly removing the amount for now.

Mayor Pierce stated that a better time to address this is during budget season and she noted that she would be interested in working with the County as well. She also mentioned the possibility of using an intern to help build a marketing program.

Further discussion ensued about the amount listed in the resolution and current marketing efforts.

Council Member Kimball indicated that he is intrigued by the idea of working with the County and would like to hear more about it, so, at this point, he would not be voting in favor of this resolution.

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

Resolution No. 4 - Authorizing Supplemental Agreement No. 6, Contract No. D035666, Massey Street, Coffeen Street, and Court Street Bridge, PIN 775362 – Funding the first Instance 100% of the Federal-Aid and State “Marchiselli” Program-Aid Eligible Costs of a Transportation Federal-Aid Project and Appropriating Funds

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS the City of Watertown approved an Agreement with New York State for funding the reconstruction of Massey Street, Coffeen Street & Court Street Bridge, PIN 775362, (the “Project”) at its October 2, 2017, Council Meeting, and

WHEREAS a project for the reconstruction of Massey Street, Coffeen Street & Court Street Bridge, PIN 775362, (the “Project”) is eligible for funding under Title 23 U.S. Code, as amended, that calls for the apportionment of the cost of such program to be borne at the ratio of eligible costs at 80% federal funds and 20% non-federal funds, and

WHEREAS the City of Watertown desires to advance the Project by making a commitment of 100% of the federal and non-federal share of the costs of the Construction in the amount of \$115,000, and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown authorizes the City Comptroller to pay in the first instance 100% of the federal and non-federal share of the costs of Construction, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that in the event the full federal and non-federal share costs of the project exceeds the amount appropriated above, the City Council of the City of Watertown shall convene as soon as possible to appropriate said excess amount immediately upon notification by the City Manager, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Manager of the City of Watertown, is hereby authorized and directed to execute all necessary Agreements, certifications or reimbursement requests for Federal Aid and Marchiselli Aid on behalf of the City of Watertown with the New York State Department of Transportation in connection with the advancement or approval of the project and providing for the administration of the project and the municipality’s first instance funding of project costs and permanent funding for the local share of federal aid eligible project costs and all project costs within appropriations that are not eligible, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a certified copy of this resolution be filed with the New York State Commissioner of Transportation by attaching it to any necessary Agreement in connection with the project, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Resolution shall take effect immediately.

Seconded by Council Member Clifford G. Olney III

Prior to the vote on the foregoing resolution, City Engineer Thomas Compo provided the history of this project and explained why this amendment to the contract is being recommended by staff. He summarized that three intersections will be eliminated from the Massey Street, Coffeen Street & Court Street Bridge project and added to the Pedestrian Signal Improvement Project. He also confirmed that the City will be upfronting the funding and then seeking reimbursement from Federal and Non-Federal funding sources.

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

Resolution No. 5 - Authorizing Supplemental Agreement No. 2 with New York State Department of Transportation (NYS DOT) for Contract No. D036015, Pedestrian Signal Improvement Project, PIN 70PS02 – Implementation and Funding Commitment of 100% of the Non-Federal Share of the Costs to Fund the Construction

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS the City of Watertown approved an Agreement with New York State for funding the construction of the Pedestrian Signal Improvement Project, Contract D036015, (the "Project") at its November 5, 2018, Council Meeting, and

WHEREAS a Project for the City of Watertown Pedestrian Signal Improvement Project, PIN 70PS02 (the "Project") is eligible for funding (\$783,329.00) under Title 12 U.S. Code, as amended, that calls for the apportionment of the costs of such program to be borne at the ratio of 100% Federal funds and 0% non-federal funds, and

WHEREAS the Project is eligible for Federal Funding (\$135,000) through the Carbon Reduction Program, that calls for the apportionment of the costs of such program to be borne at the ratio of 80% Federal funds and 20% non-federal funds, and

WHEREAS as provided for by agreement with the NYS Department of Transportation, PE and/or ROW Incidental or ROW acquisition work performed by the municipality for the federal aid-eligible construction project covered by the agreement, the costs of such work that are approved in writing by NYSDOT as applicable to the federal aid construction work (excluding costs applicable to non-federally eligible project elements) shall be credited following FHWA's construction phase closeout audit of the Project to Project costs that are eligible for federal aid, and

WHEREAS the City of Watertown desires to advance the Project by making a commitment of 100% of the non-federal share of the costs of the Pedestrian Signal Improvement Project,

WHEREAS the City of Watertown desires to advance the Project by making a commitment of 100% of the non-federal share of the costs of \$1,116,329.00,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown duly convened does hereby approves the above-subject project, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Council hereby authorizes the City of Watertown to pay in the first instance 100% of the federal and non-federal share of the cost of Design Phases I_IV,

ROW Incidentals and Acquisition, Construction work for the Project or portions thereof, and

BE IT FUTHER RESOLVED that the sum of \$1,116,329.00 is hereby appropriated pursuant to and made available to cover the cost of participation in the above phases of the Project, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that in the event the full federal and non-federal share costs of the project exceeds the amount appropriated above, the City Council of the City of Watertown shall convene as soon as possible to appropriate said excess amount immediately upon the notification by the City Manager, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Manager of the City of Watertown, is hereby authorized to execute all necessary Agreements, certifications or reimbursement request for Federal Aid on behalf of the City of Watertown with the New York State Department of Transportation in connection with the advance or approval of the Project and providing for the administration of the Project and the municipality's first instance funding of project costs and permanent funding of the local share of federal-aid and state-aid eligible Project costs and all Project costs within appropriations therefore that are not so eligible, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a certified copy of this resolution be filed with the New York State Commissioner of Transportation by attaching it to any necessary Agreement in connection with the Project, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Resolution shall take effect immediately.

Seconded by Council Member Clifford G. Olney III and carried with all voting yea.

Resolution No. 6 - Approving Employment Agreement Between the City of Watertown and Henricus F. Wagenaar for the Position of City Manager

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS the City Council desires to employ Henricus F. Wagenaar as City Manager, and

WHEREAS an employment agreement for the term from December 30, 2025 to December 29, 2027 has been drafted,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby approves the agreement between Henricus F. Wagenaar and the City of Watertown, a copy of which is attached and made part of this resolution.

Seconded by Council Member Clifford G. Olney III

Prior to the vote on the foregoing resolution, Council Member Olney asked the City Attorney to explain the purpose of Section 13 within the contract.

Attorney Kristen Smith explained that it is the same language which was in the last contract with Mr. Wagenaar and that it was added to the previous City Manager's contract prior to her being the City Attorney. She indicated that it is intended to establish a chain of command.

Council Member Olney said he felt the language was restrictive and discussed at length issues that he had in the past getting information from staff. He stressed that he does not agree with this section.

Mayor Pierce noted that Council has had this contract to review for a period of time and that the contract negotiations were discussed in executive sessions, but that Council Member Olney had not previously mentioned this concern.

Council Member Kimball indicated that he does not see a problem with this section and it set a standard that one Council Member cannot direct a member of staff.

Attorney Smith mentioned that it provides clarity of roles but does not change anyone's authority.

Further discussion continued regarding this section of the contract. Council Member Olney stated that if this section remains in the contract, then he will abstain from voting or vote against it.

At the call of the chair, a vote was taken on the foregoing resolution and carried with all voting yea except for Council Member Clifford G. Olney III abstaining.

Resolution No. 7 - Accepting Bid for WTP COAG Pump Station Roof Replacement Project – PTL Contracting Corp.

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS the City's Water Department desires to contract with a qualified firm to provide all labor, equipment, materials, and supervision required to perform all operations necessary for the removal, disposal, and replacement of an existing ballasted roofing system at the Water Treatment Plant (WTP) COAG pump station roof to include all insulation, flashing, vapor barrier, metal edge, fascia, and all necessary appurtenances, and

WHEREAS the Purchasing Department advertised and received four (4) sealed bids for the roof replacement project, and

WHEREAS on December 4, 2025, 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 and Engineering Department and it is their recommendation that the City Council accept the lowest responsive responsible bid submitted by PTL Contracting Corp., and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby accepts the bid received from PTL Contracting Corp. in the amount of \$47,000.00, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Manager of the City of Watertown is hereby authorized and directed to execute the Agreement on behalf of the City of Watertown.

Seconded by Council Member Clifford G. Olney III

Prior to the vote on the foregoing resolution, Mr. Wagenaar confirmed that this building contains the pumps which will be a part of a larger project.

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

STAFF REPORTS

Upcoming Oath of Office Ceremony

Mayor Pierce announced the Oath of Office Ceremony to be held on New Year's Day at 12:00 p.m. in the rotunda of the Roswell P. Flower Memorial Library for the newly elected Council Members, Douglas E. Osborne Jr. and Shane A. Garrabrant, along with City Judge, Honorable Mary E. Doheny.

NEW BUSINESS

Recognition of Council Member Ruggiero and Council Member Olney

Mayor Pierce recognized Council Member Ruggiero and Council Member Olney for their time on Council and presented them both with certificates and a City coin.

Response to Privilege of the Floor – Christmas Parade & Refuse Service

Council Member Kimball reminded Mr. Phillips that he had attended the Christmas Parade and spent time speaking with Mr. Phillips at the event. In regard to the recent changes in the City's refuse service, Council Member Kimball noted there are things to work through but he has faith it will work out for the better.

Appreciation to Staff – Water Breaks and Christmas Parade

Council Member Kimball thanked staff who have worked tirelessly to repair recent water breaks and the staff who assisted in making the Christmas Parade successful.

Council Member Olney's Farewell

Council Member Olney offered appreciation for the Certificate of Recognition, and he reflected on the last four years of being part of Council. He offered thanks to the people who have supported him and his efforts to make the City a better place. He said he appreciated the honor of serving in this capacity.

Ethics Complaint Against Council Member Olney and Council Member Ruggiero

Council Member Olney referred to an article in the Watertown Daily Times regarding the recent Ethics Board meeting and thanked the Board for their decision.

Liaison to the Library Board

Council Member Ruggiero said she was honored to be recognized last week as the City's liaison to the Flower Memorial Library Board and described what she had learned while serving in this position.

Response to Privilege of the Floor – Christmas Parade (continued)

Council Member Ruggiero also noted that everyone from Council was in attendance at the Christmas Parade and she thanked all on staff who helped to make the event successful, as well as Mel Busler and Stan Zaremba.

Response to Privilege of the Floor – Salvation Army

Council Member Ruggiero said that, although she has not volunteered in the Salvation Army's kitchen, she has volunteered as a Kettle Bell Ringer. She said the Salvation Army is a worthy cause and serves as a shelter for the community.

Response to Privilege of the Floor – Refuse Service (continued)

Council Member Ruggiero agreed the changes to the refuse system have been confusing and the information distributed to her residence seemed to be regarding the old process. She said her neighbors are continuing to put their garbage out on their old pickup day.

Council Member Ruggiero's Farewell

Council Member Ruggiero reflected on the past eight years of serving on Council and she listed her accomplishments and the projects completed while she was in office.

Ethics Complaint Against Council Member Olney and Council Member Ruggiero (continued)

Council Member Ruggiero thanked the Ethics Board for their decision and said it would be beneficial for the City to offer ethics training to the Board, elected officials, and staff. She went on to discuss some of the emails submitted as evidence with the complaint and posed questions to the City Attorney and the Mayor.

Further discussion ensued and Attorney Smith clarified that there was no intentional withholding of certain threads of emails or information.

Response to Privilege of the Floor - Council Member Shoen's Topics of Concern

Council Member Shoen clarified that some of the topics which he has expressed concerns about have seen improvement and progress. He pointed out that he has been on Council for two years but has learned that things in government take longer to accomplish than in the private sector.

Intersection of State Street and Public Square

Council Member Shoen stated that he has heard safety concerns regarding this intersection and suggested installing a flashing crosswalk.

Response to Privilege of the Floor – City Manager's Contract

Council Member Shoen said he understands Mr. Herman's concerns, but he explained why he believes it was appropriate to not leave this for the next Council to decide.

Response to Privilege of the Floor – Christmas Parade (continued)

Council Member Shoen also told Mr. Phillips that everyone from Council was in attendance.

Response to Privilege of the Floor – Refuse Service (continued)

Council Member Shoen stated that it may take some time for everyone to adjust to the changes in the refuse service, and he said staff is also adjusting to the new schedule. He added that he is hopeful that the changes will improve efficiencies.

Work on Holcomb Street

Council Member Shoen said he has fielded some complaints regarding the work being done on Holcomb Street by a contractor for National Grid. He added that staff is working on these complaints.

Snow on Sidewalks

Council Member Shoen reminded property owners to clear the snow on the sidewalks of their properties.

Response to Privilege of the Floor – Christmas Parade (continued)

Mayor Pierce also said that she was in attendance at the Christmas Parade and was the one who counted down to the lighting of the Christmas tree. She thanked everyone who was involved, including the floats, and said Santa’s visit to the Library afterwards was well received.

Trails At Thompson Park

Mayor Pierce asked if there were trail maps available for the snowshoe and cross-country ski trails in Thompson Park.

ADJOURNMENT

At the call of the chair, meeting was duly adjourned at 8:28 p.m. by motion of Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero, seconded by Council Member Clifford G. Olney III and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

Ann M. Saunders
City Clerk