



Watertown City Council

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Committee of the Personnel and City Organization Meeting May 13, 2025 Report May 27, 2025

The Committee convened on Tuesday, May 13, at 6:00 pm in the Louis P. Andrews Upper Conference Room, with remote participation by zoom.

Present were Caroline Bays, Chair; John Gannon, Vice Chair and Nicole Gardner, Secretary. Staff present were City Manager George Proakis, Deputy City Manager Emily Monea, Assistant City Manager for Finance Ari Sky, Stephanie Venizelos, and Kathy Cunningham. Also attending were City Council President Mark Sideris and Councilor Lisa Feltner. Lori Moran and Jacky Van Leeuwen attended in person and by zoom.

Councilor Bays called the meeting to order at 6:03pm. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the proposed reorganization plan to create a Human Services Department, and make a recommendation to the City Council.

Manager Proakis began by describing the rationale for creating the new department, which is to ensure the Administration can effectively and efficiently implement the recommendations from the recent Health and Human Services Study. He noted that creating the department was one of those recommendations. He also noted that under the Administrative Code, City Council approval is required to create a new department, hence today's meeting.

If approved, the first priority will be to hire the Director. There was a public meeting with the Committee on Health & Human Services to solicit their views – and those of the public – on qualities and capabilities desired for the role. The resulting job description was posted, and applications are coming in now.

Once the Director is hired, the following would be moved into the new department:

1. Community Wellness (now reporting to Community Planning & Development)
2. Food Pantry (now reporting to Senior Services), and
3. The budget and contract and funding for Wayside / SRSS
4. The Human Rights Commission budget – and eventually, the staff support. For now, the Commission will continue to be staffed by Council Analyst Doug Newton.

Mr. Proakis noted that these anticipated steps are consistent with the Health & Human Services Study recommendations. Further, this Department would be placed in the Parker Annex, near the Health Department and the Community Development & Planning Department, clustering these resident-centric teams near each other for effective collaboration. He noted that in time, Veteran Services might also be moved there.

The Chair asked for comments from all attending. There were no concerns or issues raised.

→ ACTION ITEM: Councilor Gardner made a motion that the Committee recommends the City Council approve the reorganization plan to create a Health & Human Services Department. Councilor Gannon seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 6:25pm with unanimous consent.
Report prepared by Nicole Gardner

ELECTED OFFICIALS

Caroline Bays,
Chair

John G. Gannon,
Vice Chair

Nicole Gardner,
Secretary