CITY COUNCIL MEETING
CITY OF WATERTOWN
January 5, 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**
Kristen E. Smith, Bond, Schoeneck & King PLLC, City Attorney

City staff present: Erica Anderson, James Mills, Thomas Compo, Brian MacCue, Aaron Harvill, Tina Bartlett-Bearup

The City Manager presented the following reports to Council:

- Resolution No. 1 - Designating Depositories of City Funds for 2026
- Resolution No. 2 - Accepting Bid for Contracted Hauling Services – Nickles Hauling, LLC
- Resolution No. 3 - Readopting Fiscal Year 2025-26 General Fund Budget to Modify Positions in the Engineering Department
- Resolution No. 4 - Accepting Bid for Sewer Main, Manhole Cleaning & CCTV (Closed-Circuit Television) Inspection Services – National Water Main Cleaning Co.
- Resolution No. 5 - Approving Change Order No. 1 for the Ohio Street Water Main Replacement Project, EDGE Civil Corporation
- Ordinance No. 1 - An Ordinance Amending the Ordinance Dated December 15, 2014, as Amended September 16, 2019, Authorizing the Issuance of $2,900,000 Bonds of the City of Watertown, Jefferson County, New York, to Pay the Cost of City Court Renovations, in and for Said City, to Change the Scope of the Project to Include Certain City Hall Improvements, and to Increase the Estimated Maximum Cost Thereof and the Amount of Bonds Authorized to $7,300,000
- Sale of Surplus Hydro-electricity – November 2025
- Sales Tax Revenue – November 2025
- Elected Officials, NYS Retirement System Reporting Requirements

Meeting opened with a moment of silence and Mayor Pierce asked that it be in remembrance of Querino "Augie" Alteri, who passed away recently at the age of 101 years.

Pledge of Allegiance was given.

The reading of the minutes of the regular meeting of December 15, 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.

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PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Laurie Haywood, 131 Wyoming Avenue, addressed the chair concerning the salaries of the City refuse workers and stated that they have not received the same pay increases as other City workers.

Jonathan Phillips, 735 Mill Street, expressed concerns with the recent changes to the City refuse system, noting some residents are choosing to use third-party vendors. He stated that some crosswalk buttons on Public Square are not working and that sidewalks on Arsenal Street are not being shoveled in a timely manner, noting the City Code should be shortened to 24 hours.

RESOLUTIONS

Resolution No. 1 - Designating Depositories of City Funds for 2026

Introduced by Council Member Robert O. Kimball

WHEREAS Section 30 of the City Charter requires the City Council to designate each year at its first meeting some incorporated bank or banks or trust company located in the City of Watertown for the deposit of all moneys belonging to the City,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the following banks are hereby designated as depositories of the City of Watertown, New York, for the year beginning January 1, 2026, and ending December 31, 2026:

Community Bank, N.A.
Key Bank
WSB Municipal Bank

And,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Community Bank, N.A., Key Bank, and WSB Municipal Bank each be required to either execute a bond delivered to the City of Watertown, New York, as approved collateral or to deposit at a mutually agreed upon depository approved collateral of a value up to FIFTY MILLION DOLLARS ($50,000,000).

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

Resolution No. 2 - Accepting Bid for Contracted Hauling Services – Nickles Hauling, LLC

Introduced by Council Member Robert O. Kimball

WHEREAS the City's Public Works Department desires to contract with a qualified firm to provide hauling services, as needed, to move a variety of materials to or from work sites and/or specified material suppliers for City Departments, and

WHEREAS the Purchasing Department advertised and received one (1) sealed bid for the contracted hauling services, and

WHEREAS on December 17, 2025, at 11:00 a.m. the bids received were publicly opened and read, and

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WHEREAS Purchasing Manager, Tina Bartlett-Bearup reviewed the bid received with the Public Works Department and it is their recommendation that the City Council accept the lowest responsive responsible bid submitted by Nickles Hauling, LLC, and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby accepts the bid received from Nickles Hauling LLC per the pricing schedule proposed, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Manager of the City Watertown is hereby authorized and directed to execute the Agreement (*and all contracts/documents associated with contracted hauling services*) on behalf of the City of Watertown.
Seconded by Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen and carried with all voting yea.

Resolution No. 3 - Readopting Fiscal Year 2025-26 General Fund Budget to Modify Positions in the Engineering Department

Introduced by Council Member Robert O. Kimball
WHEREAS on June 2, 2025, the City Council adopted the Fiscal Year 2025-26 General Fund Budget, and

WHEREAS the adopted budget included an Assistant City Engineer and two full-time Civil Engineer II positions (one of which is appropriated 40% to the hydro-electric account's budget), one part-time Civil Engineer II position, one full-time Civil Engineer I, and one part-time Civil Engineer I position, and

WHEREAS the search for an Assistant City Engineer has not yielded successful candidates, but did result in two candidates that the City Engineer recommends for the Civil Engineer I and II positions, and

WHEREAS the City Manager is recommending that the Assistant City Engineer position be converted to a Civil Engineer II position; and the part-time Civil Engineer II position be converted to a full-time Civil Engineer I position,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby re-adopts the Fiscal Year 2025-26 General Fund Budget to remove the Assistant City Engineer position and the part-time Civil Engineer II position and establish a full-time Civil Engineer II and Civil Engineer I position.
Seconded by Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen

Prior to the vote on the foregoing resolution, Council Member Shoen expressed concern regarding the financial impact of this, and he advised that if staffing is going to increase in one department, then he would like to have staff decrease in another department to the equal effect. Noting he agrees with the need for this staffing in the Engineering Department, he mentioned that, during the last budget process, he suggested removing one Code Enforcement Officer in order to increase staffing in the Engineering Department.

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Council Member Garrabrant agreed with Council Member Shoen's concern about the financial impact. He indicated that he would support the Civil Engineer II (CE II) position but would like more information regarding the Civil Engineer I (CE I) position.

Mr. Wagenaar explained that the City has had difficulty recruiting Engineering staff and has been trying to fill the Assistant Engineer position since May. However, he said, right now there are two qualified individuals for both a CE II and a CE I, which would result in an over-hire until one of the current engineers retires in December. He stressed that this is not an increase in staffing and is only a one-time over-hire for six months.

Council Member Osborne agreed with the need for these positions in this department but expressed concern about the financial impact. He asked if there is a way to make the $56,000 impact budget neutral.

Mr. Wagenaar noted that there are other vacancies throughout many departments in the City, which would cover this cost.

City Engineer Thomas Compo provided further explanation regarding the staffing levels of his department, the difficulty the City has had recruiting engineers, and the recent/upcoming retirements resulting in the loss of significant experience and institutional knowledge. He stressed the over-hire is similar to over-hires that have been done in the Police and Fire Departments, and that it is done because the positions require a special skill set.

Council Member Kimball offered his support for this resolution.

The financial impact of this was discussed further and City Comptroller James Mills noted that $56,000 would be the worst-case scenario. He also reminded Council that if the Engineer was to perform work on a water project, then the Water Fund would reimburse the position's salary for that time.

At the call of the chair, a vote was taken on the foregoing resolution and carried with all voting yea except for Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen voting nay.

Resolution No. 4 - Accepting Bid for Sewer Main, Manhole Cleaning & CCTV (Closed-Circuit Television) Inspection Services – National Water Main Cleaning Co.

Introduced by Council Member Robert O. Kimball

WHEREAS the City is seeking a qualified vendor to provide Sewer Main, Manhole Cleaning, and CCTV (Closed-Circuit Television) Inspection Services, and

WHEREAS the Purchasing Department advertised and received five (5) sealed bids for Sewer Main, Manhole Cleaning, and CCTV Inspection Services, and

WHEREAS on December 16, 2025, at 11:30 a.m. the bids received were publicly opened and read, and

WHEREAS Purchasing Manager, Tina Bartlett-Bearup reviewed the bids received with the DPW Superintendent and Engineering Department, and it is their recommendation that the City Council

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accept the lowest responsive responsible bid submitted by National Water Main Cleaning Company,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby accepts the bid received from National Water Main Cleaning Company in the amount of $133,356.00, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Manager of the City Watertown is hereby authorized and directed to execute the Agreement on behalf of the City of Watertown.
Seconded by Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen

Prior to the vote on the foregoing resolution, Council Member Kimball noted there was a significant variability in the responses to the bid.

Mr. Compo mentioned that it might be because this vendor owns the cleaning equipment and does not have to rent it. He also noted that the City has used this company in the past for similar work.

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

Resolution No. 5 - Approving Change Order No. 1 for the Ohio Street Water Main Replacement Project, EDGE Civil Corporation

Introduced by Council Member Robert O. Kimball
WHEREAS at its January 16, 2024, meeting, the City Council approved a bid from EDGE Civil Corporation in the amount of $834,974.00 for the Ohio Street Water Main Replacement Project, and

WHEREAS there have been various price adjustments for field and contract items that need to be addressed before final payment can be issued, and

WHEREAS EDGE Civil Corporation has submitted Change Order No. 1 for a cost decrease of $39,910.91,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby approves Change Order No. 1 from EDGE Civil Corporation for a decrease of $39,910.91, a copy of which is attached and made part of this Resolution, bringing the final contract amount to $795,063.09, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that City Manager or their designee is hereby authorized and directed to execute Change Order No. 1 on behalf of the City of Watertown.
Seconded by Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen and carried with all voting yea.

O R D I N A N C E S

Ordinance No. 1 - An Ordinance Amending the Ordinance Dated December 15, 2014, as Amended September 16, 2019, Authorizing the Issuance of $2,900,000 Bonds of the City of Watertown, Jefferson County, New York, to Pay the Cost of City Court Renovations, in and for Said City, to

<u>Change the Scope of the Project to Include Certain City Hall Improvements, and to Increase the Estimated Maximum Cost Thereof and the Amount of Bonds Authorized to $7,300,000</u>

<u>Introduced by Council Member Robert O. Kimball</u>

WHEREAS, by ordinance dated December 15, 2014 (the "2014 Ordinance"), the Council of the City of Watertown, Jefferson County, New York, authorized the issuance of $948,000 bonds of said City to pay the cost of City Court renovations, in and for the City of Watertown, Jefferson County, New York, including incidental expenses in connection therewith, a specific object or purpose, at an estimated maximum cost of $948,000, in and for the City of Watertown, Jefferson County, New York; and

WHEREAS, by ordinance dated September 16, 2019, the Council of the City amended the 2014 Ordinance to increase the estimated maximum cost and the amount of bonds authorized to pay the cost of the City Court renovations from $948,000 to $2,900,000; and

WHEREAS, the Council now wishes to (i) include in the scope of the project certain improvements to the City Hall building, including air handler replacements, and (ii) increase the estimated maximum cost and the amount of bonds authorized for the updated project to $7,300,000, an increase of $4,400,000; NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT ORDAINED, by the Council of the City of Watertown, Jefferson County, New York, as follows:

Section A. The title and Sections 1 and 2 of the ordinance of this Council dated and duly adopted December 15, 2014, as amended September 16, 2019, authorizing the issuance of $2,900,000 bonds to pay the cost of City Court renovations, in and for the City of Watertown, Jefferson County, New York, including incidental expenses in connection therewith, a specific object or purpose, at an estimated maximum cost of $2,900,000, in and for the City of Watertown, Jefferson County, New York, are hereby further amended, in part, to read as follows: "AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE ISSUANCE OF $8,000,000 BONDS OF THE CITY OF WATERTOWN, JEFFERSON COUNTY, NEW YORK, TO PAY THE COST OF CITY COURT RENOVATIONS AND CERTAIN CITY HALL RENOVATIONS, IN AND FOR SAID CITY."

. . . .

Section 1. For the specific object or purpose of paying the cost of City Court renovations and certain City Hall renovations, including air handler replacements, in and for the City of Watertown, Jefferson County, New York, including incidental expenses in connection therewith, there are hereby authorized to be issued $7,300,000 bonds of said City pursuant to the provisions of the Local Finance Law.

Section 2. It is hereby determined that the estimated maximum cost of the aforesaid specific object or purpose is $7,300,000 and that the plan for the financing thereof is by the issuance of the $7,300,000 bonds of said City authorized to be issued pursuant to this bond ordinance, provided however, that the amount of bonds to be issued shall be reduced by the amount of any grant funds received therefor.

Section B. The validity of such bonds and bond anticipation notes may be contested only if:

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1) Such obligations are authorized for an object or purpose for which said City is not authorized to expend money, or
2) The provisions of law which should be complied with at the date of publication of this ordinance are not substantially complied with, and an action, suit or proceeding contesting such validity is commenced within twenty days after the date of such publication, or
3) Such obligations are authorized in violation of the provisions of the Constitution.

Section C. Upon this ordinance taking effect, the same shall be published in summary in the Watertown Daily Times, the official newspaper, together with a notice of the City Clerk in substantially the form provided in Section 81.00 of the Local Finance Law.

Section D. This ordinance is effective immediately.

Seconded by Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen

Motion for unanimous consent moved by Council Member Robert O. Kimball, seconded by Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

Council Member Garrabrant indicated that he will be abstaining from the vote since his employer is involved in the project.

Council Member Shoen pointed out the cost of the construction oversight and wondered if this could be done in-house with more staffing in the Engineering Department.

Council Member Osborne asked if the Unified Court System has offered to help offset the cost of this project.

Mr. Mills explained that the State will be paying a 25% subsidy towards the interest of the bond. He reminded Council that the City is responsible for the bricks and mortar of the court facility and that the State pays for the staffing of the facility.

Council Member Kimball noted that court security will be moved to the main entrance of the building and the court officers will screen everyone coming into City Hall, which is an additional benefit.

At the call of the chair, a vote was taken on the foregoing ordinance and carried with all voting yea except for Council Member Shane A. Garrabrant abstaining.

S T A F F R E P O R T S

Sale of Surplus Hydro-electricity – November 2025
A report was available for Council to review.

Sales Tax Revenue – November 2025
A report was available for Council to review.

Elected Officials, NYS Retirement System Reporting Requirements
A report was available for Council to review.

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NEW BUSINESS

New Members of Council
Mayor Pierce welcomed the new members, Council Member Garrabrant and Council Member Osborne, and thanked them for wanting to serve the City in this capacity.

Other members of Council welcomed them as well during their individual portions of New Business.

Recent Water Crisis
Council Member Garrabrant thanked staff for their handling of the recent water crisis and asked if there would be a review of the cause in order to prevent the turbidity levels increasing to that level in the future.

Mr. Wagenaar said they have already done an initial report with the Department of Health and plan to do another after-action review. He confirmed there have been no additional findings beside the initial thoughts of the cause.

Council Member Kimball, Council Member Shoen and Mayor Pierce also thanked staff, as well as the County and State for their support during the situation.

Budget Process
Council Member Garrabrant asked if it was possible to have a work session prior to May to initiate the budget review process and receive input from Council and the residents.

Mr. Wagenaar said his goal is to have a work session, possibly in February, to start talking about the budget and preview the process.

Hydro Consultant RFP
In response to Council Member Garrabrant's inquiry about the status of the RFP for a Hydro Consultant, Mr. Wagenaar explained that staff is reviewing the proposals that were received and the goal is to have something in front of Council at the first meeting in February.

First Female Firefighter
Council Member Kimball announced that the Fire Academy Graduation was held on December 18 and featured the first female firefighter for the City of Watertown.

Water Grant Funding Award
Council Member Kimball noted that the City was awarded $37 million in grant funding for various water projects and he looks forward to these projects moving forward.

Housing Projects
Council Member Kimball announced that Neighbors of Watertown are now accepting applications for the new housing project on Main Avenue and that the housing project on Commerce Drive is 25% completed.

Swearing- In Ceremony/Council Orientation

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Council Member Osborne mentioned that this ceremony was an excellent event and he thanked the staff who were involved in planning it.

Snow on Sidewalks – Response to Privilege of the Floor

Council Member Shoen agreed with Mr. Phillips' concerns about snow not being shoveled on Arsenal Street and said the City needs a faster way of getting in touch with property owners and putting them on notice.

Sales Tax and Hydro Revenue
Referring to the staff reports, Council Member Shoen said the increase in sales tax revenue makes up for the hydro revenue being down. He stressed the volatility of these two revenue sources.

Refuse Concerns – Response to Privilege of the Floor
Council Member Shoen agreed that he is seeing more third-party vendors picking up refuse in the City. He also expressed concern that not everyone knows about the requirement of an enclosed container for stickered garbage bags and suggested there be more outreach to sticker customers. He also suggested the City return to recyclables being picked up every other week instead of weekly to decrease the impact on overtime.

Water Grant Funding Award - continued
Mayor Pierce also mentioned the City being awarded with $37 million in grant funding and thanked all the staff members who were involved in completing the application process.

Part-time City Court Judge
Mayor Pierce announced that the City is accepting applications for the appointment to the part-time City Court Judge position. She indicated that the requirements for applicants are to be a City resident and to be in practice for at least five years.

Council Liaison to the Flower Memorial Library Board
Mayor Pierce announced that Council Member Kimball has volunteered to be the liaison on behalf of the Council to this Board in place of former Council Member Ruggiero.

Motion was made by Council Member Robert O. Kimball to move into Executive Session 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 and to discuss collective bargaining.

Motion was seconded by Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

Council moved into Executive Session at 7:54 p.m.

Council reconvened at 9:55 p.m.

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A D J O U R N M E N T

At the call of the chair, meeting was duly adjourned at 9:55 p.m. by motion of Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen, seconded by Council Member Robert O. Kimball and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

Ann M. Saunders
City Clerk

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