



Watertown City Council

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Watertown, MA 02472
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ELECTED
OFFICIALS:

Mark S. Sideris,
Council President

Vincent J. Piccirilli, Jr.,
Vice President &
District C Councilor

John M. Airasian,
Councilor At Large

Caroline Bays,
Councilor At Large

John G. Gannon,
Councilor At Large

Anthony Palomba,
Councilor At Large

Nicole Gardner,
District A Councilor

Lisa J. Feltner,
District B Councilor

Emily Izzo,
District D Councilor

Committee of the Budget and Fiscal Oversight

Meeting: November 13, 2024

Report: November 26, 2024

The Committee convened at 6:00 pm on Wednesday November 13, 2024 in the Philip Pane Lower Hearing Room, as a hybrid meeting with remote participation by zoom. Present were Vincent Piccirilli, Chair; Emily Izzo, Vice Chair; and Nicole Gardner, Secretary. Also present were City Manager George Proakis, City Auditor Megan Langan, Assistant City Manager for Finance Ari Sky, Council Analyst Doug Newton, and Councilors Caroline Bays, and Lisa Feltner. Present by zoom were Councilors John Airasian and Anthony Palomba, School Committee Member Rachel Kay, and resident David Stokes.

The purpose of this meeting was to review input from Councilors and make recommendations to the City Council on the FY2026 Budget Policy Guidelines.

The Chair sent instructions to Councilors explaining that the Committee's task is not to decide whether each request is a good idea or not; rather the Committee acts as an editor to take input from nine Councilors and synthesize it into a concise, actionable document for the Manager. The Committee may decide to defer or exclude a request because it:

- a) requires policy direction from the Council before the Manager can include it in the operating budget;
- b) is substantially complete;
- c) is too ambiguous to be included in the operating budget;
- d) is part of the Capital Improvement Program and not the operating budget;
- e) is within the authority of another body who has not weighed in it;
- f) overlaps with other existing goals or requests.

To facilitate the process, the Chair and the Council Analyst arranged the requests from each Councilor, in the order received, into a worksheet for the Committee to use. During the meeting, the Committee completed the review of the FY26 Budget Policy Guidelines, and a summary of the Committee discussions and recommendations are contained within the worksheet (see attachment 1).

The final Budget Policy Guidelines (see attachment 2) will be ranked by the City Council after they are approved. The order they are shown reflects last year's priority ranking and the timing of when new requests were received.

The Committee will use the same weighted ranking method as in past years, with each Councilor filling out a ranking sheet (see attachment 3), and returning it by December 3, 2024. Following that, the final approved and ranked Budget Policy Guidelines will be sent to the Manager and posted on the website.

- ➔ ACTION ITEM: Councilor Izzo made a motion, seconded by Councilor Gardner, that the Committee recommends to the City Council that it adopt the FY2026 Budget Policy Guidelines as drafted. The motion passed by a vote of 3-0.
- ➔ ACTION ITEM: Councilor Izzo made a motion, seconded by Councilor Gardner, to recommend the City Council refer a discussion of the Budget Policy Guidelines II-F and II-H to the Public Works Committee, to occur after the new DPW Director is hired. The motion passed by a vote of 3-0.
- ➔ ACTION ITEM: Councilor Izzo made a motion, seconded by Councilor Gardner, to recommend the City Council requests the Administration provide an analysis of non-zoning property tax exemptions that the City can adopt to encourage private creation of affordable housing units. The motion passed by a vote of 3-0.

The meeting adjourned at 8:46 pm by a vote of 3-0.

Report prepared by Nicole Gardner

Attachments:

1. FY2026 Budget Policy Guidelines Worksheet
2. FY2026 Budget Policy Guidelines for Approval by the City Council (unranked)
3. FY2026 Budget Policy Guidelines Ranking Sheet

Watertown FY2026 Budget Policy Guidelines Worksheet – For Committee Report November 26, 2024

The City Council is adopting these budget policy guidelines pursuant to Section 5-1 of the Watertown Home Rule Charter, *and in line with the values and principles outlined in the Charter Preamble*. Based on these guidelines, the City Manager will develop budgetary goals and the City budget for FY26.

I. COST-SAVINGS/REVENUES - The City Council believes that identification of cost savings and/or new revenues should be a precondition to additional expenditures. To this end, in developing the FY26 budget, the City Manager should:		
FY25 Guideline	Input & Discussion	Draft FY26 Guideline
A. Continue to proceed with the guidelines of the Strategic Framework for Economic Development, with the long-term goal to promote a diversified and growing tax base, and a renewed focus on small business, retail corridors, and emerging industry clusters.	Committee Discussion: Keep, but change Strategic Framework for Economic Development, (adopted in 2011) to Comprehensive Plan which is more current. There was discussion to include New Item #1 below, but it was agreed to make that a separate guideline.	Continue to proceed with the guidelines of the Comprehensive Plan, with the long-term goal to promote a diversified and growing tax base, and a renewed focus on small business, retail corridors, and emerging industry clusters.
B. Continue pursuing mitigation monies, linkage fees, and/or other measures from larger scale projects.	Committee Discussion: Keep, no change.	Continue pursuing mitigation monies, linkage fees, and/or other measures from larger scale projects.
C. Require all Departments to actively pursue filing applications for all relevant state, federal, and private foundation grant programs.	Bays: Add “provided these grant programs are in line with values and principles laid out in in our charter, policies we have passed, or our budget priorities.” Committee Discussion: Keep as is. Do not add the additional language. Per the Manager, all actions taken by the administration are in accordance with the Charter. Agreed that the language on values and principles outlined in the Charter Preamble should be added to the header of policy guidelines.	Require all Departments to actively pursue filing applications for all relevant state, federal, and private foundation grant programs.
D. Actively seek Payment In Lieu Of Taxes (PILOT) agreements, or other in-kind services, with each non-profit organization owning or purchasing property in Watertown.	Committee Discussion: Keep, no change.	Actively seek Payment In Lieu Of Taxes (PILOT) agreements, or other in-kind services, with each non-profit organization owning or purchasing property in Watertown.

New Request	Input & Discussion	Draft FY26 Guideline
New Item #1	<p>Palomba: Continue to pursue the implementation of the Watertown Square Area Plan with the long-term goal of increasing our tax base through the development of small and medium size businesses in the Square.</p> <p>Committee Discussion: Agreed to add this as this is an important new Economic Development initiative, but include multi-family housing to the language.</p>	Continue to pursue the implementation of the Watertown Square Area Plan with the long-term goal of increasing our tax base through the development of multi-family housing and small and medium size businesses in the Square.

II. Program Enhancements/Expenditures: To the extent that resources allow, in light of the financial policies stated above, and adhering to the principle of first identifying cost-savings and/or new revenue, the following program enhancements and, if necessary, new expenditures should receive priority in the FY26 budget. Education program enhancements and expenditures should be considered subsequently in light of the recommendations of the School Committee.

FY25 Guideline	Input & Discussion	Draft FY26 Guideline
<p>A. All departmental budgets should prioritize and enhance the ability of the City to implement the strategies and action items in the Climate and Energy Plan.</p>	<p>Palomba: No change</p> <p>Gardner: leave as is</p> <p>Committee Discussion: See new item #3 below. Keep, no change.</p>	<p>All departmental budgets should prioritize and enhance the ability of the City to implement the strategies and action items in the Climate and Energy Plan.</p>
<p>B. With the completed update to the Comprehensive Plan which includes new goals and strategies for development in Watertown; and the ongoing Watertown Square Area Plan that will include Intersection Design, Development & Zoning changes including increase in housing density, Small Business strategies, and better use of City owned land; provide funding to address the strategies and action items in the plans, and continue to enhance the capabilities of the Department of Community Development and Planning by adding resources and/or redeploying existing resources to achieve the goals of the Plans.</p>	<p>Feltner: Delete “by adding resources and/or redeploying existing resources”</p> <p>Palomba: Add, “adding resources, specifically increasing the capacity of the Senior Transportation Planner and the capacity of the Senior Housing Planner,”</p> <p>Gardner: Simplify and update the language, for example: "Provide funding to address the strategies and action items in the Comprehensive Plan and the Watertown Square Area Plan." We could also say "If needed, enhance the capabilities of the DCDP by adding resources or redeploying existing resources to achieve the goals of the Plans." But I don't think it is needed given the state of the team which is essentially built out.</p> <p>Bays: Replace with “Provide resources to the planning and redevelopment of Watertown Square.”</p> <p>Committee Discussion: Reword to simplify current adoption of the Watertown Square Area Plan, and resources should be added as needed.</p>	<p>Provide resources to address the strategies and action items in the Comprehensive Plan and the Watertown Square Area Plan.</p>

FY25 Guideline	Input & Discussion	Draft FY26 Guideline
<p>C. Continue to work collaboratively with the Watertown Public Schools on the comprehensive multi-year educational budget that assures sustainable funding for our schools and the successful education of our children, and seek to accommodate a 3.5% annual increase for FY25 for the Education appropriation that will provide level-service funding for our schools.</p>	<p>Feltner: Change “FY25” to “FY26”</p> <p>Gardner: leave as is</p> <p>Committee Discussion: Keep as is, but change FY25 to FY26.</p>	<p>Continue to work collaboratively with the Watertown Public Schools on the comprehensive multi-year educational budget that assures sustainable funding for our schools and the successful education of our children, and seek to accommodate a 3.5% annual increase for FY26 for the Education appropriation that will provide level-service funding for our schools.</p>
<p>D. Continue support for Building for the Future Initiative funding in collaboration with the School Building Committee, for the MSBA High School project, without debt exclusion funding.</p>	<p>Palomba: Remove as it has been achieved.</p> <p>Izzo: Add “And come up with a plan for Watertown Middle School.”</p> <p>Gardner: delete? Do we still need to say this?</p> <p>Bays: remove</p> <p>Sideris: add the middle school funding to the Building for the Future Initiative.</p> <p>Committee Discussion: See new item # 5 below. Keep as is until WHS is at the punch list stage in case of additional cost challenges. Put WMS with 5 unfunded capital items in one new item – see II.R below.</p>	<p>Continue support for Building for the Future Initiative funding in collaboration with the School Building Committee, for the MSBA High School project, without debt exclusion funding.</p>

FY25 Guideline	Input & Discussion	Draft FY26 Guideline
<p>E. Monitor and assess resources for launch of the 311 system in the FY25 budget.</p>	<p>Feltner: remove</p> <p>Palomba: Change to “Continue to monitor the effectiveness and assess resources for the 311 system.”</p> <p>Gardner: delete - we are now in Business As Usual with 311 as best I can tell.</p> <p>Bays: remove</p> <p>Committee Discussion: Completed, remove.</p>	<p>Remove.</p>
<p>F. Continue annual updates of the rolling five-year plan and funding schedule for the integrated improvements of the City's streets and sidewalks, water-sewer-stormwater infrastructure, and underground utilities. The plan should show status of ongoing projects, identify future projects including those with no funding source, identify sources of stormwater and sewage outflow to the Charles River, and coordination with water-sewer-stormwater projects and underground utility projects.</p>	<p>Palomba: No change</p> <p>Izzo: Add “Continue to try and locate space for DPW storage”</p> <p>Gardner: I don't understand why we need to call this out as a special item. I think the work should be done, but isn't this Business As Usual as well? I need to better understand the rationale.</p> <p>Committee Discussion: DPW is not where it needs to be resource wise, but the feeling is this is just a description of what DPW already does. y. The Manager says he takes the 3 DPW related guidelines to mean that DPW is important to the Council. The Committee suggests a referral to the Public Works Committee for a meeting with the new DPW director once they are on board for about 6 months. Keep, but clean up the language.</p>	<p>Provide funding and resources to ensure that the City’s 5-year rolling plans for streets, sidewalks, water, sewer, stormwater, and underground utilities are effectively planned and executed for optimal results.</p>

FY25 Guideline	Input & Discussion	Draft FY26 Guideline
<p>G. Fund the recommendations of the Classification and Compensation Study in the FY25 budget.</p>	<p>Feltner: remove</p> <p>Palomba: Remove as this has been completed</p> <p>Gardner: delete – completed</p> <p>Bays: Is this complete? Can we remove it now?</p> <p>Sideris: remove</p> <p>Committee Discussion: Completed, remove.</p>	<p>Remove.</p>
<p>H. Improve the operational efficiency, flexibility, and capacity of the Public Works Department to meet the City’s growing needs to manage contractors, respond to work order requests, oversee development projects, plan and implement infrastructure improvements, improve communications to residents about road construction, comply with the MassDEP 2030 Solid Waste Management Plan, and maintain complete streets infrastructure. Review improvements for snow and ice removal. Identify and implement technology needed to support the Department.</p>	<p>Palomba: No change.</p> <p>Gardner: I also don't understand why we need to call this out as a special item. I think the work should be done, but isn't this Business As Usual as well? I need to better understand the rationale.</p> <p>Committee Discussion: DPW is not where it needs to be resource wise, but the feeling is this is just a description of what DPW already does. The Manager says he wants new DPW director to assess where changes are needed in terms of operational efficiency vs. new staffing. The Committee suggests a referral to the Public Works Committee for a meeting with the new DPW director once they are on board for about 6 months. Keep, but clean up the language.</p>	<p>Provide resources to enhance the Public Works Department’s efficiency, flexibility, and capacity to meet the city's growing needs. This includes managing contractors, responding to work orders, overseeing development projects, planning infrastructure improvements, communicating road construction updates, complying with MassDEP waste management regulations, maintaining complete streets infrastructure, and improving snow and ice removal. Identify and implement the necessary technology to support these functions.</p>

FY25 Guideline	Input & Discussion	Draft FY26 Guideline
I. Fund the remaining recommendations of the HR Assessment Review in the FY25 budget.	<p>Feltner: remove</p> <p>Palomba: Removed as the majority of the recommendations have been either implemented or there are plans for implementation.</p> <p>Gardner: delete – completed</p> <p>Sideris: Add additional resources to fund the HR study recommendations.</p> <p>Committee Discussion: Completed, remove.</p>	Remove.
J. Add resources in the FY25 budget to support the work of the newly formed Human Rights Commission.	<p>Feltner: Change to “Keep resources in the FY26 budget to support the work of the Human Rights Commission.”</p> <p>Palomba: Change “FY25” to “FY26”</p> <p>Gardner: delete – completed</p> <p>Bays: remove</p> <p>Committee Discussion: Completed, remove.</p>	Remove.
K. Monitor and assess resources for City-wide rodent control in the FY25 budget.	<p>Feltner: Change “FY25” to “FY26”</p> <p>Palomba: Change to “Continue to monitor and assess City-wide rodent control.”</p> <p>Gardner: delete - did the work, added resource, now Business As Usual</p> <p>Bays: remove</p> <p>Committee Discussion: Completed, remove.</p>	Remove.

FY25 Guideline	Input & Discussion	Draft FY26 Guideline
<p>L. Continue working to identify additional acquisition of land for open space and recreation, using the Acquisition of Land/Open Space Stabilization Fund, and including proposals submitted to the Community Preservation Committee.</p>	<p>Palomba: No change</p> <p>Gardner: leave as is</p> <p>Committee Discussion: Keep, no change.</p>	<p>Continue working to identify additional acquisition of land for open space and recreation, using the Acquisition of Land/Open Space Stabilization Fund, and including proposals submitted to the Community Preservation Committee.</p>
<p>M. Continue to enhance the capabilities of the Department of Public Works Forestry Division by adding resources and/or redeploying additional resources for improving and maintaining Watertown’s public shade trees and increasing the City’s overall tree canopy, by maintaining robust data collection for public shade trees in Watertown, and analyzing the data to continue tree plantings.</p>	<p>Feltner: Delete “by adding resources and/or redeploying additional resources”; replace “by maintaining” with ‘including”; delete “to continue tree plantings.”</p> <p>Palomba: Replace with “Continue to monitor the maintenance of Watertown’s existing public shade tree canopy. Continue to collect and analysis data with the goal of creating a plan to increase tree planting in neighborhoods with heat islands. Add resources or redeploy resources to make it possible for the Department of Public Works Forestry Division to implement the plan.</p> <p>Gardner: Needs work. For example, we don't have tree management software, which makes data collection and asset management hard. What has the Tree Warden specifically asked for?</p> <p>Committee Discussion: Tree management software was implemented with completion of tree inventory last year, however what is missing is the ability to turn the data into work order plans. Keep, but reword.</p>	<p>Continue to enhance the capabilities of the Department of Public Works Forestry Division by adding resources and/or redeploying additional resources to monitor the maintenance of Watertown’s existing public shade tree canopy, and continue to collect and analyze data with the goal of creating and implementing a plan to increase tree planting in neighborhoods with heat islands.</p>

FY25 Guideline	Input & Discussion	Draft FY26 Guideline
<p>N. Consider funding for the recommendations of the Community Health & Human Services Assessment in the FY25 budget.</p>	<p>Feltner: Change “FY25” to “FY26”</p> <p>Palomba: Change “Consider funding for” to Fund”; change “FY25” to “FY26”</p> <p>Gardner: change language to something like "Fund those Community Health & Human Services Assessment recommendations that are approved by the City Council for FY2026".</p> <p>Bays: Change “Consider funding for” to Fund”; change “FY25” to “FY26”</p> <p>Committee Discussion: The Assessment with recommendations in at the Husam Services Committee for review. Update, changing FY25 to FY26.</p>	<p>Fund the recommendations of the Community Health & Human Services Assessment in the FY26 budget.</p>
<p>O. To meet the goal of allowing people who live and work in Watertown to go car free, continue to work with the Watertown Transportation Management Association to identify sustainable sources of funding for a permanent local transit program in Watertown.</p>	<p>Feltner: Delete “To meet the goal of allowing people who live and work in Watertown to go car free,”</p> <p>Gardner: Keep? I don't think we've made progress here.</p> <p>Committee Discussion: See New Items #2 & #4 below. Reword to include recommendations from upcoming Study for City Supported Local Transit.</p>	<p>To meet the goal of allowing people who live and work in Watertown to go car free, continue to work with the Watertown Transportation Management Association, and identify sustainable sources of funding for permanent local transit programs in Watertown, including the recommendations from the upcoming Study for City Supported Local Transit.</p>

FY25 Guideline	Input & Discussion	Draft FY26 Guideline
<p>P. Provide additional support for cultural events and public art in the FY25 budget.</p>	<p>Feltner: Replace “Provide additional” with “Continue”; change “FY25” to “FY26”</p> <p>Palomba: Change “FY25” to “FY26”</p> <p>Gardner: Keep? Did we accomplish what was intended with the Cultural Council match etc.?</p> <p>Bays: Change “FY25” to “FY26”</p> <p>Committee Discussion: Completed, remove.</p>	<p>Remove.</p>
<p>Q. Consider re-use of the former north branch library after review of a FY24 structural study and findings.</p>	<p>Feltner: Replace “a FY24” with “its”</p> <p>Palomba: Eliminate as this will be considered via the implementation of the Watertown Square Area Plan.</p> <p>Gardner: given the list of capital projects presented in the budget, perhaps this comes off for now? Doesn't seem realistic for next year.</p> <p>Bays: Either take this out or put it last since developing this is problematic.</p> <p>Committee Discussion: Study found building is structurally sound. Explore programmatic use of the building, and alternative funding sources for renovations. Keep but update.</p>	<p>Consider re-use of the former north branch library, including exploring use of alternative funds to assist in renovations.</p>

FY25 Guideline	Input & Discussion	Draft FY26 Guideline
<p>R. Based on final City Council policy direction, develop a budgetary plan to meet the identified need for DPW staging space.</p>	<p>Palomba: No change</p> <p>Gardner: drop, because I would merge it with other major projects (see my 2nd new item below)</p> <p>Bays: Delete “Based on final City Council policy direction”</p> <p>Committee Discussion: See item II.D above, and new items #1, 5, & 6 below. Put all 5 unfunded capital items in one new item to develop a budgetary plan, as was identified in the Preliminary Budget Overview October 22, 2024.</p>	<p>Based on final City Council policy direction, develop a budgetary plan, within the confines of Proposition 2 ½, for the five unfunded capital items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior Center/Recreation Center • East End Fire Station • DPW Staging Area • Watertown Square Plan Implementation • Middle School Renovations

New Request	Input & Discussion	Draft FY26 Guideline
New Item #1	<p>Airasian: Continue looking into the need for space. In particular, Senior Center and East End Fire Station.</p> <p>Committee Discussion: See item II.D and II.R above, and new items #5 & 6. Do not add as a separate item, update II.R.</p>	Do not add.
New Item #2	<p>Palomba: Consider funding the results of the study of a local transit system that has been funded by an ARPA grant.</p> <p>Committee Discussion: See item II.O above. Do not add as a separate item, update II.O.</p>	Do not add.
New Item #3	<p>Palomba: Consider funding the implementation of the forthcoming Building Emission Reduction and Disclosure Ordinance (BERDO), Recycling Ordinance, and Tree ordinance.</p> <p>Committee Discussion: See item II.A above. Do not add as a separate item. Requirements for additional staff to address the goals of the Climate and Energy Plan is already covered in II.A. The Manager pointed out that the real gap in services is in the Public Buildings Department, as our new Net Zero Energy schools are quite different to maintain than older buildings. It was agreed that an assessment of the Public Buildings Department would be a good idea to insure that our new energy efficient buildings are being kept in optimal operating condition. Add that as a new item.</p>	Fund an assessment of the Public Buildings Department to meet the needs of our new buildings.
New Item #4	<p>Gardner: Fund those Transit Study recommendations that are approved by the City Council for FY2026.</p> <p>Committee Discussion: See item II.O above. Do not add as a separate item, update II.O.</p>	Do not add.
New Item #5	<p>Gardner: Fund the 2026 major capital projects that are prioritized by the City Council in the coming month." I'm sure this language needs work, but my point is that we are going to discuss prioritization of Middle School, East End Fire Station, DPW Staging area, Senior Center, Community Center, Library, etc. as the Manager teed up in his budget, and this document should reflect those priorities once they are set by the Council.</p> <p>Committee Discussion: See item II.D and II.R above, and new items #1 & 6. Do not add as a separate item, update II.R.</p>	Do not add.

New Request	Input & Discussion	Draft FY26 Guideline
New Item #6	<p>Bays: Develop a budgetary plan to replace the East End Fire Station.</p> <p>Committee Discussion: See item II.D and II.R above, and new items #1 & 5. Do not add as a separate item, update II.R.</p>	Do not add.
New Item #7	<p>Gannon: Appropriation for City Council outside counsel, consultants and other experts, as provided by the Watertown City Charter.</p> <p>Committee Discussion: Do not add - funding to support the City Council needs is included in the Council Reserve, and appropriation for a specific use would need City Council policy guidance.</p>	Do not add.
New Item #8	<p>Gannon: Study of non-zoning property tax exemptions that the City can adopt to encourage private creation of affordable housing units.</p> <p>Committee Discussion: It was noted that this is controlled by State Law, and is not an FY26 budget. Recommend it be handled as a request for information. Do not add.</p>	Do not add.

Watertown's FY2026 Budget Policy Guidelines

For Approval by the City Council

November 26, 2024

The City Council is adopting these budget policy guidelines pursuant to Section 5-1 of the Watertown Home Rule Charter, and in line with the values and principles outlined in the Charter Preamble. Based on these guidelines, the City Manager will develop budgetary goals and the City budget for Fiscal Year 2026. *Watertown's Ongoing Budget Policy Guidelines* Resolution 2012-72, *Amending Watertown's Ongoing Budget Policy Guidelines* Resolution 2017-84 and *Watertown's Ongoing Capital Project Budget Guidelines* Resolution 2013-76 are hereby incorporated by reference.

I. COST-SAVINGS/REVENUES

Note: The items in this section will be ranked in order of priority by the City Council after adoption.

The City Council believes that identification of cost savings and/or new revenues should be a precondition to additional expenditures. To this end, in developing the FY26 budget, the City Manager should:

- A. Continue to proceed with the guidelines of the Comprehensive Plan, with the long-term goal to promote a diversified and growing tax base, and a renewed focus on small business, retain corridors, and emerging industry clusters.
- B. Continue pursuing mitigation monies, linkage fees, and/or other measures from larger scale projects.
- C. Require all departments to actively pursue filing applications for all relevant state, federal, and private foundation grant programs.
- D. Actively seek Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) agreements, or other in-kind services, with each non-profit organization owning or purchasing property in Watertown.
- E. Continue to pursue the implementation of the Watertown Square Area Plan with the long-term goal of increasing our tax base through the development of multi-family housing and small and medium sized businesses in the Square.

II. PROGRAM ENHANCEMENTS/EXPENDITURES

Note: The items in this section will be ranked in order of priority by the City Council after adoption.

To the extent that resources allow, in light of the financial policies stated above, and adhering to the principle of first identifying cost-savings and/or new revenue, the following program enhancements and, if necessary, new expenditures should receive priority in the FY26 budget. Education program enhancements and expenditures should be considered subsequently in light of the recommendations of the School Committee.

- A. All departmental budgets should prioritize and enhance the ability of the city to implement the strategies and action items in the Climate and Energy Plan.
- B. Provide resources to address the strategies and action items in the Comprehensive Plan and the Watertown Square Area Plan.
- C. Continue to work collaboratively with the Watertown Public Schools on the comprehensive multi-year educational budget that assures sustainable funding for our schools and the successful education of our children and seek to accommodate a 3.5% annual increase for FY26 for the Educational appropriation that will provide level-service funding for our schools.
- D. Continue support for Building for the Future Initiative funding in collaboration with the School Building Committee, for the MSBA High School project, without debt exclusion funding.
- E. Provide funding and resources to ensure that the City's 5-year rolling plans for streets, sidewalks, water, sewer, stormwater, and underground utilities are effectively planned and executed for optimal results.
- F. Provide resources to enhance the Public Works Department's efficiency, flexibility, and capacity to meet the city's growing needs. This includes managing contractors, responding to work orders, overseeing development projects, planning infrastructure improvements, communicating road construction updates, complying with MassDEP waste management regulations, maintaining complete streets infrastructure, and improving snow and ice removal. Identify and implement the necessary technology to support these functions.

Watertown's FY2026 Budget Policy Guidelines for Approval

- G. Continue working to identify additional acquisition of land for open space and recreation using the Acquisition of Land/Open Space Stabilization Fund and including proposals submitted to the Community Preservation Committee.
- H. Continue to enhance the capabilities of the Department of Public Works Forestry Division by adding resources and/or redeploying additional resources to monitor the maintenance of Watertown's existing public shade tree canopy and continue to collect and analyze data with the goal of creating and implementing a plan to increase tree planting in neighborhoods with heat islands.
- I. Fund the recommendations of the Community Health & Human Services Assessment in the FY26 budget.
- J. To meet the goal of allowing people who live and work in Watertown to go car-free, continue to work with the Watertown Transportation Management Association, and identify sustainable sources of funding for permanent local transit programs in Watertown, including the recommendations from the upcoming Study for City Supported Local Transit.
- K. Consider re-use of the former north branch library, including exploring use of alternative funds to assist in renovations.
- L. Based on final City Council policy direction, develop a budgetary plan, within the confines of Proposition 2 ½, for the five unfunded capital items:
 - Senior Center/Recreation Area
 - East End Fire Station
 - DPW Staging Area
 - Watertown Square Plan Implementation
 - Middle School Renovations
- M. Fund an assessment of the Public Buildings Department to meet the needs of our new buildings.

Watertown's FY2026 Budget Policy Guidelines Priority Ranking

For both sections I and II, rank each item by priority (1=highest) and return to the Chair of the Budget & Fiscal Oversight Committee no later than 5:00 pm Tuesday December 3, 2024. The final published budget policy guidelines will be ranked by composite priority.

Councilor Name: _____

I. COST-SAVINGS/REVENUES	
FY26 Guideline	Ranking
A. Continue to proceed with the guidelines of the Comprehensive Plan, with the long-term goal to promote a diversified and growing tax base, and a renewed focus on small business, retain corridors, and emerging industry clusters.	
B. Continue pursuing mitigation monies, linkage fees, and/or other measures from larger scale projects.	
C. Require all departments to actively pursue filing applications for all relevant state, federal, and private foundation grant programs.	
D. Actively seek Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) agreements, or other in-kind services, with each non-profit organization owning or purchasing property in Watertown.	
E. Continue to pursue the implementation of the Watertown Square Area Plan with the long-term goal of increasing our tax base through the development of multi-family housing and small and medium sized businesses in the Square.	

II. PROGRAM ENHANCEMENTS/EXPENDITURES	
FY26 Guideline	Ranking
A. All departmental budgets should prioritize and enhance the ability of the city to implement the strategies and action items in the Climate and Energy Plan.	
B. Provide resources to address the strategies and action items in the Comprehensive Plan and the Watertown Square Area Plan.	
C. Continue to work collaboratively with the Watertown Public Schools on the comprehensive multi-year educational budget that assures sustainable funding for our schools and the successful education of our children and seek to accommodate a 3.5% annual increase for FY26 for the Educational appropriation that will provide level-service funding for our schools.	
D. Continue support for Building for the Future Initiative funding in collaboration with the School Building Committee, for the MSBA High School project, without debt exclusion funding.	
E. Provide funding and resources to ensure that the City's 5-year rolling plans for streets, sidewalks, water, sewer, stormwater, and underground utilities are effectively planned and executed for optimal results.	
F. Provide resources to enhance the Public Works Department's efficiency, flexibility, and capacity to meet the city's growing needs. This includes managing contractors, responding to work orders, overseeing development projects, planning infrastructure improvements, communicating road construction updates, complying with MassDEP waste management regulations, maintaining complete streets infrastructure, and improving snow and ice removal. Identify and implement the necessary technology to support these functions.	
G. Continue working to identify additional acquisition of land for open space and recreation using the Acquisition of Land/Open Space Stabilization Fund and including proposals submitted to the Community Preservation Committee.	
H. Continue to enhance the capabilities of the Department of Public Works Forestry Division by adding resources and/or redeploying additional resources to monitor the maintenance of Watertown's existing public shade tree canopy and continue to collect and analyze data with the goal of creating and implementing a plan to increase tree planting in neighborhoods with heat islands.	
I. Fund the recommendations of the Community Health & Human Services Assessment in the FY26 budget.	
J. To meet the goal of allowing people who live and work in Watertown to go car-free, continue to work with the Watertown Transportation Management Association, and identify sustainable sources of funding for permanent local transit programs in Watertown, including the recommendations from the upcoming Study for City Supported Local Transit.	
K. Consider re-use of the former north branch library, including exploring use of alternative funds to assist in renovations.	
L. Based on final City Council policy direction, develop a budgetary plan, within the confines of Proposition 2 ½, for the five unfunded capital items: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior Center/Recreation Area • East End Fire Station • DPW Staging Area • Watertown Square Plan Implementation • Middle School Renovations 	
M. Fund an assessment of the Public Buildings Department to meet the needs of our new buildings.	