



Committee on Personnel and City Organization Minutes
Wednesday, February 12, 2025
6:00 PM
Watertown City Hall, Lower Meeting Room

Attendees:

Caroline Bays - Committee Chair, John Gannon - Vice-Chair, Nicole Gardner - Secretary, George Proakis, City Manager, Tyler Cote, Engagement Specialist, Emily Monae, Deputy City Manager, Laura Murray, Jeanne Ostroff, Digital Media Manager, Councilor Vinnie Piccirilli, Councilor Tony Palomba, Ryan Nicholson, Fire Chief, Linda Scott, Angeline Kounelis, Elodia Thomas, Joan Gumbleton, and Rita Colafella

Chair Bays called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss and review a proposed city logo.

She began by asking if the Committee members or the public would like to make comments. Angeline Kounelis asked that her letter to the Council be read into the record. In the letter, Ms. Kounelis reiterated her opposition to the proposed logo, citing concerns that the initiative could gradually phase out the official city seal, and questioning the level of community involvement in the process. Ms. Kounelis emphasized her belief that the city seal represents the city's history and the respect for its people, and that it serves as an effective and honored symbol of the city.

Attachment #1.

Chair Bays next asked the Manager to update the community and the Committee on the status of the branding and logo, and related matters.

Manager Proakis began by reiterating that the Administration began working with a graphic designer some time ago to develop a cohesive, recognizable brand strategy that includes a color palette, and fonts, and a logo which would ideally offer the potential for department specific branding). The goal is to streamline communication efforts and create a consistent identity for the City, including in social media, email signatures, business cards, posters and collateral. The brand would be implemented gradually, replacing materials as they wore out or were updated. The logo would complement the existing city seal, which would remain the official symbol of Watertown and would continue to be used for all official purposes, including things like documents from the City Clerk and the patches worn by the Police Department.

The Manager next clarified that the City's wayfinding signs, which had been designed some years ago, have been produced by DPW and are ready for installation. These signs, which have a similar color palette to the proposed brand palette, would be used at city borders and to help people navigate within the city, identifying landmarks like the library and city hall. The colors used in the signs (green and blue) align with the

proposed branding efforts. Chair Bays suggested sharing the map of locations of signs with the PCO committee for future discussions.

Next the Committee reviewed the community feedback on the logo obtained through the FlashVote survey administered last October. Slides were presented. **Attachment #2**

Tyler Cote began with a brief overview of the FlashVote system, highlighting its use to gather public input in a cost-effective and efficient manner. Residents are periodically invited to sign up to participate in FlashVotes, via social media etc. Mr. Cote explained that FlashVote's methodology helps address self-selection bias, as individuals who sign up for FlashVote are agreeing to participate in any survey, not knowing the topic in advance. This reduces the chance of getting responses only from people who feel strongly about one specific issue.

When a FlashVote survey is conducted by the City of Watertown, the survey is released, via text or email, to a representative panel of residents who are already signed up, with a 48-hour window for responses. Councilor Gannon questioned whether there had been social media outreach for this specific topic. Manager Proakis explained that no targeted social media outreach occurred for this specific logo survey, or any other specific survey administered by the City, because the aim is to avoid bias by focusing on a broad cross-section of the community rather than attracting highly opinionated individuals.

Mr. Cote said the survey went to a panel of 934 potential participants, and 495 people responded to at least one question. He also explained that the Watertown News published an article about the survey, which was also shared on Facebook. This allowed people who had not signed up for FlashVote to access the survey via an open link. This led to 56 "open-link" responses from individuals outside the FlashVote panel.

Councilor Gardner raised a concern about the methodology, questioning if the open survey link could skew the data. Mr. Cote acknowledged that this was an unusual situation, and explained that responses from the "open-link" respondents can be differentiated from the Flash Vote member panel, which is made up of a random cross section of the community.

The first question asked was "Do you approve or disapprove of this logo concept?" The 495 FlashVote member panel respondents showed a positive skew, with ~53% of respondents either strongly approving or somewhat approving of the logo. Of the remaining respondents, ~17% were neutral, ~28% strongly or somewhat disapproved, and ~2% were unsure.

In contrast, of the 56 open link participants, ~61% either strongly disapproved or somewhat disapproved of the logo concept.

The second survey question asked if there were any changes that would make the respondent like the logo concept more. Results from the FlashVote member

panel showed that ~24% said yes and offered ideas, ~35% were unsure, and 39% felt no changes would make them feel more favorable.

The final question sought any other comments or suggestions about the potential logo. A mix of responses were received, ranging from recommendations for minor changes to the logo's design to more general feedback, such as a desire to keep the city seal, or concerns about where the logo might be used.

Councilor Gardner asked if there were any major themes or suggestions that emerged. Mr. Cote explained that while some themes could be identified (e.g., requests for various minor design tweaks), it was challenging to group responses in a meaningful way.

The meeting was then opened for public comment.

Linda Scott read from prepared remarks, expressing concerns regarding the logo process, specifically referencing FlashVote, the lack of public input, and the appearance of contradictory feedback from the community. She also expressed concerns about a new city position tied to its development. She has made public records requests regarding the logo design and an employee position created for it, raising questions about job titles, funding sources, supervision, and job classification. Councilor Gardner asked Ms. Scott to send her comments and relevant documents to be attached to these minutes. **Attachment #3.**

The Manager responded by explaining that the consultant that had developed the proposed brand – color scheme, fonts, and logo – was then hired as a part-time, hourly, temporary employee to support the implementation of the branding effort, with tasks to be assigned as they arose, assuming the Council approved the proposed branding. This is a simpler operational approach than hiring the individual as an independent contractor.

Elodia Thomas shared concerns about the multiple projects underway in the city, including this branding/logo project, the way-finding signs, and the development of a logo for the Watertown Arts District. She asked who was overseeing these initiatives and voiced concerns about the lack of public transparency, especially regarding the FlashVote results and potential conflicts of interest with out-of-town participants.

Joan Gumbleton questioned the need to alter the city's long-standing seal and argued that it could be seen as an unnecessary expense, especially considering the costs associated with rebranding efforts such as vehicle wraps and new stationery. She criticized the lack of public input in the logo process and expressed dissatisfaction with the FlashVote results, suggesting they may not represent the broader community's views, particularly seniors. She suggested using real estate tax statements to disseminate important information about surveys and public input opportunities,

particularly for renters and homeowners who may not be reached otherwise. The Manager said this had been done in the past and that the City would continue to do so.

With regard to public participation, Mr. Cote shared that respondents skewed toward older residents, as follows:

- ~40% of responses came from individuals aged 61+,
- ~27% was from the 46 to 60 age range,
- ~31% was from the 31 to 45 age range, and
- ~2% was from individuals 30 and under.

Mr. Proakis explained that FlashVote aims to capture a more diverse and representative sample than what would typically be gathered from people who regularly attend meetings or write letters to councilors. While acknowledging the system is not perfect, Proakis emphasized that survey data is just one of many tools used to inform policy decisions.

Councilor Gannon reiterated that the survey's sample size and diversity must be considered in context. He also cited the strong public participation process during the Watertown Square project as an example of effective community involvement.

Councilor Gardner acknowledged that not everyone has access to technology or can attend meetings. She felt the data provided by FlashVote was useful and directionally informative. She also stressed that the survey data should not be taken in isolation but should be one part of a broader discussion.

Ms. Kounelis again expressed disappointment over the lack of oversight and transparency regarding the logo process, citing that it was not properly vetted by elected city representatives. She also raised concerns about the use of public funds for the project without proper authorization and questioned the limited community involvement.

Mr. Proakis acknowledged the concerns about transparency and emphasized the challenges in balancing efficiency with full community input. He assured attendees that the administration is open to further discussion and will work to ensure the public has the opportunity to provide feedback on the branding and logo process.

Returning to the logo discussion, Councilor Gannon expressed his concern that there had not been sufficient debate or discussion within the council before approving the logo decision. He noted that the logo could be related to the town's way-finding signs but also questioned if it was necessary at all.

After a reiteration of concerns from several meeting participants, Chair Bays acknowledged that while the process was not perfect, the goal was to move forward and

rebuild trust with the community. She noted that despite efforts to engage the public, there remained mistrust around the logo's purpose and its place within the larger community context. She suggested that more information about the logo's intended use and how it fits alongside the existing seal and signage would be helpful in clarifying the situation. She then proposed further clarifying discussions on the uses of the logo, way-finding signs, and the town seal, to ensure that the public understood the distinct roles each played in representing Watertown.

With regard to the branding and logo, the Manager outlined three potential strategies for developing a new logo:

1. Moving forward with the current logo if the flash vote results are seen as favorable enough.
2. Testing multiple variations of the logo if the flash vote results are seen as not conclusive.
3. A more involved and expensive process, including creating a logo committee and conducting a procurement process to refine logo options.

Chair Bays suggested the possibility of having an artist competition or narrowing the options by limiting the color palette to those used in the way-finding signs. Mr. Proakis explained that the committee approach was important for ensuring that the logo would work operationally, but there could be flexibility in how the process unfolds, depending on community input. Councilor Gardner expressed interest in seeing a refined budget and timeline for a potential "skinnier" public process.

Manager Proakis said the administration would explore options for logo development and the public process, including ensuring broader participation moving forward. The next step will involve developing a proposed plan, budget and timeline for further action.

In closing, Chair Bays emphasized that the council is not considering replacing the city seal and reassured the public that it will continue to be used for official, important documents.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:49 pm on a unanimous vote.

Minutes prepared by Nicole Gardner

Dear Councilors Bays, Gannon and Gardner:

FOR THE RECORD - PLEASE READ

Herein, I reiterate my thoughts, as previously submitted to the Committee and City Council on 06/11/2024 and 03/26/2024. I, along with many others, are strongly opposed to "branding" of the City of Watertown with the proposed Logo.

The Administration *states*, as follows:

"Please note that the project does not affect the City seal, which will continue to be used for official purposes."

In my opinion: the proposed "Logo" is the precursor to the gradual elimination of the City Seal. A segue to send the City Seal into obscurity for "official purposes", only.

Once again: where was the community input? Were the City Councilors, the representatives of the electorate, aware of the Administration's Logo initiative?

The Administration *believes*, as follows:

*"While implementation will take time, **we believe** this project will ultimately create unity and consistency in the image of the City we project to the community."*

Unity is: *"In Pace Condita,"* (founded in peace)

"Consistency" is the use of one, City of Watertown Seal that speaks for itself. Not to be confused with a second, branding of Watertown Logo.

Technology allows for easy transfer of the City Seal to all documents and surfaces. The City created a simplified (line art) version of the City Seal that appears on the high density polyethylene trash and recycling totes, (image attached).

In my opinion, the City Seal exudes respect for the City and its people. Whether the Seal is affixed to City letterhead, business cards, vehicles or emblazoned on a trash receptacle.

I considered it an honor and privilege to serve under the City Seal of Watertown. Thank you.

Best,
Angie
Angeline Maria B. Kounelis
Retired District A, East End, City Councilor

A2

Committee on Personnel and City Organization

February 12, 2025

A Review of Previous Steps

June 2024 - Now

Developing a brand for Watertown

Watertown set out to develop a cohesive, easily recognizable brand for the City in 2023.

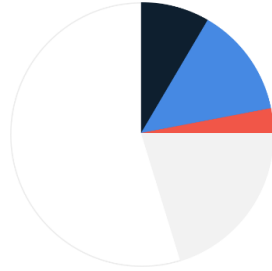
Working with a graphic designer with extensive municipal government experience, we strove to develop a brand strategy that includes a logo, a color palette, fonts, and other design elements that allow the City to present itself in a consistent way to the public while also giving departments and programs the flexibility to portray their own unique identities.

Importantly, this brand is meant to exist in tandem with our City Seal, which will continue to be used for official purposes.

Example of a municipal branding strategy

COLOR

COLOR RELATIONSHIPS



TYPOGRAPHY

BRAND STRATEGY

Watertown's current visual public presentation

- The City's current visual presentation of itself is inconsistent.
- A few departments use department-specific logos, while many use the City seal or no symbolic identification at all. Often departments use a mix of these three methods depending on the work product.
- There is no consistency in colors, fonts, or styles used across departments (and sometimes within departments).



Brand strategy – in progress



Brand strategy:

The purpose of the rebrand is to reflect the City's core values and present a consistently clean image

Innovative – Our logo represents new creative, yet consistent, ideas and processes.

Optimistic – Our Brand embodies a hopeful and confident future.

Accessibility – Our brand strategy is made for everyone. Whether written information or visual guides, the City of Watertown finds it critical for its residents to not only access the information they need, but the resources available to them.

Resiliency – To align with our initiatives of the Climate and Energy plans. Our branding mirrors the values of perseverance and rising to each new challenge.



311



What is a logo?

A logo is a graphic symbol that is used to identify City programs, initiatives, marketing and promotional materials, and more.

Logos are often part of a broader branding strategy and are intended to be relatively simple and flexible in design. They can also be adapted for individual departments and programs.



WATERTOWN
MASSACHUSETTS



WATERTOWN
MASSACHUSETTS



Department sub-branding – illustrative & not final



WATERTOWN
CITY CLERK



WATERTOWN
HEALTH



WATERTOWN
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT



WATERTOWN
RECREATION



WATERTOWN
311 DEPARTMENT



WATERTOWN
PUBLIC BUILDINGS

What is a seal?

A seal is the most formal and authoritative symbol of a municipality and is used to certify official documents and records. The City Clerk is the official custodian of Watertown's seal.

A seal often represents a municipality's history and founding, and they are often intricate in design. Seals are used in contexts that require authenticity and official recognition, such as legally binding documentation, government-issued certificates, and proclamations.



We are not proposing to change the seal or its use for official documents and records.



CITY OF WATERTOWN
Massachusetts
2024-000
Office of the City Clerk

BUSINESS CERTIFICATE - D/B/A

Original Issue Date: 01/26/2024 New or Renewal: New
Original Expiration: 01/28/2028 Renewal Expiration: N/A

The undersigned hereby declares a business as described below under the following title and address, and further acknowledges compliance with all local Zoning, Inspectional Services and/or State requirements.

ABC Corporation dba XYZ Cafe
(Name of Business)
123 Main Street
(Address of Business)
Sample Business
(Description of Business)

OWNER SIGNATURE(S):

(1) _____ (2) _____
(3) _____ (4) _____

Printed Owner Name (s): _____ Residence: _____

1) Owner Info _____ 978 Main Street Watertown MA 02472
2) _____
3) _____
Notes _____

CITY CLERK or DESIGNEE

On this date then personally appeared the above-named person(s) who proved to me through satisfactory evidence of identification the person(s) whose name(s) were signed on the preceding document who swore or affirmed to me that the contents of this document are truthful and accurate to the best of their knowledge and belief.

Noelle Gilligan City Clerk
City Clerk / Designee Printed Name Title



City Council Meeting
Tuesday, June 11, 2024 at 7:00 PM
Richard E. Mastrangelo Council Chamber
149 Main Street
Watertown, MA

Agenda

ACCESS INFORMATION:

- A. This meeting will be held on June 11, 2024 at 7:00 P.M. Location: Richard E. Mastrangelo Council Chamber
- B. The meeting will be televised through WCATV (Watertown Cable Access Television): <http://vod.catv.org/CablecastPublicSite/watch-now?site=3>
- C. The Public may join the virtual meeting online: <https://watertown-ma.zoom.us/j/92691331344>
- D. Public may join the virtual meeting audio only by phone: (877) 853-5297 or (888) 475-4499 (Toll Free) and enter Webinar ID: 529 9133 1344
- E. Public may comment through email: spicci@watertown-ma.gov
- F. Please Visit the City Council Website here: <https://www.watertown-ma.gov/350/City-Council>

1. ROLL CALL
2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
3. PUBLIC FORUM
4. EXAMINATION OF RECORDS OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS
 - A. Minutes from City Council Meeting May 28, 2024
5. PRESIDENT'S REPORT



CITY OF WATERTOWN
Office of the City Clerk
Administration Building
149 Main Street
Watertown, Massachusetts 02472

Noelle Gilligan
City Clerk/Chief Election Officer

Telephone (617) 715-8686
Fax (617) 972-6595

VOTER REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE

We certify that _____

is a registered voter at _____

as of the date of this certificate.

At least three registrars' names must be signed or stamped below.

(Today's Date: Month, Day, Year)

REGISTRARS OF VOTERS OR
ELECTION COMMISSIONERS

(City or Town)



City of Watertown
Watertown, MA

WATER & SEWER BILL

Customer Copy

Keep this portion for your records

Customer					Service Address				
RESIDENT NAME					123 ABC ROAD				
Bill Number	Account Number			Bill Date		Due Date			
00000000	0000000			04/12/2024		05/13/2024			
Description	ERT Number	Current Read Date	Previous Read Date	Current Meter Reading	Previous Meter Reading	Read Code	Usage	Charge	
5/8" WATER METER	1735015	03/01/2024	12/01/2023	223015	220736	OTHER READ	2279	133.93	
SEWER CHARGE		03/01/2024	12/01/2023	223015	220736		2279	252.29	

Many communities use both seals and logos – for different purposes



CITY OF KNOXVILLE



CITY OF KNOXVILLE

Alternative logo options considered



Example materials with utilized “waves logo”

Hello, Watertown 311.
How can we help?

311
SEE - CLICK - FIX

A pothole needs to be filled.

Available on the App Store | GET IT ON Google Play

WATERTOWN 311
SEE - CLICK - FIX

New City Hall, Parker Annex & Senior Center Building Hours

WATERTOWN MASSACHUSETTS

Most City departments' hours are changing

DPW & Inspectional Services on different schedules

Starting June 3, 2024

New Hours

Monday	8:30 AM - 5:00 PM
Tuesday	8:30 AM - 7:00 PM
Wednesday	8:30 AM - 5:00 PM
Thursday	8:30 AM - 5:00 PM
Friday	8:30 AM - 12:30 PM

These are new permanent hours!

Email: 311@watertown-ma.gov | Call: 311 | Visit: www.watertown-ma.gov

WATERTOWN MASSACHUSETTS

Month, Day, Year

Date:

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed diam nonummy nibh euismod tincidunt ut laoreet dolore magna aliquam erat volutpat. Ut wisi enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exerci tation ullamcorper suscipit laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat.

Duis autem vel eum irure dolor in hendrerit in vulputate velit esse molestie consequat, vel illum dolore eu feugiat nulla facilisis at vero eros et accumsan.

Nam liber tempor cum soluta nobis eleifend option congue nihil imperdiet doming id quod mazim placerat facer possit assum. Typi non habent claritatem insistant, et utera legentis in is qui facer eorum claritatem. Investigationes demonstraverunt lectores legere me habere sapiam.

Sincerely,

YOUR NAME

City Hall - 149 Main Street - Watertown - MA - 02472 - 617-972-6466

City of Watertown Brand Introduction Presentation

WATERTOWN MASSACHUSETTS



City of Watertown, MA
George Proakis
City Manager | City Manager
gproakis@watertown-ma.gov
617-972-6465

watertown-ma.gov

City of Watertown, MA
George Proakis (he/him/his)
City Manager
617-972-6465

watertown-ma.gov

City of Watertown, MA
Laura Murray (she/her)
Director | Constituent Services
617-972-6465

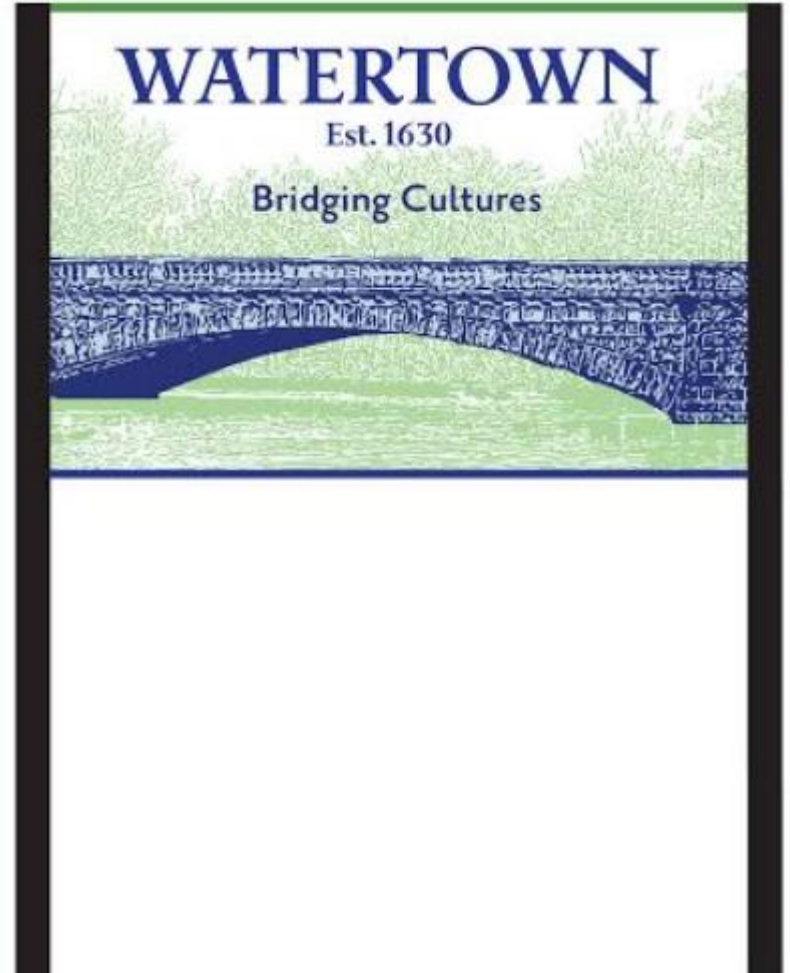
watertown-ma.gov

June 2024 Committee Meeting | Review

- Committee on Personnel and City Organization voted unanimously that the City create a logo.
- Discussion was had about the overlap between the City's wayfinding signs and a City logo.
- Committee directed administration to develop cost-effective, time conscious approach to gathering community input about the prospective logo for the City.
 - A new memo was shared with Council about developing and sharing a FlashVote in October 2024.
 - FlashVote was completed on October 19, 2024 and we are here to share results.

A Word About Wayfinding

- We reviewed the history of the Wayfinding Signs with regards to branding and the logo:
 - The Committee on Economic Development and Planning recommended the Town Council endorse moving forward with a revised wayfinding sign design on March 31, 2021 (right).
 - The Town Council voted to endorse the updated design for the wayfinding signs with the added “Established 1630” text, and blue tone design on April 13, 2021.



A Review FlashVote

October 2024

“Waves Logo” FlashVote

1

The City Manager shared a memo with the Honorable City Council on October 16, 2024, detailing the challenges associated with branding exercises.

2

To gather public input, the communications team worked with FlashVote to initiate a representative survey about the proposed logo.

3

Upon its completion, the communications team now returns to communicate with the Committee the results and hear next steps.

Drafted “Waves” Logo



WATERTOWN
MASSACHUSETTS



WATERTOWN
MASSACHUSETTS



WATERTOWN
MASSACHUSETTS



WATERTOWN
311 DEPARTMENT

October 2024

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		



934 Residents Invited to Survey



48 Hours to Respond



3 Questions

Benefits of FlashVote

All Residents Can Sign Up

Upon sign-up, residents give some general demographic data, including their address. They are then added to a “member panel” of respondents invited to take each FlashVote.



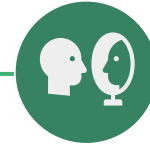
Survey Sent Directly to Residents

Those who have signed up are sent the survey by FlashVote directly by either email or text and have 48 hours to complete the survey.



Accounts for Self-Selection Bias

Those invited to participate in the survey have demonstrated they are likely to participate in surveys, regardless of the topic, account for the self-selection bias.



Shortcoming of Self-Selection

Self selection bias can occur on topics that might trigger emotional or passionate responses, something graphic design can easily do.



Watertown News Coverage



On October 18, 2024, Watertown News posted a story about the FlashVote going live, with an open survey link for anyone to take the survey while it was live.



This link was later circulated around social media, leading to an additional 56 responses from those not previously signed-up for FlashVote and likely opted-in to taking the survey after knowing its topic.



Therefore, the following graphs show the two groups separately; in red – respondents who opted-in to taking the survey through the open link; in blue – those who were invited to participate by FlashVote after previously signing up to participate in surveys, regardless of the topic.



Question 1:

The City of Watertown currently has an Official City Seal, but it does not have a separate logo to help residents easily recognize City promotional materials and general communications.

Below are images of a logo concept for the City, which represents the waves of the Charles River, the four districts of Watertown, and the four square miles that make up our great city:



The logo could also be customized for different departments and programs like these:

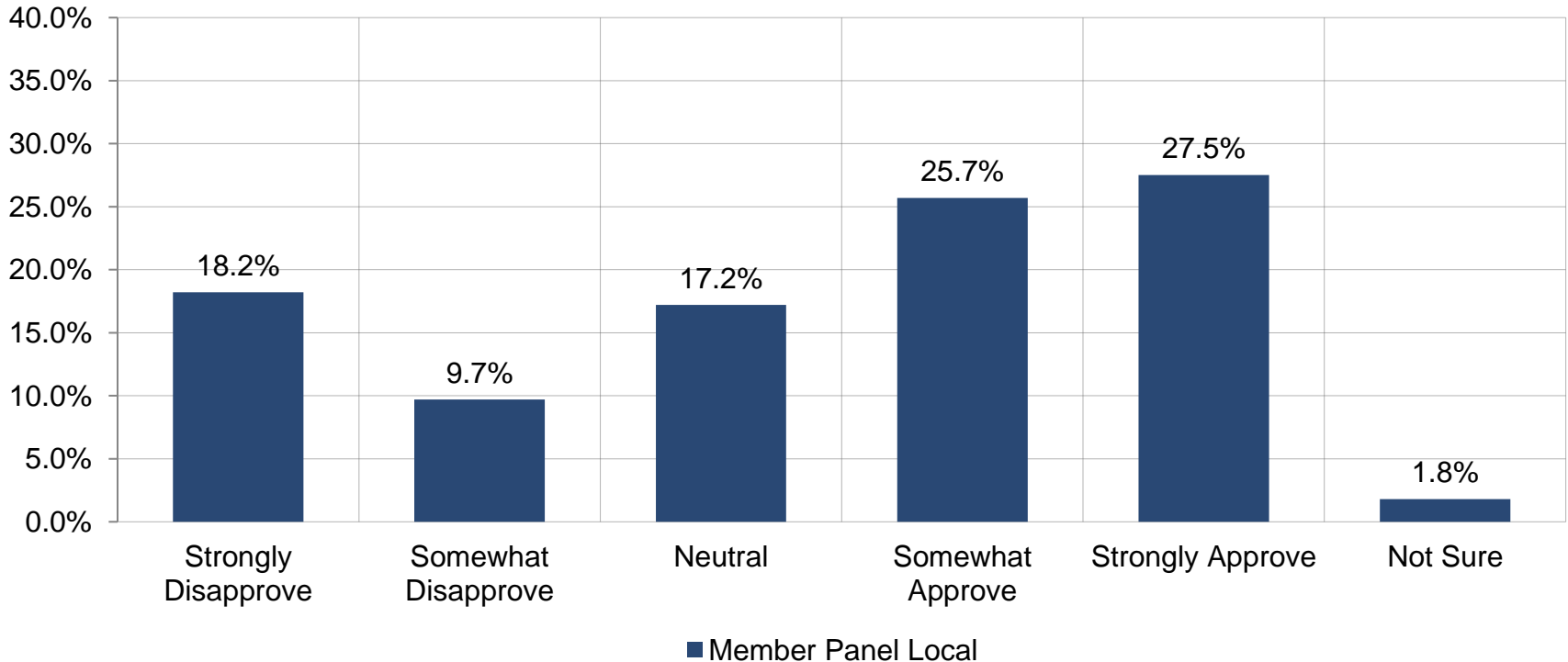


Do you approve or disapprove of this logo concept?

495 responses from
the Member Panel

Question 1:

Do you approve or disapprove of this logo concept?

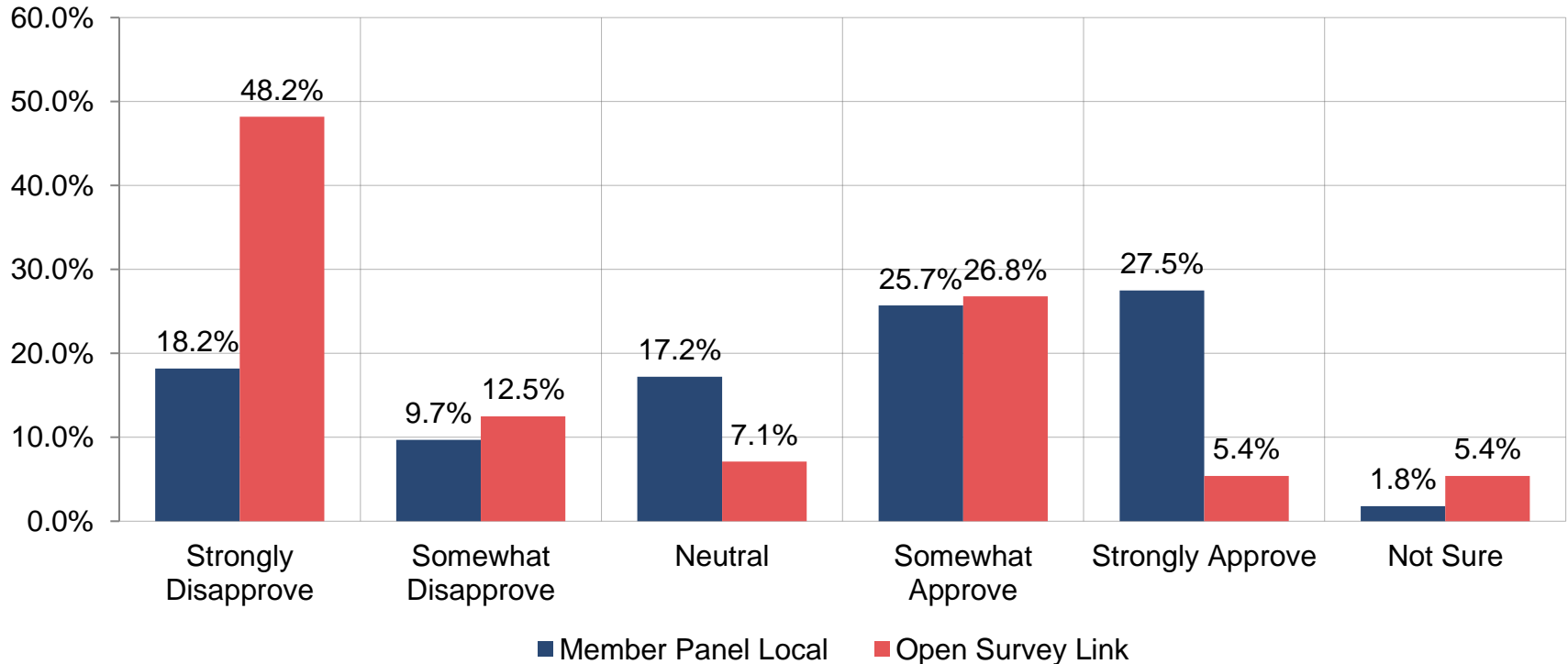


Question 1:

495 responses from
the Member Panel

56 responses from
the Open Survey Link

Do you approve or disapprove of this logo concept?

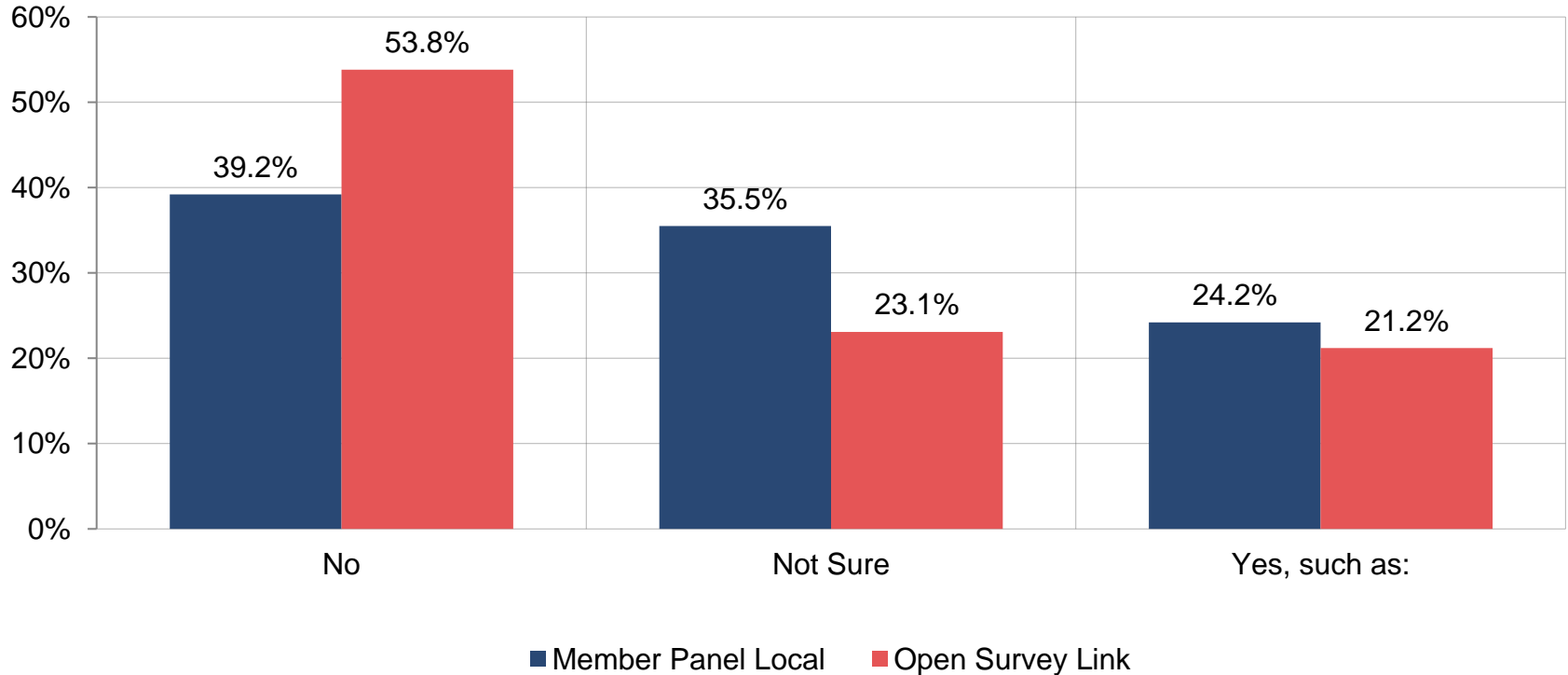


Question 2:

479 responses from
the Member Panel

52 responses from
the Open Survey Link

Is there any change that would make you like it more?



Question 3:

Any other comments or suggestions about a potential logo for the City of Watertown?



Received 176 Responses

This question received 176 responses from the local member panel.



29 Open Survey Responses

An additional 29 responses were submitted by those who accessed the survey through an open survey link.



Hello Councilors,

I hope that you are enjoying this “winter wonderland” and are staying safe and warm.

I attended the February 12th Personnel and City Organization meeting, where I made a lengthy contribution to the discussion. Councilor Gardner asked me to send her my remarks that night for inclusion in the minutes.

When I thought about this a little more, I thought that I would send the background for those remarks and the follow up that I promised Councilors Gardner, Gannon and Bays that I would share with them when I received it from the Clerk’s office.

As I started to assemble all of this, it occurred to me that this might be a matter for all City Councilors, or at least it might be of interest to you all. So attached in one document is:

Part 1: The pertinent information that I received in a Public Records Request

Part 2: My written comments and questions the night of the meeting, which were based upon Part 1.

Part 3: The results of the second Public Records request that came to me the day after the February 12th meeting.

Based upon all of this, my opinion.

I hope that you will find my research helpful..

Sincerely,
Linda Scott
55 Olcott Street

Hello Nicole, Caroline and John,

Nicole asked me to send my remarks at the Personnel and City Organization meeting of February 12, 2025 to her for inclusion in the minutes, so I thought that I'd send it to the entire City Council, since they are all our elected representatives.

Before I get to the document that I read on the 12th, I'd like to reference a few documents obtained through my Public Records Request related to the Watertown Logo. I'll just give you the date, people involved and gist of the City communication that caught my eye when thinking about this issue. Perhaps you can ask staff to get the originals to you.

Part 1 (Documents from Public Records Request 1)

One of the earliest e-mails that I found in this records request on the topic of developing a City logo was dated about two years ago:

February 28, 2023 An e-mail sent from Jeanne Ostroff to Sebastian Ebarb
Subject: Watertown logos and design guidelines questions

"Hello Sebastian,
Thank you for the info you sent about designing a new seal for Watertown. The City and Deputy Managers think a seal should be a longtime process if the City decides to go in that direction.

Instead we are now considering a city logo, a 311 logo and a City Style Guide, that can coordinate in some way with the already approved Wayfinding signs (see the attached document). Note, the wayfinding was designed and approved before our Public Arts & Culture Planner, Liz Helfer (copied in this email) and I started working in Watertown."

It goes on to ask if he does logos, what he would charge and how long it would take. Please see the e-mail for the complete list of questions, etc.

After the February 28, 2023 email, there is an on-going exchange of messages between Mr. Ebarb and Watertown employees.

Questions: How did Mr. Ebarb become involved in this Watertown project? How was Mr. Ebarb's work being paid for in 2023? Did the City Council approve this? Was there an effort to involve Watertown residents? If yes, what was that effort?

We're jumping a year ahead now.

February 15, 2024. An e-mail sent from Emily Monea to Sebastian Ebarb:
Subject: RE: New Item

This e-mail discusses the job title for Sebastian. Emily suggested a slight change from what Sebastian comes up with so that Sebastian doesn't look like the designer and the city manager.

February 15, 2024. An e-mail sent from Sebastian Ebarb to Emily Monea
Subject: RE: New Item

This e-mail thanks Emily for forwarding the budget. He's also designing a "Job Document Template."

February 19, 2024 E-mail from Sebastian Ebarb to Emily Monea
Subject: Watertown Logo!

Last SEED invoice (What does SEED stand for? Perhaps Sebastian Ellington Ebarb Design?)
Will be recording his hours for submittal after this. No CORI check yet

February 20, 2024. From William Robbins (Watertown HR) To Sebastian Ebarb
Subject: New Hire Paperwork and Offer Letter

February 21, 2024 From: Sebastian Ebarb To: Tyler Cote
Subject: Connecting with the Commander's Mansion Team

Note: Since Mr. Ebarb's involvement in designing a Watertown logo in February 2023, he has had discussions with a variety of city departments under his own e-mail address. Sebastian now has a Watertown e-mail address.

February 21 and 22, 2024. E-mails between William Robbins (City of Watertown HR) and Sebastian Ebarb

March 7, 2024. From Sebastian Ebarb to a number of Watertown employees

Sebastian has questions for them to answer so that he can implement information into the Logo format. (Note: all of this is occurring before the Council actually sees and approves of this logo and the public weighs-in).

March 13, 2024 from Emily Monea to Sebastian Ebarb
Subject Watertown Brand Updates

"Hi Sebastian

Hope you're doing well. A few updates for you:

1. George liked the suggestion of using the City logo for the City Manager's Office.
2. He also liked the budget template but...we need it to be landscape. Our budget development process is still pretty old school (it will be better next year!), and the formatting is based on PDFing excel charts that need to be landscape. Attaching the email I sent with links to the budget books and docs for your reference.
3. George spoke with the City Council President, and he suggested we submit a memo to the Council in advance of the budget to get their support on the logo and branding effort, so we're aiming to do that at the 3/26 Council meeting. George will also give a brief presentation. We don't anticipate any work tasks for you on that-just an FYI.
4. The City Council President also encouraged us to wrap our new electric van in the new logo (we were happily surprised about that!), but we'd like to add something to the design to highlight the fact that it's an electric vehicle. Can you please add this to your list? It is not time sensitive.

Thanks,
Emily"

Note Again: All of the above occurred BEFORE the public got to participate in the Logo's creation in any meaningful way. In fact, in a letter that George Proakis wrote to the City Council,

our City Manager states that Mr. Ebarb and his company, Nahi, started working with the City on this project in 2023.

By February 20, 2024, Mr. Ebarb (whose city logo design this is) is already hired and working with different departments around this logo. He's also working on layouts and formatting of documents for the City Manager.

The first involvement of the City Council appears to be at their March 26, 2024 City Council meeting (over a year into the process).

The first opportunity for the public to give feedback on the already designed logo is a few days in October 2024, by taking an on-line FlashVote survey. As Watertown resident, Devan Scott, responded in Watertown News on October 18, 2024:

“There is a FlashVote asking for input on which of 4 versions of this logo people prefer. Not sure why this project has continued without community input until – ‘which version of this logo do you prefer?’ The comments in this thread were clear, sensible and seemingly went completely unheard. I love Watertown & many of the things happening here. I do not support a logo that can induce migraines - especially when it says nothing about Watertown.”

After reading these e-mails and more, I had questions.

Part 2 What I read at the February 12, 2025 Personnel and City Organization meeting.

“Good Evening Councilors,

I started assembling and writing an article about the prospective new Watertown Logo in October 2024.

When reviewing resident results on the City Logo Survey, there was this response:

One Watertown artist asked “This is the first I’ve heard of designing a new logo. I’m a working artist in Watertown and know many other artists in the town. Was there a call for art?”

There were many other responses to the survey that left me asking more and more questions:

They ranged from expressing a lack of opportunity for public input; a lack of sense of government teamwork; a distrust of government intentions; squandering of public resources; questioning why a City logo was needed.

My Public Records Request on the new logo process itself was submitted to the clerk’s office in December 2024. I received the documents (about 100 pages) on December 19, 2024.

That data returned some interesting and surprising results. It seems that this logo process has been on-going for years, with what looks like a City job, in which the employee got to make up his own job title.

Obviously, I had a significant number of questions to be answered given this data. I made a second Public Records Request on January 21, 2025:

Dear Ms. Gilligan,

I am making a request for records under the Public Records Law.

After reviewing a previous set of records, I would like to have information on a possibly new City position.

The title of that position is probably “Designer/Watertown City Managers Office.”

If this is hard to find, you can look under an employee’s name, Sebastian Ebarb. He should have been appointed around February of 2024 to this position. Perhaps that’s the quickest way to find the information. Here are some of the questions that I’d like to be able to answer:

The official title for that position (if not the above).

The job description for this position.

Is this a municipal position or some job funded through some other source? If funded in another way, what is that source?

Who is this position assigned to for supervision?

When this position was created and by whom?

What's its classification and salary range?

Any benefits, etc. assigned to this position?

Anything "special" about this job...is it a "remote" position, for instance.

I'd also like a record of the job search history for this position...who in Watertown handled it? Where and when was the job posted for applicants? How many applicants applied for this job?

Is there some procedure that the city must follow when establishing and hiring for a new position such as this? If yes, what is it?

I received a letter from the City Clerk on February 4, 2025, saying that this information should be ready by the end of this week. This would be just days AFTER you make your decision this evening.

There may be no "there there." But this Logo process seems to be less than transparent and aboveboard, and before you send off your "stamp of approval," I'm asking that you hold off on sending this matter to the City Council for a vote until there is more clarity.

I'd be glad to share any results that I receive with you. Thank you!"

End of my reading for the February 12, 2025 meeting

Part 3: Sharing The Second Set of Public Records Request Data

The information below arrived on February 13th, the day after the meeting. My request date was certified on January 21, 2025. I received a letter from the City Clerk on February 4, 2025, saying that the response would be delayed until late this week.

The response arrived the day after the meeting on the City Logo. It consisted of 5 pages, the Clerk's response to me, a copy of the letter that I sent to her and an offer letter from City Manager George Proakis to Sebastian Ebarb in February 2024.

At the bottom of the Clerk's letter it states:

“Please be aware that a record holder's duty to respond to requests for information extends only to records that are in existence and in his custody. See G.L. c.4, §7(26); see also 950 CMR 32.03 (defining "custodian" as the public official who has routine access to or control of public records). Moreover, there is no obligation to create a record in response to a public records request. G.L. c.66, §10(a); 32 Op. Att’y Gen. 157, 165 (May 18, 1977).

Attached you will find the offer letter that was signed by Sebastian Ebarb. There are no further documents that relate to your request. The City has no further documents responsive to your request.”


The following two pages are a copy of City Manager Proakis’ offer letter to Sebastian Ebarb and an analysis of the information that can be gleaned from that letter.



George J. Proakis
City Manager

CITY OF
WATERTOWN
Office of the City Manager

Administration Building
149 Main Street
Watertown, MA 02472
Phone: 617-972-6465
www.watertown-ma.gov
citymgr@watertown-ma.gov

Sebastian Ebarb


Dear Sebastian,

We are pleased to extend an offer to you for the position of Graphic Designer with the City of Watertown. You have been carefully selected to be part of our staff dedicated to providing the citizens of Watertown with the most thorough, efficient, and effective municipal services possible.

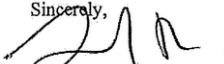
As you are aware, this position is temporary in nature. Your hours will vary but will not exceed 20 hours per week. Your rate of pay will be \$80.00 per hour.

This offer is contingent upon the results of the mandatory CORI check which is also attached. Please fill out that paperwork and scan it back to hr@watertown-ma.gov along with a copy of your driver's license.

The initial six months of employment are probationary for all employees. If you find the terms of this letter to be acceptable, please sign two copies of this letter and return one to this office.

Welcome to the City of Watertown! We look forward to seeing you on Tuesday, February 20th, 2024. We hope that you find your new position to be both challenging and rewarding.

Sincerely,


George J. Proakis
City Manager

AGREED: Sebastian Ebarb
Sebastian Ebarb

Date: Feb 21 2024

- CC: Honorable City Council
Colleen Doyle, Director of Human Resources
Megan Langan, City Auditor
Steven Magoon, Assistant City Manager for Community Development and Planning
Emily Monea, Deputy City Manager
Kayla A. Sheehan, Director, Watertown Contributory Retirement Board

Comparing the Mr. Proakis' offer letter to my public information request questions, here's what I've found:

Question	Answer
Job Title	Graphic Designer with the City of Watertown
Job Description	None
Municipal Job?	Letter mentions municipal services
Funded by	None
Job hours/pay	No more than 20 hours/week @ \$80/hour
Benefits?	None listed*
Start Date	February 20, 2024
Supervisor	None listed
When and by whom job created?	None listed
Job Classification/salary range	None listed
Special parts of job?	Can hours be outside of City Hall? None mentioned. Where's his office and what are his hours?
Job Search History	Letter mentions he was "carefully selected," but no job listing for this can be found.
City hiring procedures?	None
When, how and by whom was hiring process conducted?	None

*Sebastian got open enrollment forms for dental and vision on April 3, 2024. Is this proof of insurance eligibility?

In short, the information in the offer letter seems to provide the nuts and bolts of hiring an employee... hours, pay, etc.). And judging from the City Clerk's letter, there is nothing else to be found... no announcement for soliciting applications for this position, no posting on the City website or elsewhere, no evidence of interviews with those who applied, because this job search (and likewise the city logo creation) was not part of a public, transparent process.

Question: In City Manager Proakis' 10/22/2024 presentation to the City Council, he answers the oft asked question, how many staff did we bring on-board in 2024?

See <http://vodwcatv.org/CablecastPublicSite/show/3449?site=3> minute 52:05
Where is Mr. Ebarb's part-time job accounted for on that screen? Are there any other jobs like Mr. Ebarb's that have gone uncounted?

My Opinion:

Personally, I don't buy our City Manager's explanation made at the February 12th meeting, that we in Watertown don't have a lot of personnel policies. It sounds more like an excuse. We didn't hire a municipal neophyte for City Manager. He knows better than to hire folks without a legitimate process.

Sure, the Manager has stated that the number of hours has been low thus far, but let's not downplay the potential full cost of this "part-time job": 20 hrs/wk X \$80/hr X 52/wks/yr = \$83,200/year, (plus benefits?).

I'm wondering if this number aligns with the intent of the fund transfer Mr. Proakis requested at the November 27, 2023 City Council meeting. (<https://watertownma.portal.civicclerk.com/event/5322/files/report/374>).

I discovered the existence of a curious e-mail sent by Emily Monea to Sebastian Ebarb on February 15, 2024 (Mr. Ebarb's official start date as a Watertown employee was February 20, 2024). The subject line of this e-mail: FW: City Council Request -November 27, 2023. The attachments included something called "City Council request_HR budget transfer_Nov 2023. It would be good to get clarification on this.

Finally, I want to make crystal clear that this has absolutely nothing to do with the quality of work or the professionalism of Mr. Ebarb and his ability to have won this position, if in fact it had been advertised appropriately by the City. This has everything to do with a City government that's cutting corners in very important and critical ways that can, in the future, lead to community distrust, ethics problems and lawsuits.

Isn't it time to rein in these types of hiring abuses? How many other examples are there of this form of hiring during Mr. Proakis' tenure, and how can we assure through policies, ordinances and oversight that this does not happen again?

Thank you.

Linda Scott
55 Olcott Street