

**CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION  
CITY OF WATERTOWN  
March 9, 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:** Aaron Harvill, Thomas Compo, James Mills, Brian MacCue, Dana Aikins, Michael Lumbis

**DISCUSSION**

**City Street Projects Updates**

Thomas Compo, City Engineer, began by presenting Council with a handout and then displayed a slideshow. Beginning with Richards Drive, he said that this street was one of his first projects when he started work as the City Engineer in 2024. He explained that, right away, he knew there were bigger problems on the street than originally believed. Mr. Compo drew Council's attention to before and after photos of what he described as "basically a lake" in front of a home and he discussed the various steps which had already been completed, including a video and a report from the consulting firm. He expressed concern that although letters were sent to all the residents of Richards Drive explaining the work planned and requesting permission to enter their homes to install the backflow prevention devices, only one homeowner had responded so far.

Mr. Compo then turned Council's attention to Iroquois Avenue. He explained that, in 2008, the City undertook a sewer improvement project, which included installation of storm sewer connections to the new main in the street. He said that for unknown reasons, there was never any provision in the contract to disconnect sump pumps from the sanitary sewer lateral and reconnect into the new storm sewer lateral. He told Council that the engineering department will communicate with the homeowners to inspect and request connection to the installed storm sewer main. He noted this will create credits for the Western Outfall Trunk Sewer (WOTS). He summarized the layout out of the new pipelines and drew a map of where the pipes will be laid. He also informed Council there will be no patching of the pipes and was thankful for the new survey equipment which was purchased for the Richards Drive project. He added that bids for the job will take place in the next three weeks.

Mr. Compo then directed Council's attention to Newell Street and explained there will be a total reconstruction from Arch Street to Engine Street. He presented Council with a map showing the location of concrete pipes which are lined with asbestos. He discussed at length the dimensions of the pipes and the locations across the Black River. He also reminded Council of the work that was started on the project last summer. He noted that the initial pipe design was confusing and was unclear as to why it was originally designed like that.

He showed Council photos of manholes that were surging with water from a heavy rain, which was in front of the Public Works building. He pointed out that the City had received a \$50,000 grant and informed Council of the tentative schedule for the project. He indicated a consultant will need to be hired.

Mr. Compo finished the discussion by updating the work to be completed on Huntington Street, which will include new water main pipes and will run all the way to Factory Street. He reminded Council of the water main break that happened in front of the Water Plant and summarized the final plans for the project. He then discussed the City's top five projects, which consist of Engine, Leray, East Main, Newell and Sherman Streets.

### **City Water Projects Updates**

Aaron Harvill, Water Superintendent, presented Council with a handout and a slideshow presentation. He began by explaining that the disinfection-by-products improvement project is currently under review by the New York State Department of Health. He said the Town of Pamela has approved the project and the Department of Health has been reviewing the basis of design since August 2025. He also highlighted that the City has submitted payment for the building permit to Jefferson County and noted that the City has notified the Environmental Protection Agency that the March 1 administrative order milestone will not be met due to the design still under review by the Department of Health (DOH). He summarized the details of the next administrative order milestone being on May 1<sup>st</sup> with tree-clearing beginning April 1<sup>st</sup>.

Mr. Harvill then discussed the East Reservoir Project. He highlighted that the project received a State funding grant in the amount of \$5 million for water infrastructure improvement. He added that the project submitted to the State is a \$29 million infrastructure project, which includes construction of a new above-ground reservoir, connection to the existing reservoir and a section of dedicated water transmission mains from the water plant to the reservoirs. He added that staff will be asking for a resolution to get a water feasibility test done.

Much discussion ensued regarding lining the reservoir.

Mr. Compo explained that it is possible to start the project this summer but is waiting for the results of the DOH review.

Mr. Harvill then drew Council's attention to the settled water line. He informed Council that it was originally installed around 1890 to convey water from the settling basin to the treatment plant. He said the pipe is approximately 2,500 feet in length and approximately 1,900 feet of pipe runs through the Black River and beneath the Delano Island Dam. He added that a leak was discovered during a drawdown to accommodate a hydro dam inspection on November 4, 2025. At that time, due to the conditions of the river, they decided to make a spot repair. He explained that divers were employed to wedge and grout the crack in the pipe, which had to be cured for nine days. They packed the bottom of the pipe, and this reduced the leak enough to allow the treatment plant to meet demand. He informed Council that a plan is in place to relocate the pipe out of the river.

Council discussed concerns about not replacing the 135-year-old pipe, the financial burden of moving the pipe and the next step of getting the Department of Transportation to assist with mounting the pipe on the Route 3 bridge.

Mr. Harvill next addressed the topic of lead and copper rule replacement and informed Council that the State deadline for the replacement plan is November of 2027. He explained that the City will then have ten years to remove known lead. He informed Council that the service line, which is the line that runs from the residence to the street, are the property owners' responsibility. He advised that there is currently no means to require that the materials get replaced, but it is, instead, an option. He informed Council that in October 2024 there were 697 total services of concern and as of October 2025 there were 668 total services of concern. Mr. Harvill advised Council that one of the hurdles is getting the homeowner to participate but also noted that poor records have been kept over the years. He pointed out that there is funding available through the State Revolving Fund, which is highly competitive, and he added that the City has already received a NYSDOH grant for LSL replacement, which ended in 2024. Mr. Harvill informed Council that approximately 190 services were replaced between 2018 and 2024. He noted that currently, City Code does not mandate replacement and suggests that this should be changed.

### **Lead Paint Initiative and Demolition Projects Update**

Code Enforcement Supervisor Dana Aikins advised Council that Jefferson County is handling the lead registry since the City declined. He noted that the County had hired staff and had sent out letters in December to required properties. He advised that the State is putting money towards this initiative as the County has received a grant of \$326,000 and Neighbors of Watertown have received grants of \$552,000 and \$2.5 million.

The City received a notice of law change which would require that lead inspection be tied back to code enforcement. He indicated that compliance with lead regulations will be handled in the same way as normal fire inspections. He indicated that the State had not released the exact verbiage but, once they do, Codes will get back to Council on how they will proceed.

Mayor Pierce mentioned she has heard from some members of the public who have received the County's letters and she has advised them to direct their questions to the County.

### **531 Bradley Street Demolition Update**

Planning and Community Development Director Michael Lumbis addressed Council regarding the city-owned property at 531 Bradley Street. He explained that the City had assumed ownership in 2021 and had made several attempts to redevelop the property, mentioning Neighbors of Watertown, who had deemed the project too large for them to handle. Mr. Lumbis informed Council that the City had then solicited project proposals through the Vacant Homes Initiative program in 2023, but no developer had come forward. He advised that 2024 CDBG funds had been allocated for the demolition of the house. He informed Council that the project had been put out to bid in February and six bids were received, noting Council would be asked to approve the low bid at the next meeting. Mr. Lumbis noted that the lowest bid was well under budget.

### **2026-2027 Budget Timeline**

Comptroller James Mills updated Council on the proposed timeline for the budget process, pointing out four proposed dates for budget reviews. He reminded Council that each budget season he recommends Council adopt a Local Law overriding the tax cap as standard procedure and he informed Council that proposed Local Law would come before them at the April 20<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting so they could schedule a public hearing. He also reminded Council that they would have the final vote on whether to go over the tax cap, but the option should be available to them.

Mayor Pierce stated that she was unable to attend proposed work sessions on April 7<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and the 14<sup>th</sup> but was open to other dates in the last week of March or beginning of April.

Council Member Kimball said he would not be available April 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Mayor Pierce suggested a weekend work session, mentioning this had been done in previous years.

Council Member Osborne mentioned that he was flexible.

City Manager Wagenaar indicated staff would work out some new proposed dates for the budget sessions.

**City Manager's Update**

April Work Session - City Manager Wagenaar reminded Council that the April work session would be moved from Monday, April 13 to Thursday the 16<sup>th</sup> to accommodate schedules and he mentioned the topics which would be addressed at that meeting.

Flag Resolution – City Manager Wagenaar informed Council that, as Council requested, a flag resolution would be on Monday's Council agenda.

Police Exam – City Manager Wagenaar encouraged the public to apply for the next City police exam, which will be held on May 9, but applications are due on March 31.

Streetlights – City Manager Wagenaar indicated he hears lots of complaints about streetlights being out. He advised that DPW had performed a streetlight inventory of the 3,000 City streetlights and 80 were determined to be malfunctioning. He noted the list has been provided to National Grid.

Golf Course Hole Sponsorship – City Manager Wagenaar mentioned there are still available holes to sponsor at the City's golf course.

Council Member Kimball requested an update on where the City stands on offering naming rights at the Golf Course and the Arena.

City Manager Wagenaar advised that the City has been working with their attorneys and were near a decision.

Work session ended at 8:25 p.m.

*Margaret M Puccia*  
Deputy City Clerk

