



Watertown City Council

Administration Building
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ELECTED OFFICIALS:

Mark S. Sideris,
Council President

Vincent J. Piccirilli, Jr.,
Vice President &
District C Councilor

John M. Airasian,
Councilor At Large

Caroline Bays,
Councilor At Large

John G. Gannon,
Councilor At Large

Anthony Palomba,
Councilor At Large

Nicole Gardner,
District A Councilor

Lisa J. Feltner,
District B Councilor

Emily Izzo,
District D Councilor

Report of the Committee on Economic Development & Planning Meeting Date: July 31, 2025

The Committee convened on Thursday, July 31, 2025, at 6:00 pm in the Council Office. Present were Lisa Feltner, chair; John Gannon, vice chair; and Vincent Piccirilli, secretary. The purpose of the meeting was to conduct Community Preservation Committee interviews. Elodia Thomas was also present.

Each candidate was asked the same questions:

- How would you balance applications for the three allowable categories: affordable housing, open space/recreation, and historic preservation?
- With 3 of the 4 citizen members leaving the CPC, including the current chair, vice chair, and former chair, what are your thoughts of taking a leadership role?
- How would you handle recommendations to the City Council if there is a split vote on the CPC for a project?
- How familiar are you with our Community Preservation 5-year plan, and what are your thoughts about updating the plan in the next year?
- What are your thoughts on community engagement to help determine Watertown's preservation needs and to seek projects for consideration?
- What is your understanding of the goals of the CPA Program and its allowable spending purposes?
- How much time do you think you should devote to this active Committee?
- How do you feel connected to Watertown? What deep connections do you have to different constituencies within Watertown to make the town more responsive to the needs of its residents?
- What specific skills do you bring that would support the execution of required tasks by the Committee?
- What specific viewpoints about preservation would you offer that may not normally be heard through the City's routine procedures?
- What new approaches or ideas would you bring to the CPC to help identify projects outside the City's routine budget priority process?

Marissa Mayo has degrees in History and Anthropology, and a Master's in Paleoanthropology. She is currently the Property Care Operations Manager for Historic New England, which owns the Abraham Browne House in Watertown, managing projects and maintenance for properties in 5 states. She feels her skills in her job will be an asset in understanding and evaluating projects for the CPC, although her main experience is with historic preservation and landscaping plans while considering climate action, accessibility, affordability and longevity of buildings. Her career makes for a good fit to serve on the Historical Commission, but she wants to broaden her horizons and thinks it will be fun to serve on the CPC (and not just feel like an extension of her job). She briefly reviewed Watertown's 5-yr plan before her interview with the Residents' Advisory Committee but needs to learn more about the city's needs and the CPA program. The Committee noted that the next 5-yr plan coincides with the 400th

anniversary of our founding. Considering impacts from the pandemic and that her husband regularly walks all over Watertown (he doesn't drive), she has renewed appreciation for open space. Most of her neighbors don't use computers so she appreciates the need for public engagement in person and at community events sponsored by churches or other cultural groups. She doesn't feel able to commit to a leadership role at this time; she needs to work with others on the committee first and hear about how they want to organize themselves, and she expects to be able to volunteer just about 5 hours every other week toward this working committee. She is aware that some applications to the CPA program are well intentioned but not well thought out, and they either need to be re-done or seek an alternative way accomplish their goals, before bringing recommendations to City Council; the Committee conveyed the importance of broad consensus on projects. Thinking about Community Preservation, she feels we need to support walkable neighborhoods and small business, while also understanding that many residents are struggling with the cost of housing and modernization needs, balanced with preservation and the character of neighborhoods.

Amy Plovnick has a Master's in City Planning. She recently started work at VHB in Watertown and previously worked at the US Department of Transportation Volpe Center. She has been on the Bicycle & Pedestrian Committee since 2019 and will step down if confirmed for the CPC. She was also a co-founder of Housing for All Watertown, which advocates for more housing in Watertown. She is familiar with some city planning documents and reviewed our 5-year CPA program plan before her interview with the Residents' Advisory Committee, but she needs to learn more about allowable spending purposes. She cannot take on a leadership role in the near future because of work and family obligations, but she is interested in members' thoughts on public engagement, studying the needs in all three preservation categories, collaboration and supervising administrative support. Her experience is centered on transportation within urban planning, and the Bicycle & Pedestrian Committee sees some overlap with recreation and open space, but she is interested in all three categories and especially wants to learn more about historic preservation. When making recommendations, she feels the CPC needs to make sure projects are well thought out, use funds wisely and serve the community at large for future generations. She understands that although Watertown CPA funds are substantial, not a lot of good projects have come forward. She feels the Affordable Housing Trust and the CPC need to work more closely together for affordable housing projects to avoid duplication of efforts. She believes the two biggest concerns for residents for Community Preservation are affordable housing and transportation, and she is interested in exploring if bike paths [trails] could be CPC projects.

Christina Murphy has a degree in Sociology and Child Development, and a Master's in Management for Child, Youth, and Family Policy. She currently the Director of Communications for C4 Innovations, who provides options for services and supports for people experiencing substance use, mental health challenges, and housing instability. She is active in Watertown Public Schools and served on the Hosmer School Site Council and Parent Teacher Organization. She is familiar with our CPC 5-year plan, is impressed by its detailed demographic data, and she reviewed the allowable spending purposes as dictated by the state CPA. For outreach and engagement, she believes in going to where the people are to connect with them and encourage two-way interaction; it is always difficult to expand participation and/or attendance at public meetings for a variety of reasons. She sees Community Preservation as an important asset for residents and future generations, and about how people relate to their environment; dingy or uninviting storefronts could be improved to provide better experiences and interactions. She cannot initially take on a leadership role (e.g. children in sports and work-life) and because she needs to learn more about the CPA and see how the CPC works together. She expressed understanding that the four at-large members have a special role on the CPC, with the statutory members already serving on other boards and more experience or focus on one category. She was also

recently invited to join Watertown Community Foundation’s Board and will consider how best to serve both the CPC and residents’ interests.

Based on responses to questions and conversations during the interviews, the Committee had a brief discussion about the challenges the CPC is facing with leadership of the Committee and supervision of its staff person. At the last CPC meeting on July 17, they were not able to elect an interim chair, and instead one member agreed to be a “convener” for the next three months. The Committee agreed the CPC needs guidance and support to successfully function.

- ➔ **Action Item:** Councilor Piccirilli made a motion, seconded by Councilor Gannon, to recommend that the City Council make a referral to the Committee on Economic Development & Planning to discuss and make recommendations on leadership support for the Community Preservation Committee. Voted 3-0
- ➔ **Action Item:** Councilor Piccirilli made a motion, seconded by Councilor Gannon, to recommend that the City Council confirm of Marissa Mayo for appointment to the Community Preservation Committee for a term expiring February 1, 2028. Voted 3-0
- ➔ **Action Item:** Councilor Piccirilli made a motion, seconded by Councilor Gannon, to recommend that the City Council confirm Amy Plovnick for appointment to the Community Preservation Committee for a term expiring February 1, 2026, filling the unexpired term of Mark Kraczkiewicz. Voted 3-0

Councilor Piccirilli made a motion, seconded by Councilor Gannon, to recommend that the City Council confirm Christina Murphy for appointment to the Community Preservation Committee for a term expiring February 1, 2027. Voted 3-0

Note: After this meeting, Christina Murphy sent an email to the EDP Committee withdrawing her appointment because she won’t be able to give it the level of commitment it needs. She confirmed she will be joining the Watertown Community Foundation board for the next few years and is also helping with the Hosmer 5th grade activities this year. Therefore, an action item for Council to approve her confirmation is not included.

The meeting adjourned at 8:38 pm.

Report prepared by Vincent Piccirilli