

**CITY COUNCIL MEETING
CITY OF WATERTOWN
October 6, 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: Erica Anderson, James Mills, Aaron Harvill, Michael Lumbis, Dana Aikins, Tina Bartlett-Bearup, Matthew Timerman

The City Manager presented the following reports to Council:

- Resolution No. 1 - Authorizing the Sale of Surplus Police Equipment
- Resolution No. 2 - Accepting Bid for Demolition Project – Various Properties – Buckley’s Excavating & Landscaping LLC
- Resolution No. 3 - Designating the City Manager as the Authorized Representative to Apply for the Northern Border Regional Commission Grant to Fund the Disinfection By-Product Improvement Project
- Resolution No. 4 - Approving the Use of Washington State Department of Enterprise Services (DES) Cooperative Purchasing Agreement for Transit Buses
- Resolution No. 5 - Approving the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Sub-Recipient Agreement with Neighbors of Watertown, Inc. for the 2025 Homebuyer Program
- Resolution No. 6 - Discontinuing a Portion of a City Street Known as Waterman Drive
- Resolution No. 7 - Authorizing Adjustment to the Fiscal Year 2025-26 City Tax Bill for Parcel No. 55-12-001.000 and Refund Overpayment to National Grid
- Resolution No. 8 - Approving Change Order No. 09G with C.O. Falter for Water Pollution Control Plant Sludge Disposal Modifications Project Phase 1B
- Resolution No. 9 - Authorizing Amendment No. 8 of the GHD Engineering Agreement for Water Pollution Control Plant Sludge Disposal Modification Project Phase 1B
- Resolution No. 10 - Adopting the 2025 Jefferson County Hazard Mitigation Plan
- Sale of Surplus Hydro-electricity – August 2025
- Sales Tax Revenue – August 2025
- NYS Retirement System 2027 Employer Contribution Rates
- Winter Crow Roost Dispersal Program
- Boards and Commissions Report and Letters of Interest
- Transportation Commission Report

Meeting opened with a moment of silence.

Pledge of Allegiance was given.

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

COMMUNICATIONS

An email was received from Bill and Debbie Dermady, 118 Seymour Street, commending DPW staff for the work recently done in Lansingdorp Park, and she encouraged the public to participate in the Adopt-A-Spot program.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Christopher Tehonica, Carthage, discussed the homeless issue, noting that he has surveyed many of them to determine where they are coming from, and stated that most are down on their luck and need help.

Patrick Hickey, Pawling Street, provided Council with an update from the Transportation Commission and the Neighborhood Watch Program. He asked Council to review the information given to them regarding the recent Transportation Commission meetings and consider their request to expand the commission's scope to include bike, e-bike and pedestrian infrastructure. Regarding the Neighborhood Watch Program, he reviewed statistics and stated the membership is growing.

Don Metzger, Watertown, mentioned a recent article in the Watertown Daily Times regarding the processing of leachate from the Rodman landfill and other landfills outside the area by the Watertown Pollution Control Plant, and he discussed his concerns with cancer-causing chemicals and toxins possibly getting into the Black River and surrounding water systems.

Stanley Campamy, Franklin Street, discussed the homeless situation and their need to have shelter before winter and a place to store their personal belongings. He also commended the Police Department for breaking up a fight in the downtown area over the weekend and he suggested the City do a better job decorating for the upcoming holiday season.

Frank Battista, Palmer Street, addressed Council about the bid for demolition services in Resolution No. 2. He was concerned that the demolition of the Coffeen Street property included the garage because he felt the garage was salvageable and would add value to the property, if it were to be sold.

Jonathan Phillips, Mill Street, expressed concern with the price of the City garbage stickers being \$5 when the Jefferson County dump only charges \$3 per bag. He also stated that he feels the price of the City totes is too high. Lastly, he expressed his concerns with the upcoming water projects and stressed the need for the City to address the aging water pipes throughout the City.

Elizabeth Brown, Gill Street, discussed the homeless problem and where people were coming from, stating it makes sense for homeless people to come into the City for the available resources. She suggested a household registry, similar to what is done in other countries, as a possible solution. She also thanked Council Member Olney for bringing new information to light.

PUBLIC HEARING

At 7:15 p.m. Mayor Pierce asked the City Clerk to read the notice of Public Hearing concerning City of Watertown 2020 Community Development Block Grant Annual Action Plan Amendment.

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.

R E S O L U T I O N S

Resolution No. 1 - Authorizing the Sale of Surplus Police Equipment

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS the City of Watertown Police Department has surplus equipment, the description of which is attached and made a part of this resolution, and

WHEREAS the surplus equipment may have some value best determined by an online auction,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Watertown, New York, that it hereby authorizes the sale, by online auction, of the surplus equipment as described in the attached listing, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that final acceptance of such bids shall constitute acceptance of the same by the City Manager.

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

Resolution No. 2 - Accepting Bid for Demolition Project – Various Properties – Buckley’s Excavating & Landscaping LLC

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS the City desires to abate and demolish the existing structures located at the following sites: 518 Coffeen Street, 308 Waltham Street, 247 Main Street West, and 235 Rutland Street North, and

WHEREAS the Purchasing Department advertised and received four (4) sealed bids for the Demolition Project – Various Properties, and

WHEREAS on September 17, 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 Code Enforcement Supervisor, and it is their recommendation that the City Council accept the lowest responsive bid submitted by Buckley’s Excavating & Landscaping, LLC, and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby accepts the total bid amount received from Buckley's Excavating & Landscaping, LLC in the amount of \$94,800.00, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Manager of the City of Watertown or their designee 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, Council Member Shoen mentioned that the Public Works Department recently budgeted for an excavator, which he thought was to be used to assist with demolition projects. He noted that on two of the properties, the structures were already on the ground and wondered if DPW could do the work to save money.

Mr. Wagenaar said they looked at that, but considering the risks, contamination and DPW's current workload, it was decided not to proceed in that direction at this time. He explained that the analysis of risk and cost showed it was not a good payout, but it is something that could be considered for future demolition projects. He also agreed with Council Member Shoen's suggestion for future bids to be done independently for each structure instead of one bid for all and he provided, at the request of Council Member Olney, more information as to why it was not cost effective for DPW to perform this work.

In response to Mayor Pierce's inquiry about Mr. Battista's suggestion to keep the garage at the Coffeen Street property, Code Enforcement Supervisor Dana Aikins stated that, in his professional opinion, the garage was not salvageable.

Discussion ensued regarding whether the garage should be looked at again and whether Council could approve this resolution but then change the project scope to remove the cost of the garage demolition if it was determined to be salvageable.

Attorney Kristen Smith advised that she is not sure this could be modified once the resolution is approved since the resolution accepts the bid as presented. She recommended Council either approve the resolution as is or reject the bid to make the change.

Motion was made by Council Member Robert O. Kimball to table the foregoing resolution.

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

Council Member Shoen questioned whether the costs of the demolition would be recouped by the City and said he would rather see the City address these properties prior to them getting to this condition, mentioning the need for housing.

This led to a discussion about land banks and an overview of recent meetings the City Manager is having with the County regarding land banks.

Resolution No. 3 - Designating the City Manager as the Authorized Representative to Apply for the Northern Border Regional Commission Grant to Fund the Disinfection By-Product Improvement Project

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS the City of Watertown, New York, is under an EPA Administrative Order for removal of disinfectant by-products from the City's drinking water, and

WHEREAS the City of Watertown has contracted with LaBella Associates for grant application services, and

WHEREAS the Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC), established by Congress in 2008, offers grants through the Catalyst Program for projects across the Northern Border Region, and

WHEREAS the Projects classified as construction in support of infrastructure are eligible for awards of up to \$1,000,000, and

WHEREAS the City Council desires to seek funding for the disinfectant by-product project through the NBRC Grant Program, and

WHEREAS the Grant Agreement requires that the municipality designate an Authorized Representative for the project, and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby authorizes the City Manager to enter and execute the Northern Border Regional Commission grant.

Seconded by Council Member Clifford G. Olney III

Prior to the vote on the foregoing resolution, Mr. Wagenaar, at the request of Council Member Olney, provided a brief explanation of this grant for the public's benefit. In response to Council Member Olney questioning the need for this project since the City's water has been in compliance recently, Mr. Wagenaar cautioned him to refrain from comments that a project is not needed when applying for grants because the approvers of grants listen to these discussions.

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

Resolution No. 4 - Approving the Use of Washington State Department of Enterprise Services (DES) Cooperative Purchasing Agreement for Transit Buses

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS Washington State acting by and through the Department of Enterprise Services (DES), a Washington State governmental agency authorized to develop, solicit, and establish procurement solutions, including contracts to provide goods and/or services to support state agencies and to other local or federal government agencies or entities; and,

WHEREAS pursuant to RCW 39.26.060(1), Washington State DES is authorized to contract with eligible entities through a fully executed cooperative purchasing agreement; and,

WHEREAS the City represents that it is an eligible entity and seeks to utilize the Washington State DES contracts in order to purchase FTA approved transit buses; and,

WHEREAS Purchasing Manager, Tina Bartlett-Bearup in consultation with the Citibus Transit Department, DPW Fleet Manager, and legal counsel, have determined it is in the City's best interest to utilize the Washington State DES agreement for the procurement of FTA approved transit buses as specified under the terms and conditions of the agreement; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby approves the Cooperative Purchasing Agreement between the City of Watertown and Washington State DES in order to provide a cost savings to the City and provide a tool to make the City's governmental operations more effective and efficient, a copy of which is attached and made a part of this resolution; and

BE IT FURTHER that the City Manager of the City Watertown is hereby authorized and directed to sign all contracts associated with this resolution and any Agreement on behalf of the City of Watertown.

Seconded by Council Member Clifford G. Olney III

Prior to the vote on the foregoing resolution, Purchasing Manager Tina Bartlett-Bearup explained, at the request of the Mayor, why the City is allowed to use a cooperative agreement from Washington State.

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

Resolution No. 5 - Approving the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Sub-Recipient Agreement with Neighbors of Watertown, Inc. for the 2025 Homebuyer Program

WHEREAS the City of Watertown's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Annual Action Plan for Program Year 2025 includes a Homebuyer Program that allocates funding for the purchase and rehabilitation of approximately five (5) housing units to income eligible homebuyers within the City of Watertown, and

WHEREAS the Annual Action Plan identifies the Homebuyer Program to consist of \$215,000 in funding for the purchase, rehabilitation, administration, and program delivery, and

WHEREAS Neighbors of Watertown, Inc. will serve as the Sub-Recipient of the funds for program administration, and

WHEREAS a Sub-Recipient Agreement between the City of Watertown and Neighbors of Watertown, Inc. for the CDBG funds has been prepared,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Watertown that it hereby approves the Sub-Recipient Agreement with Neighbors of Watertown, Inc. for the 2025 Homebuyer Program, a copy of which is attached and made a part of this resolution, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Manager, is hereby authorized and directed to sign the Sub-Recipient Agreement on behalf of the City Council for the 2025 Homebuyer Program.

Not introduced

Resolution No. 6 - Discontinuing a Portion of a City Street Known as Waterman Drive

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS the City Council has established a City street known as Waterman Drive in the City of Watertown, and

WHEREAS Jefferson County has requested that the City transfer ownership of a portion of Waterman Drive located adjacent to the Jefferson County Public Safety Building in order to enhance security of the complex, and

WHEREAS the City Council of the City of Watertown is authorized, pursuant to Section 20, Paragraph (7) of the New York General City Law, to discontinue streets, and

WHEREAS the City Council deems it in the best interests of the City to discontinue the following portion of Waterman Drive, subject to the reservation of a permanent utility easement for the benefit of the City of Watertown, more particularly described as follows:

All that parcel of land located in the City of Watertown, County of Jefferson and State of New York, bounded and described as follows:

Beginning at an existing iron pipe at the northeast corner of land conveyed to County of Jefferson (Liber 1548 Page 150); and runs thence, from the point of beginning, South 84 degrees 15 minutes 05 seconds West, 766.08 feet, along the north line of said land of County of Jefferson, also being along the south street boundary of Waterman Drive, to a point; thence North 05 degrees 44 minutes 55 seconds West, 66.00 feet, across Waterman Drive, to a point in the north street boundary of Waterman Drive, said point also being at the southeast corner of land conveyed to AFGRITECH LLC (Instrument 2016-00001135) and at a corner. of land conveyed to New York Central Lines, LLC (Liber 1703, Page 80) on the north and east; thence North 84 degrees 15 minutes 05 seconds East, 812.75 feet, along the south line of New York Central Lines, LLC, also being along the north street boundary of Waterman Drive, to an existing iron pipe at a corner thereof; thence South 29 degrees 31 minutes 05 seconds West, 80.84 feet, along said land of New York Central Lines, LLC on the east, also being the east street boundary of Waterman Drive, to the point the point of beginning, containing 1.19 acres of land, more or less.

The above described parcel being a portion of Waterman Drive, formerly City Center Drive, dedicated to the City of Watertown by resolution dated January 19, 1999.

SUBJECT TO a permanent utility easement granted to the City of Watertown for the construction, maintenance, repair, and replacement of utilities, as more fully set forth in the Utility Easement Agreement between the City of Watertown and the County of Jefferson.

SUBJECT TO any other rights or restrictions of record that may exist.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Watertown that the use of a portion of Waterman Drive in the City of Watertown, as described above shall be discontinued effective immediately.

Seconded by Council Member Clifford G. Olney III

Prior to the vote on the foregoing resolution, Mr. Wagenaar provided clarification as to the location of this portion of Waterman Drive, stating that it was just past the entrance to the parking lot for the Public Safety Building. He added that the intent of this is for security purposes.

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

Resolution No. 7 - Authorizing Adjustment to the Fiscal Year 2025-26 City Tax Bill for Parcel No. 55-12-001.000 and Refund Overpayment to National Grid

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS the initial Fiscal Year 2025-26 City property tax bill for parcel No. 55-12-001.000 (property in the streets) owned by Niagara Mohawk, a National Grid Company, was billed and paid in the amount of \$448,577.65, and

WHEREAS it has been determined that the final equalization rate was not applied to the assessment value, resulting in an overcharge for the Fiscal Year 2025-26 City tax bill by \$25,869.23,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby reduces the Fiscal Year 2025-26 City property tax bill for Parcel No. 55-12-001.000 (property in the streets) owned by Niagara Mohawk, a National Grid Company, by \$25,869.23 for the incorrect property tax bill amount, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Watertown that the above amount is to be refunded to the property owner, and the City Comptroller is hereby authorized to mark the books and records accordingly.

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

Resolution No. 8 - Approving Change Order No. 09G with C.O. Falter for Water Pollution Control Plant Sludge Disposal Modifications Project Phase 1B

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS the City of Watertown entered into an Agreement dated May 2, 2019 with C.O. Falter (contract No. 4) for the construction of Phase 1B Sludge Disposal Modifications at the Water Pollution Control Facility at a cost of \$5,757,101, and

WHEREAS throughout the execution of the contract, change orders No. 01G through 08G have been amended to add \$203,263.03 in additional cost, increasing the contract cost to \$5,960,364.03, and

WHEREAS Amendment No 09G adds \$69,691.39 for construction of a New Drip Trap Manhole; and

WHEREAS Amendment No. 09G deducts (\$9,590.4) for remaining miscellaneous work not performed (bid item C-1), and

WHEREAS Amendment No. 09G deducts (\$14,280.00) for unused PLC training allowance (bid item C-2), and

WHEREAS Amendment No. 09G deducts (\$62,810.00) for unused unit bid items (bid items B-1,2,3,4,5,6), and

WHEREAS Amendment No. 09G deducts (\$13,355.25) for additional resident project representative services associated with the gas engine repairs and slope correction to the biogas piping, and

WHEREAS Amendment No. 09G deducts (\$18,745.95) for additional construction administrative services associated with a 476-day delay in achieving substantial completion, and

WHEREAS the total amount of the change order is a contract cost reduction of (\$49,090.22), and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby approves the deductions outlined in amendment 09G to the Phase 1B Sludge Disposal Modifications Project bringing the contract total to \$5,911,273.81, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this has been approved by the Environmental Finance Corporation and will lead to the closure of the project and with the change order reducing the amount paid to contract No. 4, Change Order No. 9G will result in no direct charge to the City, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Manager 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. 9 - Authorizing Amendment No. 8 of the GHD Engineering Agreement for Water Pollution Control Plant Sludge Disposal Modification Project Phase 1B

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS GHD Consulting Services Inc. and City of Watertown entered into an Agreement dated September 16, 2016 to perform engineering services for design and construction of Phase 1B Sludge Disposal Modifications at a cost of \$540,450, and

WHEREAS Amendment No. 1 through 7 were authorized between August 7, 2017 and August 16, 2021 at a combined cost of \$457,395.22, and

WHEREAS substantial completion of the project was delayed due to repeated failure of the gas engine(s) and the responsibility to correct the issues, and

WHEREAS GHD provided Resident Project Representative services for Construction Contractor to correct work, and

WHEREAS the City has requested GHD to extend Construction Administration and Resident Project Representative (RPR) services for contract time extensions, and

WHEREAS the Construction Contractor (Contract No. 4) is responsible for City's additional cost due to delay in completion of construction and correction of work,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby approves Amendment # 8 for additional Construction Administration services of 476 days of service (to May 30, 2023) at a cost of \$18,745.95 and to Extend Resident Project Representative services to provide an additional 137.5 hours for the period of December 13, 2021 to October 13, 2023 at a cost of \$13,355.25 increasing the project total to \$1,029,946.42; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this has been approved by the Environmental Finance Corporation and will lead to the closure of the project and with the change order reducing the amount paid to contract No. 4 will result in no direct charge to the City.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Manager 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 explained that this project has been going on for quite some time and that these change orders are necessary to close out the project.

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

Resolution No. 10 - Adopting the 2025 Jefferson County Hazard Mitigation Plan

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS the City Council of the City of Watertown recognizes the threat that hazards pose to people and property within the City, and

WHEREAS the City of Watertown has actively participated in the preparation of the 2025 Jefferson County Hazard Mitigation Plan in accordance with the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000, and

WHEREAS the 2025 Jefferson County Hazard Mitigation Plan identifies mitigation goals and actions to reduce or eliminate long-term risk to people and property in the City of Watertown from the impacts of future hazards and disasters; and

WHEREAS adoption by the City Council demonstrates the City's commitment to hazard mitigation and achieving the goals outlined in the 2025 Jefferson County Hazard Mitigation Plan,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown, New York, hereby adopts the 2025 Jefferson County Hazard Mitigation Plan. This plan, approved by the community, may be edited or amended after submission for review, but will not require the City to re-adopt any further iterations. This only applies to the specific plan and does not absolve the City from updating the plan in five years.

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

STAFF REPORTS

Winter Crow Roost Dispersal Program

Mayor Pierce, Council Member Kimball and Council Member Ruggiero expressed support for continuing with this program.

Council Member Olney wondered if there was something else that could be done but also indicated he would support it.

Sale of Surplus Hydro-electricity and Sales Tax Revenue – August 2025

Council Member Kimball noted that the hydro revenue is down \$1 million, mostly due to the dry weather. He added that sales tax is up but that the City would need to see if this would continue.

NYS Retirement System 2027 Employer Contribution Rates

Council Member Olney asked how the new rate compares to the last five years.

City Comptroller James Mills referred Council to a graph within the report and stated that the rate has continued to go up. He provided Council with the State Comptroller's projection, mentioning potential reasons for the increases and he noted that he had planned for this increase in the City's multi-year plan projection.

Boards and Commissions Report and Letters of Interest

A report was available for Council to review.

Transportation Commission Report

A report was available for Council to review.

NEW BUSINESS

Privilege of the Floor Response – Price of Refuse Stickers

Council Member Kimball mentioned Mr. Phillips' comments comparing the City's bag cost and the County's bag cost. He pointed out that the County may be cheaper, but you have to bring your garbage to the dump versus someone coming to your property to pick it up.

Privilege of the Floor Response – Legal Expanse

Council Member Kimball mentioned the comments made regarding the cost of legal actions. He said it is mandatory for a municipality to defend itself against liability issues, take preventative measures and address lawsuits. He said what has been spent on legal expenses over the last year has been well spent to protect the City, noting that this past year has been complicated with various issues. He summarized that this is part of the cost of doing business as a municipality.

Homelessness

Mentioning the comments made during Privilege of the Floor, Council Member Olney discussed the homeless situation worsening as the City moves into the winter months and his support for accepting Mr. Simao's offer to provide a shelter on his property. He said he believes the County's estimate of the number of homeless people in the county is low and he would like to see more done to prevent people from being out in the elements, as well as provide storage for their personal belongings.

Number of Lawsuits Against Property Owners Not Paying Taxes

Council Member Olney indicated that he sent a request to the City Comptroller to find out the number of times that the City has sued a property owner who has not paid their taxes.

Mr. Mills said he has not had the opportunity to research this to provide the answer.

Council Member Olney said he had asked at a previous meeting whether it was illegal for someone to not pay their taxes and was told that it was, but he does not believe that it is. He said there may be consequences if you do not pay your taxes, but it is not illegal. Making reference to a lawsuit, he said if things had turned out differently, the City would not have had to pay \$75,000 in legal fees to fight this suit. He added that then the City might have been able to consider this individual's offer to use his body shop for a homeless shelter this winter.

NYS Police Investigation Regarding Certain Members of Council

Council Member Olney mentioned that a recent article in the media suggested that the NYS Police did not have a warrant for the Council Members' phones when they came to City Hall on January 21. He wanted to know who knew that and when, as well as whether the City Attorney was aware of what was going on. He directly asked the City Manager and the Mayor what they were aware of and continued to pose questions regarding the handling of the investigation by the NYS Police.

Mayor Pierce questioned how Council Member Olney's comments pertained to New Business of the City. She advised that the NYS Police would have the answers to what Council Member Olney's is looking for and suggested he seek them directly from that agency.

Council Member Olney continued to discuss the handling of the January 21 meeting by the NYS Police and the review of Council Members' phones. He pointed out that, on a later date, he allowed the NYS Police to look at his phone.

Harvest Festival

Council Member Ruggiero commented that the Harvest Fest went well and thanked all the staff involved in making it successful.

Raising of the Italian American Flag

Council Member Ruggiero announced that the Italian American Flag will be raised next Monday at noon at the Italian American Club.

Privilege of the Floor Response – Processing of Leachate

Council Member Shoen asked Mr. Wagenaar to provide Council with information so that Mr. Metzger's concerns could be addressed.

City's Financial Status

Council Member Shoen discussed the hydro-electricity and sales tax revenue reports for August 2025, stating that they offset each other. Regarding the increase in retirement cost, he said it is approximately \$1.7 million that equates to a large tax increase, which cannot be absorbed by the City taxpayer. He advised that the City cannot continue the way it has been going financially.

Drug Bust on State Street

Council Member Shoen mentioned a recent drug bust on State Street in which 100 envelopes of Fentanyl were seized. He expressed disappointment that the individual was booked and then released, and he voiced his frustration with the people that support bail reform.

Homelessness (continued)

Council Member Shoen said he has asked where these individuals are coming from and wanted to know why they are coming here to Watertown. He wondered if it is the availability of drugs and the free stuff that is given to them here. He also expressed his concerns that students at the newly renovated Globe building have been frightened by homeless and drug addicts lingering in that area of the City.

Open-Door Policy

Mayor Pierce stated it was recently reported in the media that the public needs an appointment to visit the City Manager's and Mayor's Office due to the installation of a new security door. She clarified that an appointment is not necessary and that the open-door policy is still in place, noting that the City Manager's Administrative Assistant will greet the public.

Halloween Decorated House Contest

Mayor Pierce announced that she will be holding her house decorating contest for Halloween again this year. She said that anyone interested can contact her through email or social media and the deadline for entries will be October 15.

ADJOURNMENT

At the call of the chair, meeting was duly adjourned at 8:22 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