

**CITY COUNCIL MEETING
CITY OF WATERTOWN
June 1, 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
Joseph V. Frateschi, Harrison Beach Murtha, City Attorney

City staff present: Erica Anderson, James Mills, Thomas Compo, Dana Aikins, Aaron Harvill

The City Manager presented the following reports to Council:

- Resolution No. 1 - Accepting Bid for Process Chemicals – Dry Polymer – Pollution Control Facility (PCF) Slack Chemical Company, Inc.
- Resolution No. 2 - Authorizing Agreement with National Grid to Allow Usage of Convenience Outlets for Farm and Craft Market Vendors
- Resolution No. 3 - Accepting Fee Proposal for Professional Design Services for Open Channel Fine Screen on Influent Line B at the Pollution Control Facility – Wright-Pierce
- Resolution No. 4 - Accepting an Employee Assistance Program Proposal from Pivot
- Ordinance No. 1 - An Ordinance Authorizing the Issuance of \$450,000 Bonds of the City of Watertown, Jefferson County, New York, to Pay the Cost of the Demolition of a Non-City-Owned Building That Poses a Significant Threat to Public Health or Safety in the City of Watertown
- Old Business - Proposed Local Law - A Local Law Amending the Code of the City of Watertown, §253-17 Sewer Service Charges, and Surcharges, §253-28 (G) Trucked or Hauled Pollutants, and §253-77 Tanker-Hauled Sewage, Septage and Slurries
- Gomez and Sullivan Hydroelectric Consultants

Meeting opened with a moment of silence.

Pledge of Allegiance was given and Mayor Pierce asked that it be in remembrance of Theodore Kolb, father and grandfather of City employees.

The reading of the minutes of the regular meeting of May 18, 2026, and adjourned meeting of May 21, 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.

COMMUNICATIONS

An email was received from Debbie and Bill Dermady, 118 Seymour Street, expressing concern regarding charging a fee for the use of the City pools and the elimination of some of the playground programs.

An email was received from Kris Hudson, property manager for Kamiay Real Estate LLC, requesting to purchase City-owned property at 659 Olive Street and 201/209 Sterling Street, to create parking for residents living in nearby apartment buildings.

An email was received from Donnie Lee Barrigar, thanking Council for adopting the current flag policy.

An email was received from Lake Effect Progress, filing a petition on behalf of individuals supporting efforts to have the Pride flag flown by the City of Watertown for the month of June

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Jonathan Phillips, 735 Mill Street, addressed Council regarding his appreciation for the City Manager and Codes for fixing a sidewalk on Arsenal Street, his opposition to charging pool fees and his belief that with the new changes in refuse policy, customers will return to using the City's service.

PUBLIC HEARING

At 7:15 p.m. Mayor Pierce asked the City Clerk to read the notice of Public Hearing concerning a Proposed Local Law - Local Law Amending the Code of the City of Watertown, §253-17 Sewer Service Charges, and Surcharges, §253-28 (G) Trucked or Hauled Pollutants, and §253-77 Tanker-Hauled Sewage, Septage and Slurries.

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 - Accepting Bid for Process Chemicals – Dry Polymer – Pollution Control Facility (PCF) Slack Chemical Company, Inc.

Introduced by Council Member Robert O. Kimball

WHEREAS the City desires to purchase the Process Chemicals – Dry Polymer, on an as needed basis, for use at the City's Pollution Control Facility (PCF) located at 700 William T. Field Drive, Watertown, NY 13601 for fiscal year period of July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027, and

WHEREAS the Purchasing Department advertised and received two (2) sealed bids for the Process Chemicals -Dry Polymer, and

WHEREAS on April 23, 2026, at 3:00 p.m. the bids received were publicly opened and read, and

WHEREAS Purchasing Manager, Tina Bartlett-Bearup reviewed the bids received with the Water Superintendent and Chief Operator and it is their recommendation that the City Council accept the lowest responsive responsible bid Slack Chemical Company, Inc.,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby accepts the bid received from Slack Chemical Company, Inc. per the pricing schedule proposed, for the purchase of Process Chemicals – Dry Polymer.

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

Resolution No. 2 - Authorizing Agreement with National Grid to Allow Usage of Convenience Outlets for Farm and Craft Market Vendors

Introduced by Council Member Robert O. Kimball

WHEREAS the City of Watertown has historically authorized use of portions of the City's public right-of-way for operation of the annual Farm and Craft Market, and

WHEREAS Cornell Cooperative Extension has assumed responsibility for hosting and coordinating the annual Farm and Craft Market, and

WHEREAS Cornell Cooperative Extension desires to allow its vendors who participate and pay for space at the annual Farm and Craft Market to gain access to National Grid's convenience outlets for electrical supply, and

WHEREAS the City of Watertown and National Grid have agreed to allow this electrical usage for the public benefit and in the best interest of its citizens,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby authorizes the attached Convenience Outlet License Agreement between the City of Watertown and National Grid, a copy of which is attached and made part of this resolution, and

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

Secoded by Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen

Prior to the vote on the foregoing resolution, Council Member Garrabrant asked who was responsible for verifying that the items logged are the only ones plugged into the outlets.

City Manager Wagenaar indicated that DPW and Maintenance verify those connections.

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

Resolution No. 3 - Accepting Fee Proposal for Professional Design Services for Open Channel Fine Screen on Influent Line B at the Pollution Control Facility – Wright-Pierce

Introduced by Council Member Robert O. Kimball

WHEREAS, the City Water Department identified the need for mechanical screening improvements at the City's Pollution Control Facility in order to remove excess rags from Influent B and reduce damage and maintenance costs associated with downstream equipment, and

WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of Watertown included funding for the Influent B Screen project as a capital expense in the 2025–2026 Adopted Budget, and

WHEREAS, funding for the project was further authorized by the City Council on April 6, 2026, through Ordinance No. 1, and

WHEREAS, the City Water Department solicited proposals for the planning and design of the mechanical screening equipment improvements, and

WHEREAS, Wright-Pierce Engineering Services submitted a proposal to provide professional design and bidding services for the Influent B Screen project, and

WHEREAS, Wright-Pierce has submitted a fee proposal in the amount of \$99,400 for said professional services,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby accepts the fee proposal for Professional Design Services Agreement between the City of Watertown and Wright-Pierce in the amount of \$99,400, a copy of which is attached hereto and made a part of this resolution, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Manager, or their designee, is hereby authorized and directed to execute any Agreement associated with the fee proposal for professional design services between the City of Watertown and Wright-Pierce on behalf of the City of Watertown.

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

Resolution No. 4 - Accepting an Employee Assistance Program Proposal from Pivot

Introduced by Council Member Robert O. Kimball

WHEREAS Mercer serves as the City of Watertown's benefits broker, and they have completed a competitive bid process for the Employee Assistance Program renewal, and

WHEREAS the City has received a total of five (5) competitive proposals for Employee Assistance Programs, and

WHEREAS it is the recommendation of Human Resources and the City Manager's Office that the City of Watertown accept the proposal presented by Mercer for Employee Assistance Program services for City employees through Pivot,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown, New York, accepts the eighteen (18) month proposal to provide Employee Assistance Program services through Pivot to City employees, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Manager is hereby authorized and directed to sign any Agreement pertaining to this proposal on behalf of the City Council.

Seconded by Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen

Prior to the vote on the foregoing resolution, Council Member Kimball asked if only mental health services were covered under this program.

Mr. Wagenaar replied that the program also covered other conditions such as substance abuse.

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

ORDINANCES

Ordinance No. 1 - An Ordinance Authorizing the Issuance of \$450,000 Bonds of the City of Watertown, Jefferson County, New York, to Pay the Cost of the Demolition of a Non-City-Owned Building That Poses a Significant Threat to Public Health or Safety in the City of Watertown

Introduced by Council Member Robert O. Kimball

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

Section 1. For the class of objects or purposes of paying the cost of the demolition of a non-City owned building that poses a significant threat to public health or safety, including incidental expenses in connection therewith, in and for the City, there are hereby authorized to be issued \$450,000 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 class of objects or purposes is \$450,000 and that the plan for the financing thereof is by the issuance of the \$450,000 bonds of said City authorized to be issued pursuant to this bond ordinance.

Section 3. It is hereby determined that the period of probable usefulness of the aforesaid class of objects or purposes is five years, pursuant to subdivision 12-a of paragraph a of Section 11.00 of the Local Finance Law.

Section 4. Subject to the provisions of the Local Finance Law, the power to authorize the issuance of and to sell bond anticipation notes in anticipation of the issuance and sale of the bonds herein authorized, including renewals of such notes, is hereby delegated to the City Comptroller, the chief fiscal officer. Such notes shall be of such terms, form and contents, and shall be sold in such manner, as may be prescribed by said City Comptroller, consistent with the provisions of the Local Finance Law.

Section 5. The faith and credit of said City are hereby irrevocably pledged for the payment of the principal of and interest on such obligations as the same respectively become due and payable. An annual appropriation shall be made in each year sufficient to pay the principal of and interest on such obligations becoming due and payable in such year.

Section 6. Such bonds shall be in fully registered form and shall be signed in the name of the City by the manual or facsimile signature of the City Comptroller and a facsimile of its corporate seal shall be imprinted thereon and may be attested by the manual or facsimile signature of the City Clerk.

Section 7. The powers and duties of advertising such bonds for sale, conducting the sale and awarding the bonds, are hereby delegated to the City Comptroller, who shall advertise such bonds for sale, conduct the sale, and award the bonds in such manner as he shall deem best for the interests of the

City, including, but not limited to, the power to sell said bonds to the New York State Environmental Facilities Corporation; provided, however, that in the exercise of these delegated powers, he shall comply fully with the provisions of the Local Finance Law and any order or rule of the State Comptroller applicable to the sale of municipal bonds. The receipt of the City Comptroller shall be a full acquittance to the purchaser of such bonds, who shall not be obliged to see to the application of the purchase money.

Section 8. The power to issue and sell notes to the New York State Environmental Facilities Corporation pursuant to Section 169.00 of the Local Finance Law is hereby delegated to the City Comptroller. Such notes shall be of such terms, form and contents as may be prescribed by said City Comptroller consistent with the provisions of the Local Finance Law.

Section 9. The City Comptroller is hereby further authorized, at his or her sole discretion, to execute a project financing agreement, and any other agreements with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and/or the New York State Environmental Facilities Corporation, including amendments thereto, and including any instruments (or amendments thereto) in the effectuation thereof, in order to effect the financing or refinancing of the class of objects or purposes described in Section 1 hereof, or a portion thereof, by a bond, and, or note issue of said City in the event of the sale of same to the New York State Environmental Facilities Corporation.

Section 10. The intent of this resolution is to give the City Comptroller sufficient authority to execute those applications, agreements, instruments or to do any similar acts necessary to effect the issuance of the aforesaid bonds and, or notes, without resorting to further action of the City Comptroller.

Section 11. All other matters, except as provided herein relating to such bonds, including determining whether to issue such bonds having substantially level or declining annual debt service and all matters related thereto, prescribing whether manual or facsimile signatures shall appear on said bonds, prescribing the method for the recording of ownership of said bonds, appointing the fiscal agent or agents for said bonds, providing for the printing and delivery of said bonds (and if said bonds are to be executed in the name of the City by the facsimile signature of its City Comptroller, providing for the manual countersignature of a fiscal agent or of a designated official of the City), the date, denominations, maturities and interest payment dates, place or places of payment, and also including the consolidation with other issues, shall be determined by the City Comptroller. It is hereby determined that it is to the financial advantage of the City not to impose and collect from registered owners of such bonds any charges for mailing, shipping and insuring bonds transferred or exchanged by the fiscal agent, and, accordingly, pursuant to paragraph c of Section 70.00 of the Local Finance Law, no such charges shall be so collected by the fiscal agent. Such bonds shall contain substantially the recital of validity clause provided for in Section 52.00 of the Local Finance Law and shall otherwise be in such form and contain such recitals in addition to those required by Section 52.00 of the Local Finance Law, as the City Comptroller shall determine.

- Section 12. The validity of such bonds and bond anticipation notes may be contested only if:
- (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 resolution 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 13. This resolution shall constitute a statement of official intent for purposes of Treasury Regulations Section 1.151- 2. Other than as specified in this resolution, no monies are, or are reasonably expected to be, reserved, allocated on a long term basis, or otherwise set aside with respect to the permanent funding of the object or purpose described herein.

Section 14. This ordinance, which takes effect immediately, 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.

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.

In response to Council Member Osborne's inquiry as to what the City can do to prevent this from happening, Attorney Frateschi noted that, in this case, the City is taking defensive action due to the current condition of the building. He then explained offensive actions, such as Code citations and penalties, that could be done by the City prior to a building reaching a condition requiring demolition.

Council Member Osborne asked what protocol is followed once a building is identified as condemned and if there are regular inspections. He also mentioned the recent discussion regarding a rating system used for vacant and deteriorating properties and wondered about the rating score of this building.

Mr. Wagenaar mentioned that the rating system had not been applied to commercial buildings.

Code Enforcement Supervisor Dana Aikins provided details of the rating system and how it is applied to residential properties. He also provided details regarding the history of this building and how the City tried to work with the property owner. He advised that staff try to look at vacant properties once per year, but can only do outside inspections because a search warrant would be needed in order to enter a privately-owned building.

Council Member Osborne expressed concern with the taxpayers being burdened with the cost of the demolition for this privately-owned building.

Mr. Aikins informed Council that, although staff knew this building was deteriorating, the roof failure was discovered this past Saturday after receiving a complaint by an adjacent property owner who could visualize the roof from a higher view of their building.

Further discussion occurred regarding how the City could be more proactive with these types of properties in order to prevent the owners from walking away from their properties and leaving the taxpayers with the costs of demolition.

Attorney Frateschi reviewed litigation options through City Court and Supreme Court that could be taken, noting a lien could be put on the property if the taxes were not paid.

City Comptroller James Mills informed Council that there were approximately \$69,000 owed in back taxes. He also explained where this property fell in regard to the new tax foreclosure process.

Discussion turned to whether the City would get reimbursed for the demolition costs, what the value of the property would be after the building is demolished and the status of the bank liens on the property.

Mr. Wagenaar explained that this property owner has been very difficult to contact and often changes their phone number since they owe money to several entities in regard to this building.

Council Member Shoen suggested that the County and School District assist the City in funding this demolition, since they are also taxing entities on the property.

Attorney Frateschi advised that the City could reach out to the County and is free to have a shared services agreement with other entities, but the City has primary responsibility because the property is in the City's jurisdiction. In response to Council Member Shoen's inquiry of whether the City could relinquish its zoning authority to the County, he said he does not know the County well enough, but it would be uncommon, although he has seen intermunicipal agreements to share Code Enforcement Officers.

Council Member Shoen commented that he would like this conversation to take place with the County and explore the option further. He also suggested using the balance of this fiscal year's demolition budget and the \$100,000 that was budgeted in fiscal year 2026/27 for demolition to fund this.

Mr. Mills warned that if the expense is incurred in this fiscal year, then the City cannot use money allocated in a future fiscal year towards the expense.

Further discussion ensued on whether to proceed with the demolition and each member of Council expressed their thoughts on it. Debt service was discussed, as well as other options for paying for demolitions of private properties. Discussion turned to other City-owned properties and the implementation of the new tax foreclosure process.

Mr. Mills advised that the debt service on the bond would be approximately \$100,000 per year for five years. He also assured Council that approving the bond gives the City a safe option in case bonding is necessary, but that he would not be borrowing for the money until next fiscal year with the debt service starting fiscal year 2027/28.

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

OLD BUSINESS

Proposed Local Law - A Local Law Amending the Code of the City of Watertown, §253-17 Sewer Service Charges, and Surcharges, §253-28 (G) Trucked or Hauled Pollutants, and §253-77 Tanker-Hauled Sewage, Septage and Slurries. *(Introduced on May 21, 2026; public hearing held this evening; appears in its entirety in the 2026 Minutes Book on page 7-9 of the 5/21/2026 minutes).*

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

STAFF REPORTS

Gomez and Sullivan Hydroelectric Consultants

Council Member Garrabrant asked if the proposal to develop a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) document was in response to the complaint made to FERC.

Water Superintendent Aaron Harvill indicated that the SOP is not required by FERC and that it was determined to be a priority to assist during the transition of upcoming retirements of personnel and Ampersand's lead operator. He noted that there will be a significant loss of institutional knowledge.

Council Member Garrabrant asked for a breakdown of the consultant fees and expressed concern with not preparing for the end of the National Grid contract.

Mr. Harvill advised that the consultant put together a priority list and he assured Council that preparing options for the expiration of the National Grid contract is being addressed as well.

NEW BUSINESS

Clean Water Initiative

Council Member Garrabrant thanked the public and staff for preliminary feedback on this initiative.

Zoning Ordinance - EV Charger Requirement

Council Member Garrabrant mentioned that the City zoning ordinance requires the installation of EV charging stations for new development projects. He said the intent was to get ahead of the New York State mandate, but the State has delayed the mandate, and he wonders if it might not be fully implemented in the future. He expressed concern that this requirement is costly and may discourage developers from building projects within the City. He asked for staff feedback regarding other reasons for keeping this in the zoning ordinance and he proposed presenting legislation at the next meeting to remove the requirement from the ordinance.

Dairy Parade

Council Member Garrabrant advised that the Dairy Parade will be held this Friday and said he was looking forward to seeing the City refuse truck as a participant.

Building Demolition and Blight Removal

Council Member Kimball discussed the decision and high cost for the demolition of JB Wise Place, especially after working on a difficult budget process. He noted that the City is trying to eliminate blight and mentioned some of cleanups going on throughout the City, including properties on Coffeen, West Main and Bradley Streets. He said he would like to have discussion regarding the property on Clinton and Sherman Street

Watertown Boys Baseball

Council Member Kimball congratulated the Watertown High Boys Baseball team for making it to the Sectional Finals for the first time in over 30 years.

Zoning Ordinance - EV Charger Requirement (continued)

Council Member Osborne agreed with Council Member Garrabrant's proposal.

Pool Fees

Council Member Osborne stated that there had been a lot of criticism of Council's decision to implement a fee policy for the use of City pools. He noted that charging fees for pool usage is not unique to municipalities and listed other municipalities which charge pool fees. Commenting that he recognized costs were going up for families, he mentioned that a resident asked if they could donate to cover pool fees.

Mr. Wagenaar advised that he would need details on how the donations would be distributed and staff would need to check with attorneys to make sure it was legal.

Mayor Pierce mentioned that she had been contacted as well regarding potential pool fee donations.

City Attorney Frateschi informed Council that the City would be free to accept donations, but they must take care not to appear as if they are soliciting donations from the public. He stressed that the public would have to give donations on their own.

Council Member Shoen suggested that, since donations could not be solicited, perhaps individuals could donate through the Northern New York Community Foundation. He offered suggestions for how people could donate and possible programs options for donations, such as an "adopt-a-kid" program. He noted that \$350,000 of the pool budget is paid by taxpayer support, so the pool program is already heavily subsidized by the taxpayer. He suggested the possibility of corporate sponsorships.

Zoning Ordinance - EV Charger Requirement (continued)

Council Member Shoen mentioned that he attends Planning Commission Meetings and was opposed to this requirement when the zoning ordinance was being updated. He said he supports Council Member Garrabrant's proposal to remove it from ordinance.

Refuse Program

Council Member Shoen commented that public response to the changes in the refuse policy has been positive.

Zoning Ordinance - EV Charger Requirement (continued)

Mayor Pierce also said that she supports removing this requirement from the zoning ordinance.

A D J O U R N M E N T

At the call of the chair, meeting was duly adjourned at 8:09 p.m. by motion of Council Member Robert O. Kimball seconded by Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

Ann M. Saunders
City Clerk