



Watertown City Council

Administration Building
149 Main Street
Watertown, MA 02472
Phone: 617-972-6470

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 and Planning Meeting Date: December 16, 2025

The Committee convened on Tuesday December 16, 2025, at 5:30 pm in the Richard E. Mastrangelo Council Chamber, as a hybrid meeting with remote participation by zoom. Present were Lisa Feltner, chair; John Gannon, vice chair; and Vincent Piccirilli, secretary. Staff present were Deputy City Manager Emily Monea, City Manager George Proakis (by zoom), and Council Analyst Doug Newton. Also present were President Mark Sideris, Councilors Anthony Palomba, and residents Jamie Gordon, Sam Ghilardi, Deborah Peterson, Jacky van Leeuwen, and by zoom Lise Paul, Adam Schultz, and Jeremy Mendelson.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss qualifications and qualities for the Assistant City Manager for Community Development and Planning, per Charter Article 3 Section 3A.

Mr. Proakis began by stating the job was already posted, and he has been getting resumes to begin interviews in January. He is not looking to change either the job description or the organizational structure. There are four key elements that he is looking for:

1. Manager of staff of 25.
2. Making a compelling presentation of the city's vision.
3. Understand the walkable community design vision.
4. Address public/private partnerships.

He also noted that Mr. Magoon agreed to participate in the first round of interviews, and will have a role in the transition process.

Councilor Gannon listed his priorities:

1. Experience in affordable housing and implementing the Watertown Square plan.
2. Familiarity with tools of the trade.
3. Experience with public policy.

Councilor Piccirilli listed his priorities, in the two parts of the job:

As Planning Director, someone with the demonstrated ability to do the following:

1. Affordable Housing - experience in incentives for more affordable housing.
2. Commercial Development - For big business, skills in negotiating the post-biotech boom for new growth. For small business, skills in creating a vibrant street scene by attracting restaurants and other experience businesses.
3. Historic Preservation and Open Space – ability to balance the demands of redevelopment with the need to preserve the desirable nature of Watertown by preserving historic buildings and open green space.
4. Transportation – skills to meet our public transit goals, and balance the shared use of our public roads.

As Assistant City Manager, someone with the demonstrated ability to do the following:

1. For the Watertown Square plan – being able to execute the vision approved by the City Council.
2. A great communicator who makes sure all voices are heard when seeking public input.
3. An effective manager, making sure projects are completed efficiently and timely.

Councilor Feltner noted constituent requests for a focus on our climate action plan, and listed more priorities:

1. Strong management skills, with coordination across departments and implementation of approved plans.
2. Commitment to ongoing training of staff.

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3. Demonstrated ability to build community from diverse input, and a commitment to strong neighborhoods.
4. Determine how the new structure of our events team fits into our overall strategic plan and support of the Commander's Mansion.

Councilor Palomba spoke about two priorities:

1. Experience of managing people to provide effective services to the community, seeking public ideas and feelings.
2. Keeping an eye on what areas need more support and resources.

President Sideris spoke about how this is a complicated position. Teamwork is important, but it also requires a good working relationship with the public. They also need to understand the role of the City Council in setting policy and how that affects our visioning and implementation of plans.

Councilor Gannon added that it is important that they have a background in city, state, or regional government, particularly Massachusetts, and have experience in developing regional solutions for public transit and affordable housing.

Next, the Committee took public comments:

- Jacky van Leeuwen read a Watertown Housing for All letter, emphasizing housing affordability. She also believes the city needs more staff for housing.
- Sam Ghilardi said the candidate should continue the city's commitment to new growth, as aligned with our plans, and should also have creative thinking about our neighborhoods.
- Deborah Peterson read a letter from Watertown Faces Climate Change, emphasizing commitment to public input and process, leadership on transportation, and the walkability study for Watertown Square economic growth.
- Lise Paul reiterated how important transit is for Watertown, with last mile options, how to share the streets, and implementing the mobility study recommendations.
- Jeremy Mendelson spoke about the need to focus on transportation and housing.
- Jamie Gordon spoke about how Steve Magoon worked with the public and was always available to talk to the public, and was open to new ideas, and the new candidate should have the same characteristics. Steve also was a county planner in his previous job, which she thinks was helpful.

Manager Proakis will take all comments into consideration when screening applications and conducting interviews for this position. He noted it requires a strong role as an assistant city manager as discussed and posted in the job description. The letters that were read, as well as all email correspondence received, are attached.

The meeting adjourned at 6:24 pm.

Report prepared by Vincent Piccirilli

To: Committee on Economic Development and Planning

Cc: City Council

Re: Qualifications and Qualities for the Assistant City Manager for Community Development and Planning

From: Deborah Peterson

Date: Dec 14, 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to speak about qualities to look for in a new Assistant City Manager for Community Development and Planning. I would like to recommend :

- Experience and commitment to public input and engagement. Demonstrated ability to generate public input and used it constructively.
- Ability to bring leadership to transportation initiatives with a focus on mobility shift.

I find myself feeling wistful that Steve Magoon should be leaving us. I've been involved in many initiatives over many years that have been enabled, boosted and hosted by Steve at DCDP. These include the path between Grove Street and School, the Community Path Plan, and its evolution into a reality, the roll-out to businesses of the plastic bag ban, three beautiful and lasting murals, and the creation of the Public Arts and Culture Committee. I sigh when I count the years and think back at how each unfolded. Steve was there; would always take a minute to talk when we passed by his office with a question or concern, would lend space and resources, use his influence with the community or DPW and help grease the wheels of these projects. These projects all started with the vision of a cadre of local residents. It is an important part of planning.

The other perspective I bring to this search is as an advocate for our climate goal of reducing car miles. Addressing this goal lies squarely in DCDP and needs leadership from the top. It requires a paradigm shift in approaching new development, with an emphasis on transit and walkability, and density, and shared spaces and energetic engagement and high level advocacy with the MBTA and other regional entities. Outside DCDP and inside, it requires a hard look at established practices and resources throughout the City. And it will require working across departments. The recently released Mobility Study is welcome and fulfilling its potential will require leadership, guidance, and exertion from the top.

Reducing car miles is more than a climate goal. It is in fact what many people yearn for in a community –resources, schools, stores, recreational facilities, services, restaurants, institutions and neighborhoods accessible without a car. It enhances community connections and identity. It improves the quality of life. It is a way of life that many young people embrace and a way of life for many who live without a car because of disability, age, or finances. We CAN make a way of life for all of us.



Public Comment for 12/16 Committee on Economic Development and Planning

From Kevin Ryan <ryan.kev43@gmail.com>
Date Tue 12/16/2025 9:08 AM
To Piccirilli, Vincent J <vpiccirilli@watertown-ma.gov>

Hi Vinny,

I live at 80 Edgecliff Rd and I would like for the following comment to be read into the public record at the 12/16 Committee on Economic Development and Planning concerning Discuss Qualifications and Qualities for the Assistant City Manager for Community Development and Planning:

As last year's Health and Human Services study laid out, housing affordability and security is our City's most pressing need. Since updating our City's housing related policies and encouraging housing development is a priority, the new Assistant City Manager for Community Development and Planning should have extensive expertise in housing policy and housing development and affordability should be his top priority.

Thank you,
Kevin

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Kevin Ryan
(413) 626-8759
Ryan.Kev43@gmail.com



Qualifications/Qualities for New Asst City Manager

From Jacob Smith <jrsmith@uwalumni.com>

Date Tue 12/16/2025 10:58 AM

To Piccirilli, Vincent J <vpiccirilli@watertown-ma.gov>

Please read into the public record:

My name is Jacob Smith and I live on Hosmer St. in District A. I would encourage the council to prioritize assistant city manager candidates with housing expertise, especially in regards to affordable housing. Housing affordability is already a concern for many in Watertown and given the long lead times necessary for adding additional units, this is an issue the city needs to address sooner rather than later. Thank you.



Assistant City Manager for Community Development and Planning

From Brian Ho <anhbrian@gmail.com>

Date Tue 12/16/2025 12:52 PM

To Piccirilli, Vincent J <vpiccirilli@watertown-ma.gov>

Hello!

My name is Brian Ho and I live on 31 Elton Ave. I wanted to express how important it is for our new Assistant City Manager for Community Development and Planning to be an expert in creating more affordable housing in our city. Housing insecurity is a top concern for me and people within my circle.

Not only do we need a greater supply of housing units in general, it's really important that new units are considered "social housing." Whether it be a mission-driven nonprofit or Watertown Housing Authority, it's important that we are focusing on units that are not subject to market forces. We need more housing that is below-market rate and managed by entities that prioritize affordability in our community.

Thank you!



New Asst City Manager Search

From Stephanie Morgan <steff.morgan@gmail.com>

Date Tue 12/16/2025 1:17 PM

To Piccirilli, Vincent J <vpiccirilli@watertown-ma.gov>

I would like the following to be read into the public record:

I am a Watertown resident (Hosmer St. in District A) writing to encourage the city council to focus their search for a New Asst City Manager on candidates with strong experience/expertise in affordable housing. Housing is a critical topic for our city and our leadership should reflect this.

Thank you
Stephanie



Asst City manager qualifications

From Adam Schultz <aeschultz22@gmail.com>

Date Tue 12/16/2025 5:12 PM

To Piccirilli, Vincent J <vpiccirilli@watertown-ma.gov>

Please read into the public record.

I am writing to urge this body that the incoming assistant city manager prioritize and pursue affordable housing solutions that make our city the vibrant and inclusive place we want and need it to be. Whoever they are, they must care about housing the people who live and work in Watertown and have the expertise to implement strategies with city, regional, and state actors. We have been doing a great job in recent years building more and increasingly prioritizing the affordability of the city, but there is more work to do.

Thank you,
Adam Schultz
32 Whites Avenue Apt E552
Watertown, MA 02472

Housing For All Watertown's Steering Committee would like to share our view on the qualifications and qualities we hope to see in the next Assistant City Manager/Director of Community Development and Planning:

- 1) A recognition that housing is the thing that makes our community vibrant and a commitment to addressing the housing shortage in Watertown.
- 2) A commitment to the city's leadership role building housing as part of the MBTA communities act, but also committing to making the city a leader in affordable housing construction.
- 3) A willingness to try new ideas and work to improve inefficient or outdated rules and processes that slow down our ability to build housing and prevent residents from making changes to their homes so they can stay in town.
- 4) Experience leading teams to continue developing DCDP's capacity to handle planning work in-house, without having to hire consultants.
- 5) An understanding that conserving our neighborhoods means finding ways for our friends and family and neighbors to stay in town, even if buildings have to change.
- 6) A openness to out-of-the box thinking to expand the City's financial commitment to the AHT.