



# Watertown City Council

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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: September 3, 2025

The Committee convened on Wednesday, September 3, 2025, at 6:00 pm in the Richard E. Mastrangelo Council Chamber, with remote participation by Zoom. Present were Lisa Feltner, chair; John Gannon, vice chair; and Vincent Piccirilli, secretary. Staff present were George Proakis, City Manager; and present on zoom was Lanae Handy, Community Preservation Coordinator. Present were President Mark Sideris, CPC Member Dennis Duff, former CPC Member and Chair Elodia Thomas, and Susan Falkoff. Present on zoom were former CPC Member and Chair Mark Kraczkiewicz, former CPC Member and Vice Chair Jonathan Bockian, Jacky van Leeuwen, Dawn Duff, and Jamie Gordon.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss and make recommendations on leadership support for the Community Preservation Committee (CPC).

Councilor Feltner provided background, stating while conducting confirmation interviews for new CPC members on August 12, 2025, and based on those conversations, the EDP Committee had a brief discussion about the challenges the CPC is facing with leadership and supervision of its staff person. At the last CPC meeting on July 17, members were not able to elect an interim chair, and instead one member agreed to be a “convener” for the next three months. The EDP Committee was concerned the CPC needs guidance and support to successfully function and transition with three new at-large members.

Councilor Piccirilli noted that per statute, the CPC is required to elect a chair, and the key responsibilities of the chair are to publish agendas, run meetings, and supervise its staff.

Mr. Proakis said that he is working on updating the City’s Administrative Code, and that the CPC is an outlier in that it’s the only Committee that supervises its own staff, and that he would like to change this so that the Community Preservation Coordinator reports directly to City staff. There was no further discussion as this was beyond the scope of the referral. He also said that he intends to bring in KP Law to give training to the chairs and the members of all Boards, Committees, and Commissions on Open Meeting Law, as we are due for a refresh given turnover.

President Sideris said the intention is to provide leadership support only as an interim step during the transition period, and that it’s up to the CPC to decide what level of help they want. He would be willing to attend meetings to help out and facilitate training and education.

Mr. Bockian wanted to clarify that at the last CPC meeting, Alan Gallagher was elected to convene the next meeting, with the understanding that he would be willing to become an elected interim chair when the new members are present to vote. He thinks Ms. Handy is doing a great job and should be supervised by the CPC, not city staff.

Ms. Handy said she spoke with Stuart Saginor from the statewide Community Preservation Coalition, and he is interested and available to provide training for new members and the committee in general as they wish. She does not see a problem for the CPC to operate with Mr. Gallagher serving as an interim chair.

Mr. Krackiewicz said this request seems to be missing context, and the CPC has a well-defined process with procedures in place, and Ms. Handy is doing a great job in following them and should continue to be supervised by the committee. He is not sure why this is being raised as an issue for the City Council to solve, and he does not think it's appropriate for a City Council member to preside over a CPC meeting.

Mr. Duff said that the CPC is not like other boards because it has its own staff, but he thinks City staff could be providing additional assistance as they have all along when requested. He recognized the former leadership of Dr. Elodia Thomas, particularly on the accomplishment of a high quality 5-year Community Preservation Plan and its branding and public roll-out. He thinks that the CPC is running well for the most part, but he is concerned about the recruitment of new volunteers in general.

Ms. Thomas said that as the first CPC chair, she worked hard to get the first Community Preservation Plan approved and a process in place. She acknowledged there have been power struggles between the CPC and city staff, and she also believes the Community Preservation Coordinator should be mostly in-person and not remote. She feels that the chair needs to be someone with experience and deep ties to Watertown, and while she welcomes help from a seasoned City Councilor during transition, given rather complicated topics and requirements per the CPA; she does not want the CPC to be taken over by the administration. Members need to know when to ask for advice, and she mentioned that Tom Tracy and KP Law have been of great help in the past and the CPC is able to hire consultants.

During the Committee's discussion on potential options to support successful transition, we clarified the intent to offer help to the CPC leadership temporarily until three new at-large members have some time to gain experience (one position is still vacant), elect a permanent chair, and that it is not to take over the CPC leadership. It was noted that the CPC has successfully requested help from City staff as needed, and members feel able to supervise the part-time coordinator.

- ➔ **Action Item:** Councilor Piccirilli made a motion, seconded by Councilor Gannon, that the Committee recommends the City Council offer the Community Preservation Committee the Council President, or his designee, to provide assistance to the CPC chair. Voted 3 to 0.

The meeting adjourned at 7:41 p.m.

Report prepared by Vincent Piccirilli