

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

Mayor Sarah V.C. Pierce Presiding

Present: Council Member Robert O. Kimball
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: James Mills, Thomas Compo, Brian MacCue, Michael Lumbis, Kimberli Johnston, Amber Fowler, Aaron Harvill, Josh Satchwell

The City Manager presented the following reports to Council:

- Resolution No. 1 - Authorizing Data Processing Service Agreement Between the City of Watertown and the Watertown City School District
- Resolution No. 2 - Approving the Funding Approval/Agreement for the Program Year 2025 Community Development Block Grant Program
- Ordinance No. 1 - Amending the Code of the City of Watertown, Chapter 301 – Water: § 301-4 Costs of Main-to-Curb-Stop and Fire Services
- Ordinance No. 2 - Amending the Code of the City of Watertown, Chapter 161: Garbage, Rubbish and Refuse
- Staff Report - Supplemental Regulations for Marijuana Dispensaries within the City of Watertown Zoning Ordinance

Meeting opened with a moment of silence.

Pledge of Allegiance was given.

The reading of the minutes of the regular meeting of September 2, 2025 and work session of September 8, 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.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Stanley Campany, Public Square, thanked the Department of Public Works for responding to his complaints of brush interfering with the sidewalks and the Police Department for trying to clean up the downtown area. He mentioned the recent ride-a-long the City Manager did with the Police and expressed his opinion that it was done to harass the homeless. He said the City should accept Mr. Simao's offer to provide a shelter for the homeless. He also discussed his disapproval of the handling of the ethics complaint against Council Member Olney, and in particular, the City Attorney's role.

Christopher Tehonica, Carthage, discussed the homeless situation, stating Mr. Simao's offer should be accepted, and mentioned various interactions that he has had with homeless people. He pointed out that

it is important to speak to them and hear their story. He defended City Manager Wagenaar against the statements made by the previous speaker.

Jonathan Phillips, 735 Mill Street, said there is a disconnect between the homeless and the Police Department and mentioned a recent article in the media in which a Police Officer entered a burning building to rescue someone. He also expressed concerns regarding incidents occurring downtown, including fights in the street and pedestrian safety with crosswalks. Lastly, he stated that lower Arsenal Street should be changed back from one lane to two lanes.

Peter Monaco, 135 Smith Street, discussed the proposed changes to the City's refuse program and noted the things that he disagreed with. He expressed his opinion that the changes are intended to make the City's refuse program unsuccessful in order to eventually discontinue it. In particular, he was concerned with the City no longer issuing refunds to customers ending their service in the middle of the refuse quarter.

Scott Gates, 157 Dorsey Street, indicated that he has been advocating for a dog park for 19 years, recounting the years of history and why it has not been successful. He said he would give the City one more chance to work with him before he begins a suit against the City.

Vaughn Shoen, West Flower Avenue, expressed his concerns that the City has DARE signs posted on the streets but then has multiple smoke shops throughout the City. He also said that construction of low-income housing is not going to help the homeless issue.

PUBLIC HEARING

At 7:15 p.m. Mayor Pierce asked the City Clerk to read the notice of Public Hearing concerning the City's Draft Program Year 2024 Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report for the Community Development Block Grant Program.

Mayor Pierce declared the hearing open at 7:15 p.m.

No one spoke.

Mayor Pierce declared the hearing closed at 7:16 p.m.

RESOLUTIONS

Resolution No. 1 - Authorizing Data Processing Service Agreement Between the City of Watertown and the Watertown City School District

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS the City of Watertown has computer equipment which has automated the functions performed within the City Assessment Department, and

WHEREAS the City Assessor's Office is responsible for maintaining the records for all real property within the City of Watertown, and

WHEREAS the City has the ability to produce assessment rolls, print, fold and seal tax bills and maintain the data needed to accomplish these tasks, and

WHEREAS the Watertown City School District has a need for the services offered by the City's Assessment and Information Technology Departments,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown approves the three (3) year Data Processing Service Agreement with the Watertown City School District, a copy of which is attached and made a part of this resolution, and

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

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

Resolution No. 2 - Approving the Funding Approval/Agreement for the Program Year 2025 Community Development Block Grant Program

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS the City of Watertown has completed its Program Year 2025 Annual Action Plan for the Community Development Block Grant Program and submitted it to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and

WHEREAS HUD has approved the City's Annual Action Plan and has prepared a Funding Approval/Agreement for the grant funding,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby approves the Funding Approval/Agreement with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for the Program Year 2025 Community Development Block Grant Program, a copy of which is attached and made part of this Resolution, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Mayor, Sarah V. C. Pierce, is hereby authorized and directed to sign the Agreement on behalf of the City Council.

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

ORDINANCES

Ordinance No. 1 - Amending the Code of the City of Watertown, Chapter 301 – Water: § 301-4 Costs of Main-to-Curb-Stop and Fire Services

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS §301-4 of the Code of the City of Watertown Chapter 301 – Water outlines a fee structure for services provided by the Water Distribution Division of the City of Watertown's Water Department, and

WHEREAS a review of this section revealed that the cost of the materials and labor for these services has increased since the last revision of this fee structure was done, and

WHEREAS it is the City's desire that the fees reflect the current cost to the City for the materials and labor for these services,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT ORDAINED by the City Council that §301-4 (A), (B), (C), and (D) of the Code of the City of Watertown Chapter 301 – Water be deleted in its entirety and replaced with the following:

§ 301-4. Costs of main-to-curb-stop and fire services.

- A. The consumer shall pay the following charges for the installation or renewal of main-to-curb-stop service or fire service:

Size of Service Pipe (inches)	Charge
3/4	\$1,500
1	\$1,600
1 1/2	\$2,000
2	\$2,500
Larger than 2	Actual cost

- B. A tapping charge will be added to the above charges for main-to-curb-stop service or fire service, whenever a new tap is required. The consumer shall pay the following tapping charges, when required:

Size of Service Pipe (inches)	Charge
3/4	\$112.50
1	\$150
1 1/2	\$225
2	\$300
Larger than 2	\$150 per inch of tap size

- C. When employees of the Department perform this service for a contractor or developer, the contractor or developer shall be charged \$150 per inch of tap, plus actual costs for labor, equipment, and materials provided in the performance of this service.
- D. The term "actual cost," as used in this section, shall mean all reasonable costs associated with the installation or renewal of the main-to-curb-stop service or fire service, or the tapping of a water main, including but not limited to labor, materials, equipment, road repairs, and curbing repairs.

and,

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED that this amendment shall take effect as soon as it is published once in the official newspaper of the City of Watertown or printed as the City Manager directs.

Seconded by Council Member Clifford G. Olney III

Motion for unanimous consent moved by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero, seconded by Council Member Clifford G. Olney III and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

Prior to the vote on the foregoing ordinance, Council Member Olney noted that for a service pipe larger than 2 inches the fee is listed as the “actual cost” and wondered if the other fees are close to the actual City costs.

City Manager Wagenaar indicated that they were, and he then explained when this fee would be charged to a resident.

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

Ordinance No. 2 - Amending the Code of the City of Watertown, Chapter 161: Garbage, Rubbish and Refuse

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS the City Council of the City of Watertown was presented with recommended changes to the City’s Refuse Collection Service during the August 11, 2025 work session, and

WHEREAS City Council supports these recommendations, to include offering the City’s Refuse Collection Service to commercial properties (non-residential) based on site location, site access, type and quantity of refuse,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT ORDAINED that §161-1 of Chapter 161: Garbage, Rubbish and Refuse be deleted in its entirety and replaced with the following:

§ 161-1. Rubbish creating nuisance prohibited.

No person shall place or deposit or, as owner, agent or tenant, allow or permit to remain in or upon any land or the surface of the same any rubbish, as defined in §§ 248-1 and 161-1.1, which tends to or does create a nuisance or which tends to or does serve as a breeding place for flies or mosquitoes or as a source of food for rats or which tends to or does increase the fire hazard of neighboring property. Rubbish shall be contained in approved watertight trash/garbage cans or trash/garbage totes for proper disposal pursuant to § 161-1.1.

And,

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED that §161-1.1 (A) of Chapter 161: Garbage, Rubbish and Refuse be deleted in its entirety and replaced with the following:

§ 161-1.1. Dumping of rubbish prohibited; definition.

- A. No person shall place or deposit or, as owner, agent or tenant, allow or permit to remain in or upon private property or any property of the City of Watertown, particularly the margin between the sidewalk and the street, any rubbish, as set forth

herein, except on the day of regularly scheduled trash pickup for that property in an approved watertight trash/garbage cans or trash/garbage totes.

And,

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED that the following definition be added to §161-5 of Chapter 161: Garbage, Rubbish and Refuse:

CONTAINERS - Approved watertight trash/garbage cans or trash/garbage totes

And,

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED that §161-6 (A), (C), (B) and (D) of Chapter 161: Garbage, Rubbish and Refuse be deleted in their entirety and replaced with the following:

§ 161-6. Scope of City collection services.

- A. The City shall offer, with City forces, a refuse collection service to all residential properties of the City. This City refuse collection service shall also be offered to commercial properties (non-residential), at the discretion of the Superintendent of Public Works, based on site location, site access, type and quantity of refuse. The requirements of all other sections of this article on preparation and storage of refuse apply to churches and nonprofit fraternal associations as well as to residences.
- B. (Reserved)
- C. Mandatory refuse recycling. Commencing on November 4, 1991, mandatory refuse recycling will be implemented for all City of Watertown residential and approved commercial properties provided with City refuse collection services. The Superintendent of Public Works is authorized to promulgate and enforce such rules and regulations as to ensure compliance with New York State and/or County of Jefferson recycling requirements or such other mandates as imposed by the City Council.
- D. No recycling services will be provided to any City residential and approved commercial properties who do not participate in the City refuse collection services as provided at § 161-22 of this Code.

And,

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED that §161-9 of Chapter 161: Garbage, Rubbish and Refuse be deleted in its entirety and replaced with the following:

§ 161-9. Location of containers.

The containers for refuse collection shall be kept in a suitable, regular yard location or interior location on private property by the occupant of the property in a manner which does not constitute an annoyance or nuisance to the public. If in a yard location, the containers shall be kept at ground level at the rear building line of the house or structure. The refuse containers shall be placed at the curbside in front of the property on the

appropriate day for the collection of refuse for that section of the City in which the property is located. It shall be the responsibility of the occupant of the property to place the refuse containers at the curbside for collection and to remove said refuse containers from the curbside after collection is completed. After completion of the collection process, the refuse containers shall be returned to the aforementioned rear building line of the house or structure or to the interior location. Those elderly and/or physically disadvantaged who are unable to carry their refuse to the curb may have it removed from them by City crews, and such inability shall be attested to by medical personnel.

And,

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED that §161-20 (C) of Chapter 161: Garbage, Rubbish and Refuse be deleted in its entirety and replaced with the following:

§ 161-20. Locations where City collection service not provided.

C. Receptacles shall consist of metal or plastic trash/garbage cans or totes and dumpsters.

And,

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED that §161-22 (A), (B), and (C) of Chapter 161: Garbage, Rubbish and Refuse be deleted in their entirety and replaced with the following:

§ 161-22. City disposal bags and tote service; definitions; requirements; fees; penalties for offenses.

A. Definitions. As used in this section, the following terms shall have the meanings indicated:

CITY DISPOSAL STICKER — A sticker available from the City or its agents which shall bear an identification mark established by the City.

CITY REFUSE TOTE — A tote owned and issued by the City of Watertown for lease to residential and approved commercial properties for the deposit and storage of garbage and refuse.

CITY USER — A person who is a legal occupant of a residential or approved commercial property of the City of Watertown and who purchases City disposal stickers or leases a City refuse tote and uses them in accordance with this section.

DISPOSAL BAG — Any plastic bag of less than 33 gallons which bears a City disposal sticker. This shall be the only means by which a City User, not leasing a City refuse tote, can dispose of their garbage and rubbish through the City refuse collection service.

MULTIPLE DWELLING — Such premises as are rented or leased, which are occupied as the residence or home of three or more families, living independently of

each other, as further defined by the Multiple Dwelling Law of the State of New York, pursuant to § 4 of that law.

OWNERS OF MULTIPLE DWELLINGS — Such individuals, corporations or other legal entities who or which own residential properties which are defined as multiple dwellings, pursuant to § 4 of the Multiple Dwelling Law of the State of New York.

- B. Established rates. The City will purchase stickers and refuse totes meeting specifications set by the City Council. The price of the sticker and refuse tote to the City users shall be established at least annually by the Watertown City Council through a budget resolution that adopts a City Fees and Charges Schedule. Said schedule shall be available to the public at the office of the Watertown City Clerk.
- C. Preparation and collection of garbage and rubbish.
 - (1) City residential and approved commercial properties utilizing the City refuse collection service shall be required to dispose of all garbage and rubbish in the disposal bag which must bear a City disposal sticker or in a leased City refuse tote.
 - (2) In the event that a City resident decides to utilize a private garbage and rubbish pickup service, the resident is subject to the below-stated City enforcement collection fees in the event that the private pickup fails to remove the resident's garbage or rubbish and such garbage and rubbish is nonbagged as required by this section.
 - (3) Disposal bags cannot exceed 33 gallons. In no instance shall the bags be packed so as to contain more than their intended weight. Collectible material must be properly sealed and presented and set at curbside no sooner than 7:00 p.m. on the day before scheduled collection and not later than 7:00 a.m. the day of scheduled collection. All nonbagged garbage and rubbish will be left and will be subject to prosecution as litter and also subject to a special collection fee as established by the City Council of the City of Watertown at least annually through a budget resolution that adopts a City Fees and Charges Schedule in the amounts available. Such schedule shall be available to the public at the office of the Watertown City Clerk.

And,

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED that this amendment shall take effect as soon as it is published once in the official newspaper of the City of Watertown, or printed as the City Manager directs.

Seconded by Council Member Clifford G. Olney III

Motion for unanimous consent moved by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero, seconded by Council Member Clifford G. Olney III and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

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

STAFF REPORTS

Supplemental Regulations for Marijuana Dispensaries within the City of Watertown Zoning Ordinance

Mayor Pierce explained there was a memo available from staff recommending Council consider adding additional local regulations and/or restrictions, above and beyond New York State law in regard to marijuana dispensaries in the City of Watertown. These regulations could restrict hours of operations, proximity to sensitive sites, security protocols, signage and product displays. Staff advised that supplemental zoning regulations could be developed through a coordinated effort between the Planning Department, City Attorney and Planning Commission.

Mr. Wagenaar added that staff is looking at other municipalities which allow cannabis dispensaries and their regulations, as well as working with the City Attorney.

NEW BUSINESS

Water Projects and Grant Funding

Mentioning he receives many notifications of water breaks, Council Member Kimball said he was pleased to receive the notification that the City was awarded the EPA grant, which Mr. Wagenaar confirmed. He discussed the water projects that have been proposed and the extensive costs of each, as well as the importance of seeking grant funding to assist with the costs. He stressed that these grants are very competitive. He said he hopes the City will be awarded funds, but added the City is competing against many other municipalities with aging infrastructure. Noting the City is doing its due diligence to obtain grants, he warned that residents will likely see increases in water and sewer rates.

Ethics Complaint Against Council Member Olney

Council Member Kimball clarified that he has never been out to get Council Member Olney, and that the reason he wants to continue with the hearing process is to give Council Member Olney the opportunity to tell his story and receive due process. He stressed that he never thought, for any reason, that Council Member Olney would be removed from office. He indicated that his goal is to finish the process that was started by a previous Mayor and Council.

Changes to Refuse Program

Council Member Kimball referred to comments made by Mr. Monaco during Privilege of the Floor and clarified that Council is not trying to eliminate the City refuse program. He added that the intent is to have garbage bags in a trash can to prevent animals from getting into it.

Ethics Complaint Against Council Member Olney (continued)

Council Member Olney addressed comments made regarding a hearing providing him an opportunity to tell his story but said he feels the City has spent a lot of money trying to prevent him from telling his story. He cited examples of what he thought showed this and mentioned that no charges came out of the NYS Police investigation. Stating that he feels this was all politically driven, he recounted what he called “the narrative” put out there to the public and discussed in length the details surrounding the initial complaint and the process handling it.

Homelessness

Council Member Olney said he recently toured the new facility being built to help address the homeless issue and posted a video to his social media account. He said he hoped the County and City would consider Mr. Simao's offer to provide a shelter and give people a place to store their belongings and service animals.

Changes to Refuse Program (continued)

Council Member Olney said these changes have a large potential for more revenue and discussed marketing ideas, such as a new logo. He stressed the importance of the City finding new revenue sources to decrease tax increases.

Cannabis Dispensaries Regulations and Zoning

Council Member Olney mentioned that he sent information to the City Manager today regarding this. He also mentioned an individual interested in buying a building for this purpose but that they would need to seek a variance due to zoning.

Changes to Refuse Program (continued)

Council Member Ruggiero mentioned that she pushed to open the City's refuse program to commercial customers in order to create more revenue, which could help with the cost of the new trucks.

Homelessness (continued)

Council Member Ruggiero commented that the City should accept Mr. Simao's offer for a shelter as a temporary solution until the permanent housing project is completed. She said a temporary shelter at this location worked in the past to keep people out of the elements during the winter.

Dog Park

Council Member Ruggiero noted that it is hard to work with someone who has threatened lawsuits against the City if he does not get what he wants. She implied that there is no dog park today due to Mr. Gates' demands for a particular location and causing issue with the progress of the project.

Zoning

Council Member Ruggiero said she wanted to correct comments being made in the public and stated that Council does not control where developments go in the City. She clarified that it is dictated by zoning and goes through the Planning Commission, so Council does not have the power to control the number of smoke shops within the City.

Ethics Complaint Against Council Member Olney (continued)

Referring to Council Member Kimball's statement that this process was started by a previous Mayor and Council, Council Member Ruggiero stated the statement was incorrect and that it was started by the previous Mayor. She added that the previous Mayor caused the City to incur a \$19,000 legal bill for writing the ethics complaint without the remaining Council having a say in it.

Patriot Day

Council Member Ruggiero noted that she, along with the Mayor and City Manager, attended last Saturday's event. She said it is a way to honor service members and keep their memory alive.

Italian Bravo Festival

Council Member Ruggiero pointed out that it was the 40th anniversary of the festival that was held last weekend.

City Court and City Hall Renovation

Council Member Ruggiero asked for the cost of just the court room renovation.

Mr. Wagenaar stated that approximately \$1.5 million of the \$8 million was for City Hall improvements, such as the HVAC system, insulation and windows.

Dog Park/Homelessness

Council Member Shoen agreed with Council Member Ruggiero that it is difficult to want to do business with someone who is threatening litigation.

Zoning (continued)

Council Member Shoen clarified that Council can make zoning changes and he noted that he has brought some suggestions forward but any proposal requires support from other members of Council. He added Council could change where smoke shops are legally permitted within the City.

Splashpad

Council Member Shoen noted that the splashpad at the Park is closed for repairs but the one at Flynn Pool is still open.

Lower Arsenal Street

Council Member Shoen said he did not agree with limiting the number of lanes on lower Arsenal Street when it was done and he still feels it should be changed back to two lanes. He also suggested the bus transfer station be relocated from that area and offered the parking lot behind the buildings on Court Street as a possible new location.

Grants

Council Member Shoen discussed the recent grants that the City has applied for and compared the need for grant funding for water projects versus grants that have been awarded to recent housing projects. He noted the larger number of people to be impacted by the water projects and expressed frustration in the difficulty of obtaining grant funding for clean drinking water.

Homelessness (continued)

Council Member Shoen said there needs to be a review of where the homeless people come from, and if they were not originally from this area, why are they coming here. He also discussed the impact of NYS closing mental facilities and prisons throughout the State.

Harvest Festival

Council Member Shoen announced that the Harvest Festival will be held at the end of September, and he said if vendors are interested in participating, they should contact the Parks and Recreation Department.

Civil Disagreement/Discourse – Privilege of the Floor

Referring to statements made during Privilege of the Floor, Council Member Shoen said he is fine with civil disagreement but does not think it is necessary to swear at Council Members. He said he

understands how difficult it is to speak at Privilege of the Floor but feels speakers should conduct themselves in a reasonable manner.

Mayor Pierce added that she feels the speaker was inappropriate characterizing Police Officers that way, as while as the characterization of the City Manager's ride-a-long. She clarified that the City Manager wanted to see firsthand what City's Police Officers are encountering, and she thanked Mr. Wagenaar for doing that.

Homelessness (continued)

Mayor Pierce said that she has spoken with the County, and they reported that they will have the winter needs of the homeless population covered. She added that if a private individual wants to open their property as a shelter, then they are welcome to do so on their own, and she noted that there is a shelter in St. Lawrence County run by a private individual.

100th Anniversary of the VFW

Mayor Pierce said that she sent members of Council an email regarding the 100th anniversary of the VFW and a celebration will be held at the end of October.

Political Climate

Mayor Pierce read from a prepared statement regarding the recent events and current political climate in the Country. Stating she is deeply saddened by the horrific and senseless events of last week and that violence has become all too common across the nation, she said there is no justification for violence regardless of the difference in political views. She went on to speak about the need to respect one another even when there are disagreements and the importance of living peacefully despite differences. She urged everyone to re-commit to that principle and strive for more respect, civility and peace, and as Mayor, she pledged to foster that spirit in the community.

Motion was made by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero to move into Executive Session to discuss the employment history of a particular individual or corporation.

Motion was seconded by Council Member Clifford G. Olney III and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

Council moved into Executive Session at 8:11 p.m.

Council reconvened at 8:51 p.m.

A D J O U R N M E N T

At the call of the chair, meeting was duly adjourned at 8:51 p.m. by motion of Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero, seconded by Council Member Robert O. Kimball and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

Ann M. Saunders
City Clerk