



Watertown City Council Committee on Public Works

Councilor Piccirilli-Chair, Councilor Feltner-Vice Chair, Councilor Palomba- Secretary

Committee Report of October 22, 2025 Meeting Presented to the City Council on December 9, 2025

The Committee on Public Works met on Wednesday October 22, 2025 at 6:00 PM in the 3rd Floor Conference Room in City Hall with zoom capacity. Public comments could be submitted to apalomba@watertown-ma.gov.

Purpose of the meeting was to:

A. Review and Make Recommendations on the Fiscal Year 2026 Capital Improvement Program item #42:

- a. The FY26 \$2,875,000 proposed loan order for local road construction projects in the summer of 2026.
- b. The FY26 \$2,300,000 proposed loan order for connector roads/longer street projects for the summer of 2026.

B. Review and Make Recommendations on the FY2026 Capital Improvement Program item #44: Policy guidance and plans for the FY26 \$390,000 Chapter 90 Fair Share Amendment Appropriation.

Present: Tom Brady, Director, Department of Public Works (DPW), John Zaccardi, Deputy Director, DPW, Tyler Glode, City Engineer, DPW, Michael Albano, Director of Finance and Administration, DPW, Ed Baptista, Supervisor, Highway Division, DPW and Matt Baker, Interim Assistant Director of Public Utilities, DPW. Also attending either in-person or on zoom were residents Yasmin Daikh, Alissa Maryia, Nyles Gislason, Libby Shaw, Laura Murphy, Kristin Bulter, William Doran, Margaret Fitzgerald, Aric Wax, Sergery Sian, Angeline Kornelis, the Hacketts, and BW.

Please note: This meeting lasted approximately 2 hours and 45 minutes. These minutes provide a summary of the meeting. Please see the WCATV recoding of the meeting at <http://vodwcatv.org/internetchannel/show/4163?site=3> for more details. Included below is information from DPW's "Public Works Subcommittee Presentation October 22, 2025" (Presentation), learnings based on questions to DPW from committee members and residents, and general information about how DPW operates. Below is the link to DPW's Presentation.

- At this meeting the Committee was considering city borrowing by way of loan orders, that need the approval of the City Council, for local road construction and for connector roads/longer street projects. The city also annually receives state funding, known as Chapter 90 funding, that can be used for a variety of transportation related projects including road and bridge repairs, sidewalks, pavement improvement, bike paths, etc. These funds are overseen by the Department of Public Works which can recommend how these funds should be used via the city's five-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

- There can be other sources of money that are project-specific and most likely will not continue beyond the completion of the project, such as federal funds and mitigation monies from developers and utilities. In general, annual loan orders are used for the maintenance, repair, and reconstruction of local roads

and connector roads/longer street projects. Chapter 90 money and grants are used for engineering costs and funds from DPW's budget are used for limited sidewalk repairs.

- Borrowing, bidding, construction, and final city sign-off of a project for local road construction projects and for connector roads/longer streets projects can span a number of years and is somewhat complicated by the time period used for borrowing (fiscal years) and the time period for construction (calendar year), and the construction season which is between April and November.

- The general process that DPW follows after a street has been approved for maintenance, repair, or reconstruction varies depending on the state of the street, but general includes consultation with the Bicycle-Pedestrian Committee and the Complete Street Working Group during the design phase, review of the condition of underground utilities, and coordination with agencies and utility companies performing work. Design documents are created, the cost of the project and duration of the project are estimated, and the source of the funding is determined. The project is then put out for bid. Bids are reviewed and a contractor is awarded the project. The work of the contractor is monitored by DPW staff and once the major elements of the project are completed, DPW staff conducts a final review to confirm that all elements are completed. The complete design phase can take a full year before bidding occurs and construction begins.

- The primary determination of what streets and roads are ultimately recommended by the DWP each year is the Pavement Conditions Index (PCI) of the street or road. However, there are other factors considered including the condition of the utilizes the city maintains (water, sewer, drains), plans for public utility work to be done by Natural Grid and Eversource, estimates of traffic and transportation impacts, safety improvements and considerations related to multi-modal transportation, city design standards, and the city's driveway ordinance. Thus, streets not selected for full depth reconstruction may have a lower CPI than some of the streets that are selected. It should also be noted that the current PCI information is from a 2024 review, which is not available to the public, and that a new review of the PCI for our streets and roads will take place in 2027.

- The completion of streets and road repairs, as well as sidewalk repairs (not including in a full depth road reclamation project) can vary widely and can be influenced by a number of factors including delays in bidding a project, contractor availability, weather, etc. For example, borrowing for Morse Street was done in FY22 with construction to begin in the spring of calendar year 2023 with the hope of completing the project in the fall of 2024 or the spring of 2025. The DPW's Presentation notes that Morse Street is completed and in punch list review as of the fall of 2025.

- DPW does spot repairs on sidewalks that are in need of repair for safety and ADA compliance. This is usually done on a street that is scheduled for the Maintenance and Repair activity known as "mill and overlay" which includes grinding up the top layer of asphalt, putting down a binder and then laying new asphalt. It should be noted that mill and overlay can happen on particular sections of a street as well as on a complete street.

- During the October 28, 2024 meeting of the Committee on Public Works it was noted that there were five streets for which funding was approved for construction in 2024. During that meeting, DPW recommend full depth reconstruction of Poplar Street, Partridge Street, north and south Irving Park, Royal Street and Green Street. In addition, there were five streets for which funding was approved in FY25. These were George Street, Bromfield Street, Mangano Court, Grandview Avenue and Dwight

Street. DPW stated that it was their intention to complete all ten of these streets during the construction season of April 2025 to November 2025. At this October 22, 2025 meeting we learned that work has been completed on gas mains, water mains, sewers and drains, but no road repair or maintenance work has been done.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE PRESENTATION – OCTOBER, 2025

Tyler Glode our City Engineer reviewed the DPW Presentation which can be found at https://watertownmassgov-my.sharepoint.com/:f/g/personal/tglode_watertown-ma_gov/Eig1Lejsbxdt9eTxGsG9pkBAAzHhV9qCwislvLTJ7iRsg?e=50rUGEhed.

The Presentation included information about the anticipated replacement, rehabilitation, and repair of gas mains (as planned by National Grid), water mains, sewer mains, and sewers and drains and gas mains. The Presentation noted that the overall city-wide *Pavement Condition Index (CPI)* is 66, which is an increase from the 60 PCI of last year. You can see a color-code review of the PCI for individual streets in Watertown on page 4 of the presentation. The Maintenance Summary shows streets ranging from a PCI of 90-100 to streets with a PCI of 1-12). The maintenance and repair activity for our streets is directly related to the PCI of the road with the goal of prolonging the useful life of a street to as long as possible while improving “accessibility and safety for all users using Complete Streets principles”. The degree of maintenance and repair varies and can include sealing cracks in streets, full depth patch repairs, mill and overlay, and, for roads with an CPI of 1 through 29, full depth reconstruction. The time involved and the cost varies with each of these activities. The most extensive, and the most expensive, activity is full depth road reconstruction which includes road reclamation and paving, drainage repairs, curbing, concrete sidewalks, ADA accessibility requirements, grass borders, and street trees.

The Presentation provided a recap of 2025 completed streets and streets that are need completion. Morse Street and Russell Avenue are completed and the punch list for each is under review. The North Beacon Street Bottleneck Program is under construction and it is estimated to be completed in the spring 2026. The source of funding for these projects includes city funds acquired through borrowing, mitigation funds, that is funds from agencies like the MWRA or developers, or a combination of both. It was noted that the various phases of the Arsenal Street reconstruction, which was funded in part by mitigation money from developers, lasted three years. And there still remains a number of elements of the project that need to be completed. In addition, DPW reported that the 14 signals on Arsenal Street are being coordinated (adaptive signaling) to facilitate the steady flow of traffic. There was discussion of the North Beacon Bottle Neck Program which has also taken three years. The project, which is funded by a grant, will not be affected by future plans related to the renovation of Watertown Square. Finally, there is concern about the bump out at the corner of Arsenal Street and Walnut Street. DPW is in the process of reviewing that situation.

LOCAL ROAD CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

The Presentation included the recommendations that the following streets be selected for full depth reclamation in 2026 - in the Cottage Street neighborhood – Cottage Street, Sawin Court, Rifle Court, Lyons Street, Sexton Street, Cottage Lane, Molloy Street, and Hearn Street – as well as Winter Street and potentially Brigham Street and Appleton Terrace. Brigham and Appleton are bid alternate projects which means that their inclusion for 2026 will depend on funding and other factors as the bidding

process evolves. The bids for this construction will be put between November 2025 and January 2026 which is the most competitive bidding period and can result in lower bids.

It was noted that the streets in the Cottage Street neighborhood are relatively short and narrow streets and will pose challenges to implementing the typical elements of full depth road reconstruction such as concrete sidewalks, ADA accessibility requirements, grass boards and street trees. There was also concern about driveway curve cuts and related safety issues. How to proceed and address these concerns will be determined during the engineering design phase of the project.

CONNECTOR ROADS/LONGER STREETS PROJECTS

Similar to last year, there were no new recommendations for full reconstruction of Connector Roads/ Longer Street projects since funds have already been approved for the streets listed below. Other than Morse Street, these streets are in the early stages of the process.

- As mentioned, **Morse Street** is in the punch list stage.
- The borrowing for **Fifth Avenue** was done in FY23. Invitations for Bids (IfB) are planned for November 2025 with construction to follow in the spring of 2026. Please note that Director Brady amended the IfB to October 2025.
- The borrowing for **Springfield Street and Forest Street** was done in FY24. While construction was to begin in the spring of 2025. At this time the design phase is 50% complete with the hope that 75% will be completed by Halloween.
- The borrowing for **Riverside Street** was done in FY25 and construction was to begin in the spring of 2026. While this may still be possible, at the present time the design development/coordination is only 25% complete.

There was concerned that these projects have been in the works for some time and it is disappointing that the progress is so slow. Please review the WCAT recording for an update by DPW why the timeline for the completion of these projects has been extended. - It was noted that some of the connector roads/longer street projects cost more than originally estimated and this resulted in some reallocation of the funds that have already been approved from one year to another year. It was also noted that cost of road work is raising, with estimated costs, including stormwater work, reaching \$1,000 per foot.

The presentation ended with a brief review of the status of capital projects including plans for Watertown Square, engineering and landscaping design of the Arsenal Street Corridor Study, the MassDOT design and funding for the Galen Street/Nonantum Road/Watertown Street intersection, and the reconstruction of Mt. Auburn Street.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was extensive public comment from both those residents at the meeting and those on zoom.

Green Environment – a representative of Trees for Watertown requested that during the process of road maintenance, repair, and reconstruction there be a priority given to protecting the existing tree canopy and that when installing new trees the latest best practices be employed.

- **Herson Street** – A resident, who explained that she has spoken to other residents, raised concern about the disrepair of Herson street and its sidewalks. Residents have been advocating for reconstruction of the street for over three and a half years, beginning in May of 2022. It was noted that long-term residents of the street, those living on the street 25 – 30 years, say street repairs have never occurred during the time they have lived there. The residents have raised safety concerns, both for elderly residents and the children attending a daycare facility, related to the difficulty walking on the sidewalks as well as in the street. There was also concern about gas leaks. In addition, residents were disappointed that a couple of years ago mature trees were removed, without resident notice. The reason given was that the trees would not survive planned street repairs. However, these repairs have not happened as of this committee meeting.

DPW Response - Herson is scheduled for mill and overlay in the spring of 2026. Design has been completed and Chapter 90 monies will be used to fund the project. DPW is not responsible and does it monitor public underground utilities such as gas line repairs. However, they will coordinate with, in this case National Grid, to be assured that there are no plans to upgrade the service before beginning the mill and overlay. DPW will also survey the sidewalks and replace panels that are step hazards and/or do not meet ADA accessibility requirements before beginning the mill and overlay activity. DPW believes the repair activities will extend the life of the street for 15 years.

Summer Street/Fayette Street/Forest Street – There was extensive discussion of the situation on these streets. Residents at the meeting and on-line expressed a litany of concerns, including the need to redesign and reconstruct the streets and the installation of traffic safety measures. They wished that this be a priority for DPW and the Traffic Commission. Below are only some of the key points.

-Summer Street is major thorough fare leading to downtown Watertown. For example, it is estimated that there are 20,000 vehicles traveling on Summer Street per week.

- Fayette Street also experiences high volume, particularly during peak hours. Data shows that speeding is a major concern on both streets. During peak hours vehicles can travel between 40 and 60 miles per hour and during off peak hours, speeds can range from 60 to 90 miles per hour.

- Parking on both sides of the street and sometimes on the sidewalk significantly narrows these streets and there are few stop signs and no speed bumps. This situation increases the potential for accidents.

- The predominate concern raised by these and other issues, such as drag racing, is safety. The safety of pedestrians, particularly children and seniors, was mentioned by all the residents who spoke about these streets during the public comment period.

It should be noted that the Committee received many emails from residents of Summer Street, Fayette Street, Forest Street and Herson, as well as a slide show presentation analyzing traffic data. These are attached to the minutes.

DPW response – While not in the present list of connector roads/longer street projects recommended for funding in 2026, it is the intention of DPW to recommend Summer Street and Fayette Street for the next major design effort. DPW would come forth with a recommendation at a committee meeting, tentatively scheduled for October 2026, to use FY27 funds for construction of Summer Street, and

potentially of Fayette Street, that would take place in 2028. Design work for these two streets will occur in FY26 and be paid for with Chapter 90 money.

Following this discussion the Committee and DPW reviewed the various loan orders for connector roads/longer street projects and the how the funds would be used.

- FY26 money for connector roads/longer street projects, an agenda item for this meeting, would be used for completing the construction of Forest Street and Springfield Street.

- FY27 money for connector roads/longer long streets projects, would be earmarked for construction of Summer Street and possibly Fayette Street as noted above in the DPW's response to public comments. However, the first priority would be Summer Street with Fayette being a bid alternate. If there is no money for Fayette, it would be pushed to FY29 for construction.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

Councilor Palomba made the following motion that was seconded by Councilor Feltner and passed 3-0.

The Committee recommends that the full Council approve the loan order of \$2.875 million for the construction of the following streets - Cottage Street, Sawin Court, Rifle Court, Lyons Street, Sexton Street, Cottage Lane, Molloy Street, Hearn Street, and Winter Street, and potentially Brigham Street and Appleton Terrance.

Councilor Feltner made the following motion that was seconded by Councilor Palomba and passed 3-0.

The Committee recommends that the full Council approve the loan order for \$2.3 million for connector roads/longer street projects for the second half of construction of Springfield Street and Forest Street.

While the following decision by the committee does not require a formal vote, the committee agreed to endorse the DPW plans dedicate future FY27 money for Spring Street and if possible, Fayette Street.

There were committee requests, concerns, and decisions:

- Request to DPW for a list of the streets that are scheduled to be repaired via mill and overlay.
- Request to DPW that design work for Summer, Fayette, and Forest Streets be coordinated and that recommendations from the Traffic Commission for traffic, pedestrian, and bicycle safety be included in the design.
- Concern about and the need for more sidewalks and curbing on streets to address safety issues, environmental priorities, green space, tree planting, and related issues.
- Decision to make a referral for another meeting of the Committee on Public Works to discuss the resolution in the latest CIP to update the standing recommendations for capital improvement projects.

Agenda Item B. Review and Make Recommendations on the FY2026 Capital Improvement Plan item #44: Policy guidance and plans for the FY26 \$390,000 Chapter 90 Fair Share Amendment Appropriation.

Points made during the discussion of this agenda item.

- There was a typo in the CIP and in the agenda regarding the money that was available in FY24. The published figure was \$390,000 while the correct figure is \$309,000.

- Watertown received \$309,000 Fair Share funds in FY24 and \$167,000 in FY25. These funds were allocated for Main Street Bus Stop and Crosswalk Improvements as described in the MBTA and Watertown Memorandum of Understanding. This project is in the process of being completed.
- At this time, the Department of Transportation has not calculated how much Fair Share money will be allocated to cities and towns and there is no information about when the decision will be made. However, it was agreed that the committee and DPW should move forward with the understanding that Watertown will get some money.
- There was discussion of two possible projects for how funds might be used including:
 - o installing Rapid Flashing Beacons, with a cost estimate of \$100,000 per Beacon, at the Police Station and the intersection of School Street and Belmont Street, and
 - o installing ADA transition ramps as well as repairing ramps that are in disrepair. The rough estimate for the installation of an ADA compliant ramp was \$4,000.

The idea of installing more granite curbing was voiced, but the estimated cost of installing granite curbing is \$100/linear foot. The cost made this suggestion impractical.

The discussion concluded with the Committee asking DPW to create a list of possible projects and the cost of those projects so that when the Fair Share money is allocated, the committee would be prepared to hold a meeting to evaluate potential projects.

Councilor Palomba made a motion to adjourn which was seconded by Councilor Feltner and passed 3 – 0. The meeting concluded at 8:47 PM and the minutes were prepared by Councilor Palomba.

Vincent J. Piccirilli, Jr.,
Chair

Lisa J. Feltner
Vice Chair

Anthony Palomba,
Secretary