



**Watertown City Council
Committee on Human Services
Richard E. Mastrangelo Council Chamber
Tuesday, December 5, 2023
(First Meeting)**

Members Present: Councilor Tony Palomba, Chair; Councilor Caroline Bays, Vice Chair; and Councilor John Gannon, Secretary. Also present were City Manager George Proakis and resident Jackie van Leeuwen

The Committee on Human Services meeting was called to order at 6:03pm in the Richard E. Mastrangelo Council Chamber to discuss the qualities and characteristics needed for the position of Health Director

Mr. Proakis discussed the present staffing levels of the Health Department. The department staffing includes a community health officer, public health nurse, two health officers, per diem food inspector, head clerk, and a health officer for rodent control. The department is responsible for required health inspections of food service establishments.

Councilor Gannon discussed that in other communities where he has worked, the Health Director has sufficient education in the field, including a masters in public health or other related area, or environmental health. He suggested that the new director be knowledgeable of laws pertaining to public health in Massachusetts.

Councilor Bays stated that an ideal candidate for health director could have a medical background, including in communicable diseases, be comfortable with enforcement and inspections, be a good leader and communicator, be able to outreach, be an innovative thinker, have knowledge of budgets and data analysis and capable of networking with other community health officers statewide.

Councilor Palomba suggested that ideal skills for the health director would include analytical skills, capacity to understand and utilize data, work with other departments, be a team builder and have the fortitude to close out enforcement matters.

Councilor Gannon emphasized that ideal qualities would include the ability to educate members of the public on health issues and why health enforcement is necessary for community health. Also, he recalled that a prior health director was active in building a regional public health medical reserve team, which was helpful in working on regional approaches to community health issues. He also emphasized that an ideal quality would include knowledge of addiction treatment and mental health issues.

City Manager Proakis stated that he appreciated the feedback and will use the information when addressing finalists for the position of Health Director. He looks forward to learning of the results of the upcoming study on the community's health and human services delivery. He believes that the social services resource specialists are doing great work and would like to see how the study would advise providing broader community awareness of these services.

Councilor Palomba recommended that the Committee on Human Services take action in the future to study the various categories of revenue spent by the City relative to substance abuse treatment and prevention. Councilor Gannon made a motion, which was seconded by Councilor Bays. The motion was approved by a vote of 3-0.

Councilor Bays made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Councilor Gannon. The motion was approved by a vote of 3-0.

The meeting adjourned at 6:47pm.

ELECTED OFFICIALS

Anthony Palomba,
Chair

Caroline Bays,
Vice Chair

John G. Gannon,
Secretary



**Watertown City Council
Committee on Human Services
Richard E. Mastrangelo Chambers
Tuesday, December 5, 2023
7:00PM
(Second Meeting)**

Members Present: Councilor Tony Palomba, Chair; Councilor Caroline Bays, Vice Chair; and Councilor John Gannon, Secretary. Also present were Acting Health Director Abbey Myers, DPW Administration and Finance Director Michael Albano and resident Dean Martino.

The Committee on Human Services meeting was called to order at 7:00pm in the Richard E. Mastrangelo Council Chambers to continue the discussion regarding the ongoing efforts to create and implement a city rodent control plan.

Chair Palomba introduced Abbey Myers, who is the Acting Director of the Health Department, to inform the committee of updates to the ongoing city rodent control plan. Ms. Myers stated that she and the Health Department have been active in education and outreach concerning rodent control, have been baiting additional sites identified as showing rodent activity and has been working on coordination of rodent control efforts with other city departments.

Ms. Myers stated that the city has introduced a new form of rodent bait known as TERAD3 bait, which utilizes Vitamin D3 to kill rodents but also reduces the risk of secondary poisoning of other animals, including birds. With this form of rodent control, the rodent brings the bait back to the burrow shared with other rodents, and the other rodents die after eating the bait. She stated that a secondary animal, such as a bird, would have to eat multiple rodents poisoned by TERAD3 over multiple times to become ill.

Ms. Myers explained the enforcement process utilized by the Health Department for rodent complaints. She stated that the owner is made aware of the presence of rodents on their property and educates them on methods to reduce such presence. There is follow-up to review progress; if no progress is made, the Health Department will issue fines, and place rodent

control devices on a nearby public street. She stated that city efforts to control rodents have been extensive, and that the high school construction project contains many rodent control devices. The City uses mapping software to track the locations of rodent control devices, and the devices are checked periodically.

With respect to large construction projects, Ms. Myers stated that she has enacted a protocol that contractors must follow while working on city-owned land and private property for large-scale construction projects. As one element of the protocol, a contractor will not be issued a building permit or other permission to commence construction, unless there is a rodent control plan in place.

As a further initiative stemming from the rodent control plan, the Health Department is working on promulgating dumpster regulations to prompt a reduction in rodent problems. Other city departments are in the process of reviewing and commenting on the draft regulations.

Ms. Myers further stated that there are presently three interdepartmental working groups focusing on rodent control issues. One group is tasked with monitoring properties deemed to have a high incidence of rodent problems. Another group is working with owners of properties who may have hoarding disorders, which increases the likelihood of rodent problems. The final group is a rodent control working team, which meets periodically.

Ms. Myers stated that the Health Department is working on increasing citywide education on rodent issues and urges residents to reach out to the Health Department for assistance with any questions.

Resident Dean Martino stated that Edenfield Road is enduring rodent problems and is in need of rodent control solutions. He was urged to work with the Health Department to address his concerns.

Councilor Bays made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Councilor Gannon. The motion was approved by a vote of 3-0.

The meeting adjourned at 8:12pm.

ELECTED OFFICIALS

Anthony Palomba,
Chair

Caroline Bays,
Vice Chair

John G. Gannon,
Secretary