



Watertown City Council

**Committee on Public Works Meeting
Monday, February 3, 2025 at 6:00 PM
Richard E. Mastrangelo Council Chamber - Second
Floor**

Agenda

ACCESS INFORMATION:

- A. This meeting will be held on February 3, 2025 at 6:00 P.M. Location: Richard E. Mastrangelo Council Chamber
 - B. Public may comment through email: apalomba@watertown-ma.gov
 - C. Please Visit the Committee on Public Works Webpage here:
https://watertownma.portal.civicclerk.com/?category_id=91
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1. Call to Order
2. Discussion
 - A. Appoint Joseph Ganno as a member to the Stormwater Advisory Committee to a term expiring July 15, 2025
 - B. Make a recommendation to name the intersection of Dexter Avenue and Hazel Street for Arshile Gorky
3. Adjournment

ELECTED OFFICIALS

Vincent J. Piccirilli, Jr.,
Chair

Lisa J. Feltner,
Vice Chair

Anthony Palomba,
Secretary

George Proakis, City Manager
149 Main Street
Watertown, MA 02472

September 9, 2024

Dear Manager Proakis,

A working group of Watertown cultural organizations, Watertown resident and artist, Jack Dargon, and the Public Arts & Culture Planner, Liz Helfer, have been collaborating on commemorating artist Arshile Gorky who lived and painted in Watertown between 1920 and 1925, and returned regularly throughout his life. Gorky is a luminary of 20th century art in America, and conceiver of the New York School of art, commonly referred to as Abstract Expressionism. The working group has identified a square in the east end of Watertown and requests that it be named after Arshile Gorky.

Commemorating Gorky's time in Watertown will help call attention to the City's past and present welcoming tradition, and history of offering refuge and opportunity to immigrants newly arrived from countries around the world and concurrently pay tribute to Watertown's large Armenian community to which Gorky belonged. Today, immigrants continue to be drawn to Watertown because of its history and reputation as a welcoming community and a public commemoration of Arshile Gorky would serve as a reminder of the City's values, its living history, and serve as an educational opportunity for residents and visitors alike. As part of the planned multi-faceted commemoration, the working group hopes to oversee the permanent placement of markers at the homes where the artist lived and establish a self-guided Arshile Gorky walking tour which would include the newly named "Gorky Square." Given the Gorky's international reputation, the working group anticipates an economic benefit to Watertown from visitors to greater Boston eager to see where Arshile Gorky began his maturity and training as an artist.

The story of Arshile Gorky is one of determination and resilience. In Watertown there was pressure within the community, and sometimes from within the artist's own family, to put aside his artistic ambitions and take up manual labor like most of his contemporaries. Instead, Gorky established relationships within the small artistic community in Watertown that was part of the Armenian immigrant diaspora and began taking art classes in Boston where he quickly advanced to teaching classes. The name Arshile Gorky is synonymous with Abstract Expressionism, and inseparable from the historic gravitational shift of the world of art from Paris to New York in the 1950's. Arshile Gorky arrived in Watertown in 1920 in the immediate aftermath of witnessing his mother's death by starvation and after surviving the political persecution and ethnic cleansing of the 1915 Armenian Genocide. His perseverance beyond all odds is a tribute to the human spirit.

The working group has identified the intersection of Dexter Ave and Hazel St for naming. After arriving in Watertown from New York's Ellis Island, Arshile Gorky lived at 14-16 Coolidge Hill Road in Watertown with his sister Akabi and her family before the family purchased and relocated to 86 Dexter Ave. Coolidge Hill Road and Dexter Ave are located directly west and east of the heart of Watertown's historical Armenian cultural district between Elton Road and Bigalow Ave, almost epicenter of both homes. The working group requests the city name this location "Arshile Gorky Square" and include subtitles of the artist's Armenian birth name, Vostanik Adoian.

With your support, this initiative for commemorating Arshile Gorky in Watertown will move forward. A map of the proposed location is included. If you have any questions, please contact Liz Helfer, Public Arts & Culture Planner.

Sincerely,
100 Years of Arshile Gorky Working Group

Jason Sohigian,	The Armenian Museum of America
Boriana Kantcheva,	The Mosesian Center for the Arts
Joyce Kelly,	The Historical Society of Watertown
Jack Dargon,	Watertown Resident
Liz Helfer,	Public Arts and Culture Planner

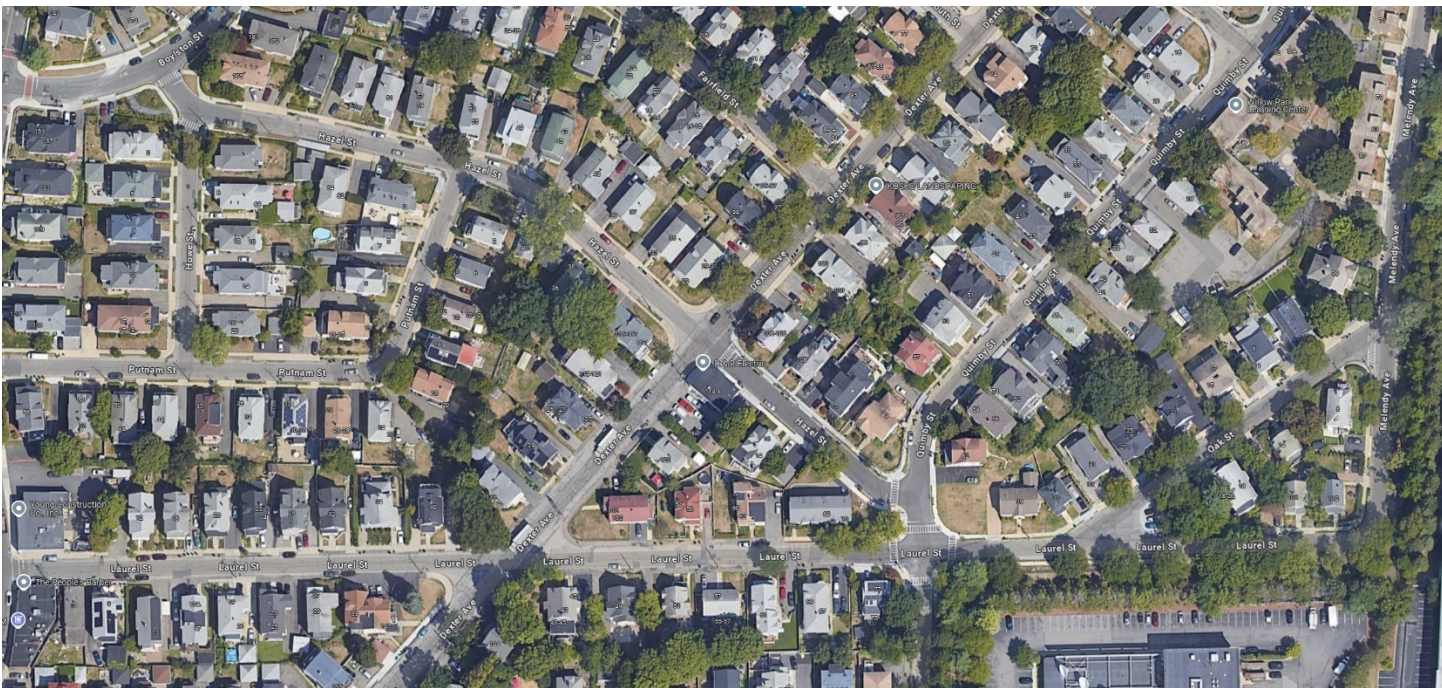


Image from Google Maps.



Image from Google Street View.