



## **Watertown City Council**

Administration Building

149 Main Street

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### **Report of the Personnel and City Organization Committee**

Meeting Date: February 26, 2024

The Committee convened on Monday, February 26, in the Third Floor Conference Room, with remote participation by Zoom.

Present were Councilors Caroline Bays, chair, Nicole Gardner, secretary, and John Gannon, vice chair. Staff present was Doug Newton. Also present were Councilors Vinnie Piccirilli and Lisa Feltner.

Councilor Bays called the meeting to order at 6:10 pm. The purpose of the meeting was to develop recommendations on the creation of a Blue Ribbon Committee regarding Councilor salary. Note: for the purposes of these notes, Councilor salary is meant to include salary for both the City Council President and the Councilors.

Councilor Bays outlined 4 recommendations to be discussed:

1. Duties of the Committee
2. Eligibility, and desirable skills, background and/or characteristics of members
3. Size of the Committee
4. Process to recruit and select Committee members

After discussion of these topics, the PCO committee, with the concurrence of the other councilors present, agreed on the following recommendations.

#### **Recommendation #1. Duties of the Blue Ribbon Committee**

The Blue Ribbon Committee duties will be to study the salary received by Councilors and the Council President for their service and make recommendations on a methodology and process for salaries to be set going forward, including a recommendation for the 2026-2027 Council salary.

The Blue Ribbon Committee would receive staff support from Council Policy Analyst, Doug Newton.

The Committee's final recommendations should be presented to the City Council no later than at the December 10, 2024 City Council meeting. Recommendations must be adopted no later than June 2025.

## **Recommendation #2. Eligibility and Desirable skills, background and/or characteristics of Committee members**

### Eligibility

1. Members should live in, own property in, and/or work in Watertown.
2. Current elected officials of the City of Watertown should not be eligible, due to potential conflict of interest
3. Current employees of the city of Watertown should not be eligible, due to potential conflict of interest
4. Current members of city boards, commissions and committees should be eligible (including those individuals receiving a stipend)

Note: the committee discussed whether recognized experts with no ties to Watertown could be appointed, given their expertise. There was a consensus that if the need for such expertise arose, the Committee could interview relevant experts as part of its work.

### Skills, background and/or characteristics

1. Members should have a strong commitment to and stake in Watertown's success. A leadership role in local companies or non-profits – or service on City boards, commissions and committees – would be a strong indicator of commitment.
2. Desirable professional experience for the Committee includes (but is not limited to) human resources, compensation, law, finance or accounting, municipal government, business leadership, and management consulting.

## **Recommendation #3. Size of the Committee**

The Committee should have 7 members. A team this size would be large enough to avoid quorum challenges, but not so large that it would be hard to recruit members.

## **Recommendation #4. Process to recruit and select members**

Following are the recommended steps:

### Recruitment of applicants

The Council should ask the Administration to publicize the position using as many

channels and processes as possible. Recruitment should occur as quickly as possible after Council approval of the process, and a reasonable deadline for applications should be set. Applicants should submit resumes and letters of interest to the council's Municipal Policy Analyst, Doug Newton.

### Initial screening of applicants

A special committee should be appointed to screen applicants. It should comprise the Personnel and City Organization Committee (Bays, Gannon, and Gardner) plus City Council Vice President, Councilor Piccirilli. The PCO recommends this special committee because it believes the process will be enhanced by Councilor Piccirilli's long term experience with the council, and his broad exposure, as Council Vice President.

The special committee should evaluate all applicants, and pass all qualified applicants on to the interviewing phase.

### Interviewing applicants.

Two approaches were discussed. One option envisioned all finalists being interviewed by the Council, in public session. The other envisioned all qualified applicants being interviewed by one individual, on behalf of the Council.

After discussing the pros and cons of both approaches, the recommendation is that Council President Sideris should conduct interviews with all qualified applicants, and then recommend members for the Blue Ribbon Committee to the Council for approval.

Having President Sideris act alone in this capacity provides important benefits.

1. Simplicity. The approach does not trigger Open Meeting Law, so any complexity arising from various requirements it might impose can be avoided.
2. Privacy for the applicants. The interviews can happen in private, with no violation of Open Meeting Law, which should encourage more interested people to apply.
3. Efficiency and simplicity. The interviews can be scheduled quickly, since finding calendar appointments will be substantially simpler for one person than 9.

→ **Action Item:** Councilor Gardner made a motion, seconded by Councilor Gannon, that the PCO recommend the City Council approve the four recommendations described above, specifically:

- #1. Duties of the Blue Ribbon Committee
- #2. Desirable skills, background and/or characteristics of Committee members
- #3. Size of the Committee
- #4. Process to recruit and select members

The committee approved the recommendations 3-0 on a roll call vote.

The meeting adjourned at 7:08 pm.

Report prepared by Nicole Gardner

**ELECTED OFFICIALS**

Caroline Bays,  
Chair

John G. Gannon,  
Vice Chair

Nicole Gardner,  
Secretary