



Watertown City Council

Administration Building
149 Main Street
Watertown, MA 02472
Phone: 617-972-6470

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

Report of the Committee on Economic Development & Planning Meeting Date: August 2, 2023

The Committee convened on Wednesday August 2, 2023 at 5:00 pm by Zoom, pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023. Present were Lisa Feltner, chair; Gannon, vice chair; and Vincent Piccirilli, secretary. Also present were residents Joan Gumbleton, Linda Scott, and Jacky van Leeuwen.

The purpose of the meeting was to conduct Zoning Board of Appeals and Planning Board interviews. It was called to order at 5:03 pm.

Samuel Odamah has a Masters in Architecture and a Masters in Education, and is a candidate for appointment to the ZBA as an alternate member. He currently works for the Harvard Graduate School of Education as an academic coach. His career path changed, and he never worked professionally as an architect, but as a student he worked for Community Solutions by Design doing visioning for city planning, working with the public and community leaders. As a parent with two small children, he has a deep interest in the future of the city that his children will grow up in. He feels that good design needs to take into account the feelings of the community. With his educational and career experience, he feels well equipped, when making a decision with his colleagues on the ZBA, to listen to input from all stakeholders, and balance what is allowed by the law versus the priorities voiced by the public.

Christopher Heep is an attorney at Miyares & Harrington specializing in municipal, land use, and environmental law. He has been on the ZBA since 2011 and is seeking reappointment as a full member. He loves volunteering on the ZBA as both a way to share his expertise with the community, as well as play a role in its future. He thinks the ZBA works well together and is doing a very good job in developing recommendations for projects that are being approved. He listens carefully to all input from developers, the public, and staff. When reaching a decision, he weighs what is allowed under the zoning ordinance, what the impacts are to the public, how those impacts can be mitigated, and if the impacts are too big and can't be mitigated, then a perhaps a project should not be approved.

Payson Whitney is a Registered Professional Engineer with 25 years of experience in civil and coastal engineering and project management at ESS Group. He has been on the Planning Board since 2017 and is seeking reappointment. He is enthusiastic serving on the Board, and as the Special Permit Granting Authority for very large projects on Pleasant and Arsenal Streets, there are still a lot of projects underway that he is working on. He respects the expertise and insights that his colleagues bring to discussions, and he has changed his mind on occasion based on what he learned. He understands the emotions that come into play with public comments, but he strives to take the emotion out of it and stick to facts when making a decision. He believes that the Planning Board should work with DCDP to develop guidelines for their proceedings, perhaps with input from developers/applicants and the public; for example, he has browsed the Salem, MA Planning Board Handbook. He would also like to be sure that Planning Board has adequate time to review all applicant materials prior to

meetings; it would also be more helpful to receive emailed comments from the public beforehand, while understanding it can take time to absorb the details of large projects and comments would still be welcomed during the meetings.

- ➔ **Action Item:** Councilor Piccirilli made a motion, seconded by Councilor Gannon, to recommend that the City Council confirm Samuel Odamah for appointment as an alternate member of the Zoning Board of Appeals for a term expiring February 15, 2025. Voted 3-0 on a roll call.
- ➔ **Action Item:** Councilor Piccirilli made a motion, seconded by Councilor Gannon, to recommend that the City Council confirm Christopher Heep for reappointment as a full member of the Zoning Board of Appeals for a term expiring February 15, 2028. Voted 3-0 on a roll call.
- ➔ **Action Item:** Councilor Piccirilli made a motion, seconded by Councilor Gannon, to recommend that the City Council confirm Payson Whitney for reappointment to the Planning Board for a term expiring February 15, 2026. Voted 3-0 on a roll call.

The meeting adjourned at 6:05 pm on a roll call.

Report prepared by Vincent Piccirilli