



Watertown City Council

**Committee on Rules and Ordinances Meeting
Tuesday, February 24, 2026 at 5:30 PM
Third Floor Conference Room**

Agenda

ACCESS INFORMATION:

- A. This meeting will be held on February 24, 2026 at 5:30 P.M. Location: Third Floor Conference Room
 - B. The Public may join the virtual meeting online: <https://watertown-ma.zoom.us/j/89707047441>
 - C. Public may join the virtual meeting audio only by phone: (877) 853-5257 or (888) 475-4499 (Toll Free) and enter Webinar ID: 897 7074 7441
 - D. Public may comment through email: jgannon@watertown-ma.gov
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- 1. Call to Order
- 2. Discussion
 - A. Confirm the Reappointment of John Labadini as member of the Licensing Board to a term expiring February 15, 2029
 - B. Review and Discuss Pet Shop Ordinance
- 3. Adjournment

ELECTED OFFICIALS

Nicole Gardner,
Chair

Lisa J. Feltner,
Vice Chair

John G. Gannon,
Secretary



George J. Proakis
City Manager

CITY OF
WATERTOWN
Office of the City Manager

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To: Honorable City Council

From: George J. Proakis, City Manager

Date: February 3, 2026

RE: Draft Pet Shop Ordinance

In response to the City Council's request for policy guidance regarding limitations on pet shop operations, a draft Pet Shop Ordinance is attached for your review and consideration.

I will bring this up under Communications from the City Manager at the February 10, 2026 City Council Meeting and respectfully request the matter be referred to Committee for further review and consideration.

WHEREAS most puppies, kittens, and rabbits sold in pet stores come from large-scale, commercial breeding facilities where the health and welfare of animals is disregarded in order to maximize profits; and,

WHEREAS documented abuses endemic to such facilities include over-breeding, inbreeding, minimal veterinary care, lack of adequate food, water, and shelter, lack of socialization, and lack of sanitation; and,

WHEREAS the prohibition of pet stores from selling dogs, cats, and rabbits is likely to decrease the demand for these animals that are bred in mills;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT ORDAINED by the City Council of Watertown that Title XI, Chapter 118 of the Watertown Code of Ordinances, is hereby enacted as follows:

118.01 Statement of Purpose

- A. Puppies, kittens, and rabbits deserve to be free from the abuse that is rampant in commercial breeding mills. Such mills also mislead consumers, who sometimes watch their pet suffer from health challenges incurred as a result of abuse at a breeding mill. This chapter serves to protect animals as well as the public from the harms caused by puppy, kitten, and rabbit mills.

118.02 Definitions:

- A. Animal Rescue Group: A not-for-profit organization having tax-exempt status under 501(c)3 of the United States Internal Revenue Code, and registered with the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, if required, whose mission and practice is, in whole or in significant part, the rescue and placement of animals into permanent homes. The term animal rescue group does not include any person that breeds dogs, cats, or rabbits or obtains dogs, cats, or rabbits for payment or compensation from a person who breeds or facilitates the sale of dogs, cats or rabbits that were obtained from such a breeder.
- B. Dog: Any member of the species *Canis familiaris*
- C. Cat: Any member of the species *Felis catus*
- D. Rabbit: Any member of the species *Oryctolagus cuniculus domesticus*
- E. Sell: To exchange for consideration, adopt out, barter, auction, trade, lease, or otherwise transfer.
- F. Offer for sale: To advertise or otherwise proffer a dog, cat, or rabbit for acceptance by another person
- G. Person: An individual, corporation, partnership, association, or any other legal entity
- H. Pet shop: Any place where birds, mammals, or reptiles are kept for the purpose of sale at either wholesale or retail, import, export, barter, exchange, or gift

- I. Public Animal Control Agency or Shelter: A facility operated by the City of Watertown or any other municipal, state, or federal agency for the purpose of impounding seized, stray, homeless, abandoned, unwanted, or surrendered animals, or a facility operated for the same purposes under a written contract with the City or any other municipal, state, or federal government.

118.03 Prohibition of the Sale of Dogs, Cats, and Rabbits

- A. It shall be prohibited for any pet shop to sell or offer for sale a dog, cat, or rabbit
- B. A pet shop may provide space for the display of dogs, cats, or rabbits for adoption only if:
 - 1. Such animals are displayed and made available for adoption by either: a public animal control agency or shelter or an animal rescue group, as defined in Section 118.02 above
 - 2. Each pet shop shall maintain records sufficient to document the source of each dog, cat, or rabbit the pet shop displays, for at least one year following the date of acquisition. Such records shall be made available immediately upon request to any animal control officer or any duly appointed officer or representative of the city
- C. No person shall sell, exchange, trade, barter, lease, or display for a commercial purpose any dog, cat, or rabbit on or in any street, public grounds, commercial or retail parking lot, flea market, or other market, regardless of whether such access is authorized by the property owner, except for a dog, cat, or rabbit displayed:
 - 1. By a public animal control agency or shelter, or animal rescue group, as defined in Section 118.02 ; or
 - 2. As part of a state or county fair exhibition, 4-H program, or similar exhibition or educational programs

118.04 Enforcement

- A. The provisions of this chapter may be enforced by the Director of Public Health or his or her designee. The provisions of this chapter may also be enforced by the Chief of Police or his or her designee.

118.05 Penalty

- A. Any pet shop or person who violates any provision of this chapter shall be fined as follows, with each day on which a violation exists constituting a separate offense:
 - 1. \$100 for the first offense
 - 2. \$200 for the second offense
 - 3. \$300 for the third offense and each subsequent offense

- B. In addition to any other remedy provided by law, this Chapter may be enforced by animal control officers or police officers through any means available through law and equity, including but not limited to noncriminal disposition in accordance with G.L. c. 40, § 21D or seizure of animals.
- C. Nothing in this section shall be deemed to limit the use of other lawful methods of abating violations of this section, including but not limited to application for equitable relief from a court of law.