



**Committee on Human Services Meeting
Monday, January 16, 2025 at 6:00 PM
Richard E. Mastrangelo Council Chamber – Second Floor**

MINUTES

Committee Members Present: Councilor Tony Palomba, Chair; Councilor Caroline Bays, Vice Chair; Councilor John Gannon, Secretary

Present at meeting:

Rob Buchanan, Principal at Health Management Associates (HMA); Rita Colafella; Tyler Cote, Community Engagement Specialist; Patrick George, Veterans' Services Officer; Steve Magoon, Assistant City Manager for Community Development and Planning; Marcy Murningham; Domenica Puleo, Community Development and Planning Administrative Specialist; Jacky van Leeuwen; and Stephanie Venizelos, Community Wellness Program Manager.

Zoom participants: Rachel Kay, School Committee; Tara Kelly, Health Management Associates; Councilor Vinnie Piccirilli, Jacob Smith, and Linda who did not provide her full name.

1. Call to Order

Councilor Palomba called the meeting to order at approximately 6:00 p.m. and introduced those present and attending via Zoom.

2. Meeting Discussion – Discussion on the Health and Human Services Assessment

Councilor Palomba invited Rob Buchanan to make his presentation after which he planned to open the discussion to the community and councilors. (The slide presentation is attached.)

Before Rob Buchanan began his slide presentation, Councilor Gannon clarified that although there had been previous meetings with the community and a presentation at a city manager's meeting, this was the first presentation before the Committee on Human Services.

Rob Buchanan introduced his colleague, Tara Kelly, who was attending/assisting him with the slide deck via Zoom. He then proceeded to describe the background of the assessment, beginning with a community forum at the library approximately one year ago, followed by approximately twenty interviews with members of the city council, departments, and community-based organizations. The project timeline was presented, which showed the start as fall of 2023 and the final report presentation as January 2025. He described the three components of the assessment: gap assessment, organizational review, and recommendations. In addition, he presented slides that listed the interviews and focus groups conducted and described the efforts to engage as many members of the community as possible.

Rob Buchanan presented the recommendations that came out of the study. The first recommendation was to create a human services director position for the city with a key task

being the development and implementation of a human services strategic plan. The second recommendation was to create a Watertown health and human services cabinet. This would serve as a way to formalize a lot of the informal work that's presently being done.). The third recommendation was to improve digital front door awareness and access to Watertown's health and human services. The fourth recommendation was to establish a physical front door to Watertown's health and human services. Use of the Parker Annex Building was suggested for this office, as well as a new home for the Watertown Food Pantry. The fifth recommendation was to establish relationships with community-based organizations (CBO) for key programs and services. The sixth recommendation was to improve access to food supports. The seventh recommendation was to develop a DEI approach. Some of the recommended functions of a DEI approach included creating a DEI director, integrating DEI into municipal strategic planning, engaging the community on DEI issues, and developing an official statement on inclusion. The eighth recommendation was to establish a language access program. The ninth and final recommendation was to prioritize health promotion and wellness with key functions including developing a health promotion and wellness strategic plan and integrating Live Well wellness into Human Services and prioritizing strategic planning and alignment.

Community feedback included concerns from Live Well about staffing and resources, housing supports, including renters, the need for strategic planning and policy advocacy to enhance Watertown's food access and infrastructure, concerns around DEI strategies, and making sure that mobility access issues aren't forgotten. Lastly, improving accessibility and green space was deemed important by community members.

Following Rob Buchanan's presentation, Councilor Palomba recognized Jacob Smith and Linda who joined the meeting via zoom. He asked Tara Kelly from HMA if she would like to add anything to the presentation. She replied that she was happy to answer questions.

Councilor Palomba invited the community's questions. Marcy Murningham, 134 Fayette Street, congratulated the team on doing a wonderful job on the Assessment. She added that she disagrees with the recommendation regarding the structural home of Live Well Watertown. Instead, she suggested that it stay where it is in the Office of Community Development and Planning, for the moment. (An email to the members of the Committee from Ms. Murningham is attached.)

Jacky van Leeuwen, 32 Whites Avenue, stated that she appreciated the thoroughness of the Assessment. Her comments were specific to housing. She hoped that the Committee would consider a housing specialist who would have their finger on the pulse of housing in Watertown, as well as locally, regionally, and nationally, and would be able to build relationships and develop creative programs. (Attached is a statement from Housing for All Watertown regarding this issue.)

Rita Colafella, 56 Cuba Street, noted that the one thing she found troubling about the Assessment was putting disability under DEI. She stated her belief that disability should have its

own officer or director. (Attached is a letter from the Commission on Disability regarding this issue.)

Councilor Palomba paused to recognize that School Committee member Rachel Kay had arrived at the meeting on zoom and to invite anyone else who would like to speak to do so.

Rob Buchanan thanked the Watertown community for making the project so enjoyable due in great part to the passion, knowledge, and expertise of the community.

Rachel Kay apologized for being late to the meeting. She added that she thought the Assessment was well done and that her opinions overlapped with Rita regarding the role of disability. Also, she would like to see more about the role of schools in the recommendations, how the City could connect with the schools vis-à-vis implementation.

Councilor Palomba then asked Councilors Bays and Gannon for their comments and questions.

Councilor Bays began by saying she loved the Assessment, particularly recommendation number two to establish a health and human services cabinet. She questioned the discrepancy between the reference to Health and Human Services throughout the report and the position being named Human Services Director. Rob Buchanan acknowledged that it is confusing, and little consistency was found in the way that other cities and towns handle it. Councilor Gannon added his perspective and experience on the matter, but ultimately believes that having a human service department, as opposed to a health and human service department, would better serve the needs of the community. Councilor Bays offered that it might make sense to consider the title of Human Services and Community Wellness Director.

Councilor Bays asked if there is currently any access to tenant-landlord counseling and mediation in Watertown. Rob Buchanan answered, no. She went on to ask about the Somerville Housing Stability Office and whether that was something Watertown could aspire to. Rob Buchanan answered that it is the larger cities like Somerville, Cambridge, and Boston that have it, but it is something Watertown could work toward. Councilor Gannon suggested that they defer to City Manager Proakis who oversaw that office in his role as Somerville Planning Director.

Councilor Gannon said that he was impressed with the Assessment. He liked the outreach and community engagement. He commented on the difference between the Health Department and Human Services. He highlighted the new grant manager role and how that would mesh well with a Human Services department, and how impactful the role could be for Watertown.

Councilor Palomba offered his reflections and concerns. He echoed everybody's compliments on a great Assessment. He said the establishment of the position is critical. He also raised the question of this new department needing administrative support and a budget. He liked the idea of the cabinet, but voiced concern over accountability. In addition, he suggested the cabinet needs to include community folks with lived experience... He liked the idea of a

physical front door but wondered who would staff it and how residents would learn about it. He said he believes it is important to use CBO to gather data. He said he is very supportive of the expansion of the food pantry. He emphasized the importance of the strategic plan that will be one of the first responsibilities of the new director.

Councilor Gannon raised the topic of ADA in conjunction with the DEI coordinator position. He said he envisions a DEI coordinator to fight for all residents, taking on a larger role that would encompass advocacy to include residents with disabilities. Rob Buchanan clarified that the thinking around the DEI Director is that it is a standalone position. Marcy Murningham addressed the problematic nature of the term DEI and encouraged the committee to consider alternative terminology.

Councilor Gannon made a motion that the Committee on Human Services recommend that the City Council endorse the Health and Human Services Assessment and request that the City Manager take action to implement its recommendations. Councilor Bays seconded the motion. All were in favor.

3. Adjournment

Councilor Gannon made a motion to adjourn. Councilor Bays seconded the motion. All were in favor. The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:06 p.m.

The minutes were prepared by Ann Korte.



"Founded in Peace"

WATERTOWN
MASSACHUSETTS

HMA

Watertown Health and Human Services Assessment

Watertown City Council Human
Services Committee Meeting
Final Presentation

January 16, 2024
6:00 p.m.





WELCOME

Health and Human Services Assessment Report

- Rob Buchanan, Health Management Associates
- Tara Kelly, Health Management Associates

BACKGROUND OF ASSESSMENT

- » Watertown engaged **Health Management Associates (HMA)** to conduct a qualitative and quantitative assessment of the community's health and human service needs, determine the scope of services presently available to meet those needs, identify remaining disparities in services, and recommend resources to fill those gaps.
- » HMA facilitated extensive community outreach and data gathering efforts in 2024 to elicit a range of community perspectives regarding the strengths and needs of health and human services in Watertown.
- » Assessment includes relevant descriptive and quantitative data about Watertown's health and human services needs from publicly available national, statewide, and local sources.

Community Engagement

- » **20 interviews** with representation from the City Council, City of Watertown department heads and staff, and leaders of community-based organizations (CBOs)
- » **8 focus groups** composed of representatives from public and private health and human services organizations, CBOs, and residents from historically marginalized and underserved populations, including those who do not presently access health and human services
- » **2 community meetings** for all residents, including a follow-up survey
- » **Draft report feedback** was solicited from Watertown residents about the community draft report.

TIMELINE



COMPONENTS OF THE ASSESSMENT

The assessment is composed of three parts:

- » **Health and Human Services Gap Assessment.** Evaluates public and private health and human service organizations that serve Watertown. Describes available services and identifies populations that are being served or inadequately served.
- » **Health and Human Services Organizational Review.** Reviews the operation of the various health and human services functions within Watertown and summarizes staffing, management, and organizational structure.
- » **Recommendations.** Includes recommended organizational and program efficiencies and enhancements, as well as an implementation timeline

Through engagement and analysis, key community priorities emerged with a focus on programs and services relating to:

- **Housing security**
- **Food security**
- **Wellness promotion**
- **Disability supports**
- **Older adult supports**
- **Communications and language access**
- **Immigrant supports**
- **Veterans' services**
- **Public health**
- **Physical and behavioral health**

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT – INTERVIEWS

- [Lydia McCoy](#), Watertown Director of Senior Services
- [Patrick George](#), Watertown Veteran's Services Officer, ADA Coordinator, Liaison to Commission on Disability
- [Stephanie Venizelos](#), Watertown Community Wellness Program Manager, Live Well Watertown
- [Anthony Palomba](#), Watertown City Council, Councilor-at-Large; HHS Committee Chair
- [Abbey Meyers](#), Watertown Public Health Director
- [Caroline Bays](#), Watertown City Council, Councilor-at-Large; HHS Committee member
- [Laura Kurman](#), Senior Program Manager, Wayside Multi-Service Center
- [Sophia Suarez-Friedman](#), Wayside Multi-Service Center Social Service Resource Specialist Clinician and Program Coordinator

- [Michael Boudreau](#), Director of Public Health, Town of Natick
- [MaryAnn O'Conner](#), Director of Public Health, City of Medford
- [Nina Nazarian](#), Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office, City of Medford
- [Samantha Stone](#), Woburn Assistant to the Mayor for Community Outreach and Communication
- [Olivia Fields](#), Director of Resident Services, Watertown Housing Authority
- [Christina Lupica](#), Youth Engagement Specialist, Wayside Multi-Service Center
- [Tia Tilson](#), Executive Director, Watertown Community Foundation
- [Maysa Ramos](#), Wayside Multi-Service Center Social Service Resource Specialist Clinician
- [Colleen Leger](#), Director of HHS, Town of Arlington

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT – FOCUS GROUPS

- Veterans
- Older Adults (*Residents over the age of 60 years*)
- Immigrants (*Watertown Project Literacy*)
- Watertown Housing Authority Residents
- Watertown Commission on Disability
- City of Watertown Health and Human Service Departments
- Community Organizations – Health Services (*Advocates Community Behavioral Health Center, and Mt. Auburn Hospital*)
- Community Organizations – Human Services (*Springwell, Helen Robinson Wright Fund at the First Parish, Marshall Home Fund, Watertown Boys & Girls Club, Watertown Community Foundation, Watertown Police Department*)

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1: CREATE A WATERTOWN HUMAN SERVICES DIRECTOR POSITION

- » Watertown needs designated leadership to address Watertown residents' human service needs, particularly in relationship to coordinating and championing services that address housing insecurity, food insecurity, migrant supports.
- » Under the direction of the City Manager, Watertown should create a Director of Human Services position. The role would oversee the planning, direction, management, and operation of Watertown's human services programs and referral pathways, including services that address housing insecurity, food insecurity, economic insecurity, and migrant supports.
- » The director also would oversee Watertown's partnership with Wayside Youth and Family Support Network, including the Watertown's Social Services Resource Specialist (SSRS) program.
- » As part of coordinating Watertown's initiatives to combat food insecurity, the Director of Human Services would promote food assistance programs and oversee the Watertown Food Pantry, which is currently part of the Senior Services Department. The role would also administer the Live Well Watertown program.
- » From community feedback a key task for the incoming Human Services Director will be prioritizing housing supports as a central focus of the role and assessing the need for additional staff in the future.

Key job functions:

- Develop and Implement Human Services Strategic Plan
- Oversee Policy and Workflow Development
- Lead Community Outreach
- Administer and Manage Partnerships with CBOs
- Advance Housing Insecurity Interventions
- Administer and Champion Food Security Programs
- Implement Data-Driven Approaches to Understanding Community Needs
- Manage Grant and Philanthropic Opportunities
- Oversee Budget Planning and Allocation
- Enhance Interdepartmental Coordination
- Develop and Advocate for Supportive Policies
- Convene the Health and Human Services Cabinet

RECOMMENDATION 2: ESTABLISH A WATERTOWN HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES CABINET

- » As Watertown navigates a rapidly evolving landscape of community health and human service needs, a dedicated, cross-functional HHS Cabinet could significantly enhance resident well-being through a comprehensive and coordinated approach to health and social services.
- » The cabinet should include key participants, such as the Human Services Director, Public Health Director, Senior Services Director, VA Officer, Community Wellness Program Manager, Housing Authority representative, Recreation Director, Public Library representative, Schools Liaison, Police Liaison, and organizations contracted to provide key services to the City.
- » The cabinet should establish a meeting structure, communications plan, cadence, and charter.

Key functions of HHS Cabinet:

- Develop and Implement Human Services Strategic Plan
- Oversee Policy and Workflow Development.
- Lead Community Outreach
- Administer and Manage Partnerships with CBOs
- Advance Housing Insecurity Interventions
- Administer and Champion Food Security Programs
- Implement Data-Driven Approaches to Understanding Community Needs
- Manage Grant and Philanthropic Opportunities
- Oversee Budget Planning and Allocation
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- Develop and Advocate for Supportive Policies
- Convene the Health and Human Services Cabinet

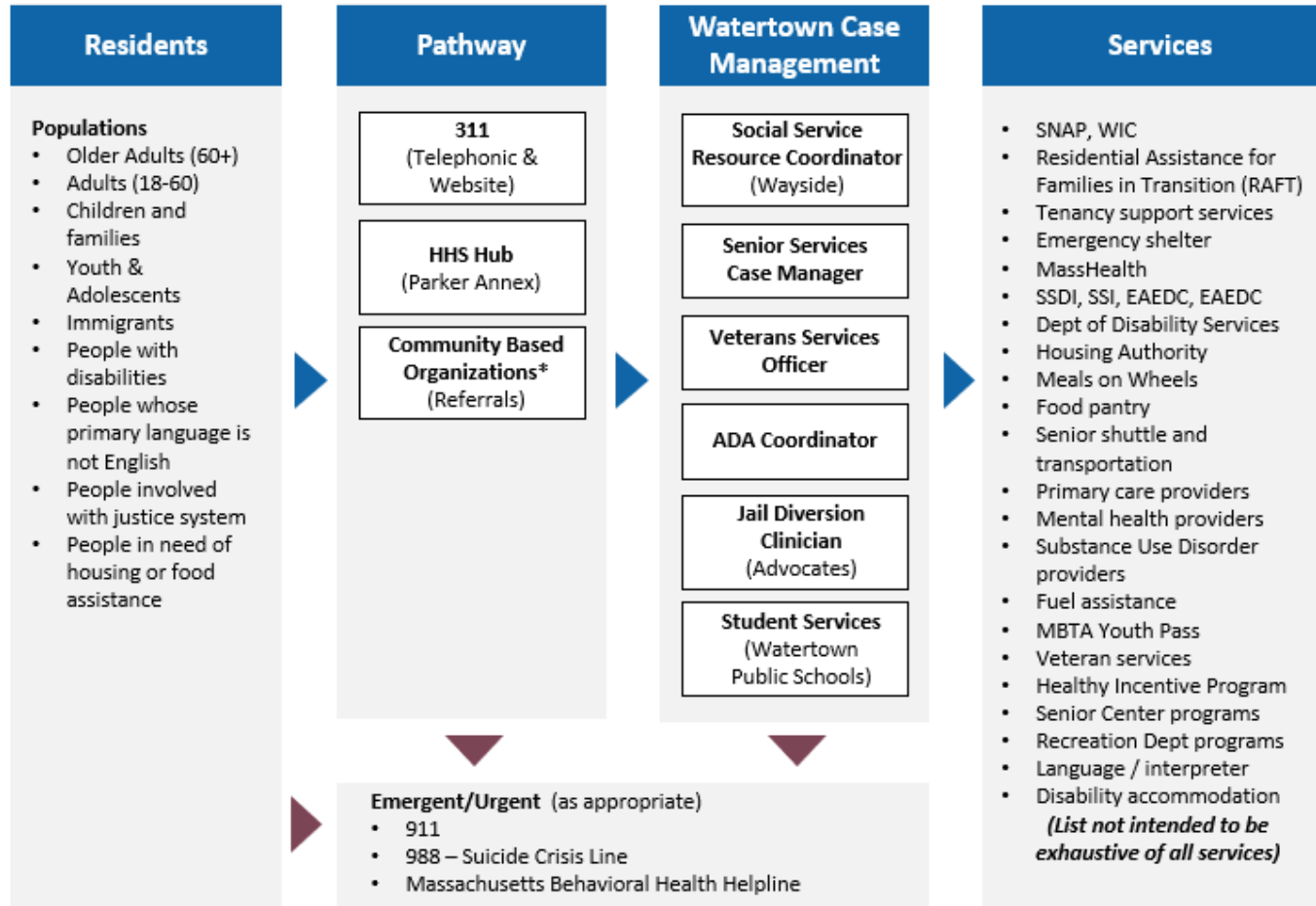
RECOMMENDATION 3: IMPROVE DIGITAL FRONT-DOOR AWARENESS AND ACCESS TO WATERTOWN'S HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

- » For Watertown to better serve residents with its existing health and human services improving awareness and access through the front door can enhance user experience and increase visibility and utility of current services.
- » The front door awareness and access campaign could include leveraging 311 infrastructure as an information source to connect residents with resources for health and human services
- » Additional functions of the campaign include develop a comprehensive online and print Welcome Packet for both new and existing residents that includes an up-to-date and detailed list of available health and human services; and use email and mail campaigns to advise residents of health programs, upcoming events, and important health tips.

Key functions of Digital Front Door:

- Website Modifications
- Leverage 311 Infrastructure as an Information Source to Connect Residents with Resources
- Welcome Packet
- Email and Mail Campaign

ENSURING RESIDENTS RECEIVE HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES



*Community Based Organizations: Includes broad continuum of public, private, and non-profit organizations that serve the needs of Watertown residents and provide formal and informal referral and supportive services (e.g., Wayside Multiservice Center, schools, Watertown Police Department, health providers, churches, etc.)—all of which provide an important referral pathway into health and human services

RECOMMENDATION 4: ESTABLISH PHYSICAL FRONT DOOR TO WATERTOWN'S HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

- » To enhance access and streamline navigation, Watertown should establish a physical front-door location to its health and human services. This HHS hub would serve as a single, physical point of contact where residents can obtain information, receive assistance, and access a range of health and human services.
- » As a City-owned building, the City of Watertown will ensure the Parker Annex Building will be Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant and therefore could serve as a hub for HHS.
- » The location could incorporate routine on-site presence from key health and human service organizations, such as Wayside Multi-Service Center and the Watertown Housing Authority, to provide specialized support and ensure a comprehensive range of services.

Key functions of Physical Front Door

- Information and Referrals
- Resource Center
- Education Campaign
- Representation from Key Organizations

RECOMMENDATION 5: ESTABLISH RELATIONSHIPS WITH CBOS FOR KEY PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

- » The community engagement process highlighted the need for Watertown to develop long-term partnerships with local CBOs for the provision of key programs and services.
- » Opportunities exist to deepen existing relationships or formally establish new partnerships with local CBOs to provide needed services, such as tenancy navigation and support.
- » Watertown can work with organizations to build a more robust foundation of data to understand the community's needs and underlying service gaps.

Key functions of CBO Partnerships:

- Develop Partnerships for Housing Supports
- Strengthen Referral Pathways for Eligible Services
- Promote Cultural Competency.
- Implement Regular Updates and Information Sharing
- Coordinate with Funders to Avoid Duplication

RECOMMENDATION 6: IMPROVE ACCESS TO FOOD SUPPORTS

- » Under the leadership of the Director of Human Services, Watertown should improve access to food supports through multiple strategies.
- » The Watertown Food Pantry should move to location that could accommodate expanded access. A location change will enable extension of the food pantry's hours of operation to accommodate a broader range of schedules.
- » To improve awareness about available food assistance programs, Watertown should continue to develop easy-to-understand visuals and guides to convey information quickly and clearly.

Key functions of Food Support Expansion:

- Relocate and Expand Food Pantry Services
- Food Pantry Oversight to HHS Dpt
- Expand Awareness of Food Insecurity Programs
- Simplify Messaging for Food Assistance Programs

RECOMMENDATION 7: DEVELOP DEI APPROACH

- » To foster a more inclusive and equitable community, Watertown should establish a comprehensive diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) strategy.
- » Watertown could establish a DEI Director who will be responsible for overseeing and coordinating related initiatives, integrating DEI principles in the municipal strategic planning processes, developing an official statement that affirms the City's commitment to inclusion, developing and implementing awareness and education programs to promote inclusion, and actively engaging with the community on DEI issues.
- » The functions of Watertown's ADA Coordinator should be transitioned to the DEI Director to ensure that compliance with the law is integrated into the broader DEI framework, enhancing support for people with disabilities and promoting a more inclusive environment.
- » Community feedback indicated the importance to further develop a more integrated approach to addressing accessibility and inclusion, ensuring that the needs of individuals with disabilities are met with greater attention and resources. One community member from the feedback process suggested the position be called the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access Director.

Key functions of DEI Approach:

- Establish a DEI Director
- Integrate DEI into Municipal Strategic Planning
- Develop an Official Statement on Inclusion
- Promote Inclusion
- Engage with the Community on DEI Issues
- Train Staff on DEI
- Transition ADA Coordination Functions to DEI Director
- Promote Language Access

RECOMMENDATION 8: ESTABLISH A LANGUAGE ACCESS PROGRAM

- » To address the growing need for effective language access services, Watertown should establish a language access program either through a vendor, dedicated language access coordinator, or a relationship with one or more CBO(s).
- » This approach could provide a centralized resource for managing and coordinating language access services.

Key functions of Language Access Program:

- Assist Staff Communication
- Collaborate with City Staff for Dynamic Public Engagement
- Translation of Documents
- CART (Communication Access Real-time Translation)
- Interpretation in Meetings
- Over the Phone Interpretation
- Video Relay Interpretation
- Auto-Generated Captioning

RECOMMENDATION 9: PRIORITIZE HEALTH PROMOTION AND WELLNESS

- » Watertown should develop a comprehensive Health Promotion and Wellness Strategic Plan that outlines key initiatives for improving community health and wellness and foster more integrated and direct collaboration between the Health Department, the proposed Human Services Director, and Live Well Watertown.
- » This approach will support the prioritization of health promotion and wellness by ensuring that resources and efforts are aligned toward preventive and proactive care.
- » The plan should explicitly include substance use disorder awareness, support, and prevention. To enhance coordination and focus on wellness program, Live Well Watertown should be incorporated within the new Human Services Department.
- » As part of the community feedback, HMA recommends that the incoming Human Services Director prioritize strategic planning and alignment of programs and resources with LWW.

Key functions of Health Promotion and Wellness:

- Develop a Health Promotion and Wellness Strategic Plan
- Explicitly Include SUD Awareness, Support, and Prevention
- Integrate Live Well Wellness into Human Services and Prioritize Strategic Planning and Alignment.

TIMELINE

#	Recommendations	Timeline
1	Create a Watertown Human Services Director Position	January 2025
2	Establish a Watertown Health and Human Services Cabinet	January 2025
3	Improve Digital Front-Door Awareness and Access to Watertown’s Health and Human Services	March 2025 – June 2026
4	Establish Physical Front Door to Watertown’s Health and Human Services (Parker Annex Building)	January – March 2025
5	Establish Deeper Relationships with CBOs for Key Programs and Services (e.g., tenancy navigation and support)	July 2025 – ongoing
6	Improve Access to Food Supports (under leadership of Human Services Director)	July 2025 – ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relocate Food Pantry 	November 2025
7	Establish a Comprehensive DEI Strategy	December 2025 – June 2026
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a DEI Director Position 	July 2026
8	Establish a Language Access Program	November 2024
9	Develop a Health Promotion and Wellness Strategic Plan	July 2025 – June 2026

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK ON DRAFT REPORT

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK ON DRAFT REPORT

Process: HMA presented draft recommendations to the residents of Watertown on October 21. Our team collected feedback both via meeting, and feedback submitted through email through November.

LiveWell

We received comments regarding LWW with information including:

- Concerns regarding staffing and resource needs required to effectively run its diverse programs, such as food security initiatives and community engagement efforts.
- Concerns for moving LWW under Human Services Director position and the potential risk of deprioritizing LWW initiatives. Many suggested that LWW should be its own separate entity.

Housing Supports

We received comments regarding the need for specialized housing leadership in human services including:

- Concerns that the responsibilities assigned to the Human Services Director are too extensive for one person to manage effectively
- An immediate need for dedicated resources and leadership in housing services given that housing insecurity is a critical issue for the city.
- Request to include renters in language regarding housing supports.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK ON DRAFT REPORT

Food Security and Access

We received comments regarding advocacy for food security including:

- A strong emphasis on the need for strategic planning and policy advocacy to enhance Watertown's food access infrastructure
- Increased support of the management of current and proposed food access programs

Location Challenges of the Parker Annex

We received concerns about access to the Parker Annex including:

- Concerns about HHS hub location including its distance from Watertown Square and lack of public transportation access
- Concerns about ADA compliance and accessibility

DEI Implementation

We received concerns regarding DEI including:

- An ask for the early implementation of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) strategies and the potential establishment of a new DEI position within the Human Services Department
- Concerns regarding the lift of duties for one FTE
- Recommendation to include “Access” in the position title

SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Disability Services

We received references including:

- Name ADA coordinator in the report, when other positioned were referenced
- Improving accessibility and access to green space in Watertown
- Ensuring access to city buildings including the Parker Annex building to eliminate long walkways to food pantry.

Data and Strategic Planning

We received references including:

- Strong support for data collection to better understand residents' needs and inform future budget planning.

Modifying the display of Comparable Communities Data

We received references requesting:

- Summarize comparable communities' data and incorporate FTEs

DISCUSSION

APPENDIX

SUMMARY OF REPORT CHANGES

- **Recommendation 1: Human Services Director.** Added the following: “During the community feedback process on the draft version of this report, a variety of community members expressed concerns that too few resources would be dedicated to addressing housing insecurity. A key task for the incoming Human Services Director will be prioritizing housing supports as a central focus of the role and assessing the need for additional staff in the future.”
- **Recommendation 4: Physical Front Door.** Added the following: “The City of Watertown is reviewing the need for any improvements necessary to ensure the Parker Annex Building complies with the ADA. Through the community feedback process, some individuals expressed concern about the location and accessibility of the Parker Annex Building.”
- **Recommendation 7: DEI Approach (bullet - Transition ADA Coordination Functions to DEI Director).** Added the following: “As part of this transition, it will be important to further develop a more integrated approach to addressing accessibility and inclusion, ensuring that the needs of individuals with disabilities are met with greater attention and resources. One community member from the feedback process suggested the position be called the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access Director.”
- **Recommendation 9: Health Promotion and Wellness (bullet - Integrate Live Well Wellness into Human Services).** Added the following: “As part of the community feedback process from draft version of this report, LWW participants in the community highlighted the significant value and contributions LWW brings to Watertown and expressed concerns about the prioritization and visibility of the program. Based on this input, HMA recommends that the incoming Human Services Director prioritize strategic planning and alignment of programs and resources with LWW.”
- **New Appendices:**
 - **Appendix 1.13:** Health and Human Service Budget and FTE Information – Comparable Communities (summarizes budget information across the comparable communities)
 - **Appendix 1.14:** Watertown Community Meeting Regarding HHS Assessment (highlights from October community meeting)

THANK YOU

Housing for All Watertown's Proposal to add to HMA' HHS Recommendations
**Establish a Director/Office within the Human Services Department,
dedicated to Housing Services and Stability**

We are advocating that Watertown prioritize assistance to low-income and workforce residents, by hiring a housing services expert to be part of the forming of the new Cabinet.

The Housing Services and Stability Director's responsibilities would include:

1. **Create a physical and digital point person/place for landlords and tenants** and for the community in the areas of housing-related education, assistance, mediation.
 - To provide a referral way-station for referrals to Wayside, Senior Center, Veterans Services, Advocates, and to legal services, for tenants' rights information, etc.
 - To advocate and seek funding for long-term Direct Assistance, landlord incentives, etc..
 - With increase in inclusionary zoning units, to support tenants and landlords, mediate rent increases, provide accountability.
 - To support migrant and other low-income families in housing searches, negotiating with landlords, in assisting to seek proofs of tenants' financial stability and character etc.
 - To support landlords willing to rent to low- and moderate-income families and are incentivized by long-term access to housing stability staff and resources.
 - To assist with efforts related to building our current pool of participating landlords willing to rent to low and moderate income families, including voucher holders.
 - To educate the community about tenants' rights, discriminatory practices, housing gaps/needs, outcomes of existing services, etc.
 - To address and refer complaints about discrimination.
2. **Convene a Watertown Housing Task Force**
 - to evaluate needs and best practices
 - to build partnerships, including with renters, landlords
 - to connect and strengthen front-line housing assistance providers
3. **Seek funds to fill in gaps.** Housing-related funding is unique and complicated; and larger grants than currently managed by Wayside are needed.
4. **Create a system of data-collection to**
 - Assist with accurate needs and outcomes assessments, and to inform data-driven decision-making.
 - Create a reporting system of homeless and unhoused residents from Schools, Library, Police, Food Pantry, Wayside, residents, and others.
 - Advocate for a Rental Registry



Councilor Tony Palomba <councilorpalomba@gmail.com>

My statement on Live Well Watertown at tonight's hearing

Marcy Murningham <marcy.murningham@gmail.com>

Thu, Jan 16, 2025 at 8:00 PM

To: Tony Palomba <apalomba@watertown-ma.gov>, John Gannon <jgannon@watertown-ma.gov>, Caroline Bays <cbays@watertown-ma.gov>

Dear Tony, John, and Caroline,

Below is a copy of what I sent Tara Kelley at Health Management Associates on November 1, 2024, in response to their request for feedback on the Health and Human Services Assessment report. It pertains to the structural "home" for Live Well Watertown — for the moment, at least.

Before doing that, let me add a new piece, involving the outgoing Biden Administration.

As many have said, LWW is a multi-faceted entity, a literal and figurative "force of nature" that cuts across departmental divisions. Moreover "wellness" is an elastic term, be it applied to individuals, institutions, and / or communities. It's not just about blood and bandages, but the range of human and ecological well being — physical, emotional, behavioral, and spiritual.

Dr. Vivek H. Murthy, outgoing Surgeon General, elaborated on this in his *Parting Prescription for America* released two weeks ago. Drawing on his service to two different Presidents, Dr. Murthy provides a lovely exegesis on how we might cultivate health, happiness, and fulfillment by centering our attention on relationships, purpose, and service. He dubs this "the triad of fulfillment" and core pillars of community. Wise words, indeed, and central to the Human Services mission you're serving.

Now, to my Tara Kelley email sent November 1, 2024:

Dear Tara,

Here's a summary of my considered reactions to HMA's very thoughtful and well-written *Health and Human Services Assessment* for the City of Watertown. Overall, it's a superb effort that was a joy to read. What stands out is HMA's recognition of the interdependence and *intradependence* of key municipal functions with respect to sustainable municipal "thriving." Ours is an unfolding story that, as innovations occur, speak to new institutional configurations and design to meet the moment effectively. Thank you for helping we residents engage in this informed deliberation.

That said, my concern lies primarily with the [structural recommendation regarding Live Well Watertown, set forth in Recommendation 9](#). In it, you state that LWW should be moved into the new Department of Human Services.

I respectfully disagree.

Amidst all the moving parts — affecting actions to date, those that occur within the HHS project's timeline, and recommended steps taken over the next few years — what stands out for me is that Live Well Watertown is a unique initiative. That's because it relies on multiple relationships and collaborations across the City of Watertown's organizational chart and beyond. It's a cherished part of the Watertown community, encompassing residents, civil society institutions, and local businesses.

For these reasons, I view LWW as not easily categorized as belonging in this or that department, a recognition of intersectionality you hint at in your report. Indeed, as you acknowledge in your assessment, LWW takes a holistic view of health and wellness, a systems frame that HMA utilizes in its work, too.

Put another way, using systems thinking, I view LWW as a "node" within a web of interrelated parts. Its multifaceted operation features not only the Farmer's Market but a range of both **people** and **place-based** activities affecting food access and security; sustainable design and climate resilience; substance abuse and mental health; transit mobility; intergenerational physical, emotional, and spiritual health and well-being; and community-based engagement.

I view that as a good thing, particularly within an environment that elevates interdisciplinarity and collaborative engagement with policymakers, practitioners, and the public. Indeed, as we move into an era with renewed recognition of the virtues of metropolitan area planning and development, this trans-discipline and trans-border quality takes on greater significance.

All this said, I believe that **LWW ought to remain where it is at the moment**, within the Department of Community Planning and Development, pending further strategic planning carried out on the part of the proposed Health and Human Services Cabinet, described in Recommendation 2. As you propose, LWW will be a member of this cabinet, so is in a good position to help discern where its future organizational home should lie.

Indeed, given its unique mission and composition, I envision **future elevation of LWW as a "node" within Watertown's municipal governance system**, one that is dedicated to the guiding ethic and principles articulated in:

- **Watertown's Preamble** to our revised Home Rule Charter, approved by voters three years ago tomorrow on 2 November 2021. As the *Preamble's* primary author, I point specifically to that governing ethic and those guiding principles, along with language emphasizing transparency and accountability, performance excellence, community engagement and public trust, and;
- **Watertown's 2023 Comprehensive Plan, 2023–2030 Open Space and Recreation Plan, and 2022 Climate and Energy Plan**; and, more broadly,
- the "smart growth" principles articulated by the **Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)**, of which the City of Watertown is a member.

Moving LWW into a newly-constituted human services department that concentrates primarily on addressing underserved members of our community runs the risk of draining LWW of its vitality and vibrancy. Keeping it where it is at the moment, with an eye toward more "independent-but-connected" standing, helps to preserve and nurture both the social entrepreneurship and high regard LWW enjoys in our community.

Moreover, given the fact that it will take awhile for the reorganization to settle in and its operating culture to be developed and refined, keeping LWW within the DCPD with an eye toward separate standing will enable continuity while more effectively embracing and co-creating what's to come.

I'm happy to discuss any of this, but fear I've gone on too long. Nevertheless, I appreciate all your efforts, and look forward to the next stage.

Wishing you well,

Marcy.

Marcy Murningham
Principal Architect, Equity Culture / Civic Fiduciary Action Labs
*Select writings on "Wealth, Power, and the Public Interest:
Building Equity Culture and Civic Stewardship," New England
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Marcy Murningham



Commission on Disability

City of Watertown
Administration Building, 149 Main Street
Watertown, MA 02472-4410

City Manager George Proakis
149 Main Street
Watertown, Massachusetts 02472

January 10, 2025

Dear City Manager Proakis:

The Watertown Commission on Disability has read, with great interest, the recent Health and Human Services Study. We appreciate the attention that the study pays to all aspects of life in Watertown, including accessibility for members of the disability community.

We do, however, find the combining of the ADA Coordinator position with that of the new Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion problematic. We worry over the ability of one person to encompass so many duties and responsibilities, especially the critical duties and responsibilities of the ADA Coordinator which is much more than a title.

Our current ADA Coordinator, Patrick George, is also the Veteran Services Coordinator. He has been an excellent liaison to the Commission in his ADA capacity, but his work has included so much more than that. Between meetings, he has followed up with city departments, such as the Department of Public Works, to convey our concerns and discuss solutions and timelines. He has contacted different businesses and done site visits to examine particular accessibility and residents' issues at the site, as well as the Commission's concerns. He has coordinated with agencies in and beyond Watertown to assure us that our residents' needs are being met at all points at which a disability may limit access.

We value the intent of the DEI Director to make opportunities for inclusion available to all residents, but opportunities for inclusion are one of many challenges for residents with disabilities. There are specific and concrete needs to which an effective ADA Coordinator must be aware of and attend to, and these issues are often forgotten or overlooked in the broader DEI context. The Commission believes that meeting ADA compliance is just the minimum requirement for true accessibility, and we need to ensure the ADA Coordinator will be able to help us achieve our goals in this realm. Our most urgent concern is that some of the required functions may be lost under a DEI Director position.

We hope to see our concerns addressed before this position is posted. We would be happy to meet with you and/or your team to have further discussion. We'd appreciate the chance to discuss how this position might be structured so as to be best situated for creating a welcoming and safe community for people with disabilities in Watertown.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Kim Charlson, WCOD Chair

CC: Patrick George, ADA Coordinator

Sarah Zoen, Human Rights Commission, Co-Chair

Mel Poindexter, Human Rights Commission, Co-Chair