



Rules & Ordinances Committee Meeting Minutes

January 20, 2026

Agenda: Review List of Referrals to the Committee on Rules and Ordinances; Review and Update City Council Rules

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 PM in the City Council Chamber. Present were Nicole Gardner, Chair; Lisa Feltner, Vice Chair; John Gannon, Secretary. Also present were Council President Mark Sideris, Councilor Caroline Bays, residents Linda Scott and Elodia Thomas (via Zoom), and Council Analyst Doug Newton

Outstanding Referrals

The Committee reviewed the following outstanding referrals:

- Rules regarding Councilor annual meetings,
- Noise ordinance,
- Appointment process for boards, commission, and committees,
- Skip the stuff ordinance,
- Building Emissions Reduction & Disclosure Ordinance (BERDO) ordinance, and
- City Council 2026-7 Rules.

Councilor Gannon made a motion, seconded by Councilor Feltner, to remove the referral regarding the appointment process for boards, commissions, and committees. The motion passed unanimously.

Councilor Gannon then made individual motions, seconded by Councilor Feltner, to continue each of the remaining outstanding referrals. Each motion passed unanimously.

Councilor Feltner noted that a referral for a tree ordinance had been dropped in error. After confirming this, the Chair added the tree ordinance back to the list.

City Council 2026-2027 Rules

Councilors were invited to submit proposed edits or additions to the Rules before the meeting (see Attachment 1). The Committee reviewed the Rules and discussed the proposed changes. All proposed changes and final decisions are summarized in Attachment 1.

Rule 2.6: Councilor Gardner proposed simplifying the language about scheduling special meetings. After discussion, she withdrew the proposal.

Rule 2.10: The Committee approved the following language: “The City Council President and the City Attorney shall report to the City Council their findings after each periodic review.” The Committee also reviewed Rule 7.9 in this context and determined that the addition to Rule 2.10 was sufficient.

Rule 7.10: The Committee then turned to the rules governing formal requests for information by Councilors. Councilor Gardner proposed revising Rule 7.10 by removing the words “and questions” from the following sentence: “Requests for Information and questions raised by Council members and accompanying responses and answers will be posted to the Council web page within a 14-day period.” After discussion, the Committee agreed to remove “and questions.” The Committee also agreed to add language stating that responses to Requests for Information must be emailed to all members of the City Council, not just the Councilor who submitted the request.

New Rule 7.11: The Council approved a new rule, 7.11, stating that referrals to Committee will be posted to the City Council web page within 14 days.

Rule 11.1: The Committee agreed to remove the word “and” before “public works.”

The meeting was continued to February 9 and adjourned at 5:54 PM.

February 9, 2026

The Committee continued this meeting on February 9, 2026 in the 3rd Floor Conference Room at 7:00 PM. Present were Committee Members Nicole Gardner, Chair, Lisa Feltner, Vice Chair, and John Gannon, Secretary. Also present were Councilors Bays and Piccirilli and Council Analyst Doug Newton.

Rule 5.2. Councilor Bays proposed adding the following sentence to the end of Rule 5.2: “Discussion shall be limited to the subject of the agenda item currently before the Council.” She explained that although the Open Meeting Law already prohibits discussion of items not on the posted agenda, adding this language would help keep Council discussions focused. After discussion, Councilor Feltner made a motion, seconded by Councilor Gannon, to add the proposed sentence. Councilor Feltner then made a second motion, seconded by Councilor Gannon, to insert the phrase “in compliance with the Open Meeting Law” before the new sentence. Both motions passed unanimously.

Rule 8.8: The Committee discussed whether to clarify if and how requests for information may be made outside of a formal Council meeting, particularly by email. Councilor Feltner expressed concern that waiting until the next Council meeting could create unreasonable delays. No change was made at this time. The Committee agreed to continue the discussion with the Council President.

Rule 10.1: The Committee reviewed the process that occurs after an ordinance is recommended by Committee for consideration by the full Council. It was agreed that the existing language incorrectly described the sequence of events.

The Committee approved the following language to replace Rule 10.1: “Upon introduction, every proposed ordinance shall be referred for hearing and consideration to the Committee on Rules and Ordinances singly, or jointly with another appropriate committee, or singly to another appropriate Committee. Referrals shall be made by the Council President, unless a motion is made and a vote of the Council determines otherwise.”

Rule 10.3: The Committee discussed clarifying the process for sending ordinances from Committee to the full Council for consideration. The Committee agreed on the following language: “When a proposed ordinance is reported out of Committee for a recommended first reading, it will be published in a future agenda as a first reading. At a subsequent meeting, it will be subject to debate and vote by the City Council.” Councilor Gannon made a motion, seconded by Councilor Feltner, to approve this language. The motion passed unanimously.

Rule 11.1: Councilor Gardner suggested that appointments to the Board of Health and Biosafety Committee should be referred to the Committee on Public Safety rather than Public Health. The Committee discussed how the responsibilities of the Board of Health and Biosafety Committee relate to both Committees. No change was made.

Rule 11.7: Councilor Gannon proposed adding the following language: “Chairs of committees shall endeavor, unless an urgent circumstance exists, to schedule committee meetings to provide residents with seven or more days’ posting notice.” After discussion, the Committee decided not to include this language.

Councilor Gardner also proposed changing the word “citizens” to “residents” in Rule 11.7. Councilor Gannon made the motion, seconded by Councilor Feltner. The motion passed unanimously.

Rule 15.3: Councilor Gardner proposed making the second public forum language consistent with the first, as follows: “At the second Public Forum, a member of the public shall state their name and address before making any remarks or asking any question, shall limit their remarks or questions to matters of City business or to items that are on the posted agenda for the meeting but are not scheduled for a public hearing, and shall speak for no more than two minutes.” Councilor Piccirilli explained that this is by design, to allow residents disappointed in the outcome of a vote after a public hearing to express their thoughts at the second public forum.

Board and Commission Appointments: The Committee then discussed how appointments to the City’s boards and commissions will be referred to Council Committees for review. Councilor Feltner made a motion, seconded by Councilor Gannon, to adopt the language shown in blue in Attachment 2. The motion passed unanimously.

Final Actions

→ **Action Item:** Councilor Feltner made a motion, seconded by Councilor Gannon, to recommend the Council Rules, as amended by the Committee, to the full Council. The motion passed unanimously.

→ **Action Item:** Councilor Feltner then made a motion, seconded by Councilor Gannon, to seek a referral to continue examining Board and Commission appointments after adoption of the administrative code. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 9:14 PM.

Minutes prepared by Doug Newton and Nicole Gardner.

CITY OF WATERTOWN, MASSACHUSETTS RULES OF THE CITY COUNCIL

Approved by the City Council on April 23, 2024

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Rule 1. ORGANIZATION

- 1.1** The City Council shall meet for the purpose of organization on the first secular day of January following the municipal election and the members shall severally, before the City Clerk, take their respective oaths of office to perform faithfully the duties of such office, provided that any member-elect who shall not be present at such organizational meeting shall take said oath at the first regular or special meeting of the City Council which such Councilor-elect shall attend.
- 1.2** The City Council shall, by majority vote of all members elected, elect a Vice President and such other officers as it shall from time-to-time deem appropriate.
- 1.3** Seating of the Council at the organizational meeting or at its first regular meeting thereafter, the order of seating of the members shall be determined by drawing of lots, provided however that the

President of the Council shall occupy the center seat and the Vice President of the Council shall occupy the seat to the immediate right of the President. Members shall draw for such purpose in order of seniority of service, provided however, that in the event that two or more members shall have similar seniority in service, then the member who shall be senior in both service and age shall have precedence.

- 1.4 As soon as practical after the start of each new term, the Rules and Ordinances Committee shall review the Council Rules per referral of the City Council and strive to make recommendation/s to the full Council by March 15.
- 1.5 Each new City Council that is seated following the November municipal election shall, as soon as practical, place on the agenda of a Council meeting a referral to the Personnel and City Organization Committee to review Council compensation and make a recommendation to the full Council pursuant to Section 2-3(a) of the Charter.

Rule 2. MEETINGS OF THE COUNCIL

- 2.1 Regular meetings of the City Council shall be held in the Richard E. Mastrangelo Chamber of the Watertown Administration Building or, if agreed upon by a majority of the members, any other suitable location within the City of Watertown, at 7:00 p.m. of the second and fourth Tuesday of each month, provided however, that the members may, by two-thirds vote, agree to hold any regular meeting on such other date as may be convenient.
- 2.2 The City Council shall be required to meet only once during the months of July, August and December, said meeting to be held on the second Tuesday of said months, and may meet a second time upon prior approval by vote of the members.
- 2.3 In the event any holiday or primary or general election shall fall on the regular meeting date, the City Council shall meet on the business day next following.
- 2.4 No board, commission or committee of the City shall meet concurrently with the time of any regular or special meeting of the City Council, provided however that this rule may be waived by the Council President, and provided further that a copy of any waiver granted under this rule shall be filed with the City Clerk.
- 2.5 No agenda item at a regular meeting of the City Council, except Executive Session and Public Forum, may be brought forward for consideration after 10:30 p.m. A regular meeting of the City Council shall adjourn after action is taken on the agenda item being considered at 10:30 p.m. An adjourned meeting of the Council shall not and may not be reconvened.
- 2.6 Special meetings of the City Council shall be held at the call of the Council President, or at the call of any three or more members, with such call to be by written notice to each member or by email; any such notice shall contain a listing of the specific matters to be acted upon. Except in the case of emergency, of which the Council President shall be sole judge of the time set for such meeting, a copy of any such notice shall be delivered not less than forty-eight hours in advance of the time set for such meeting, and a copy of any such notice to the members shall forthwith, be posted upon the City bulletin board and all other sites where meeting notices are regularly posted.

- 2.7** All special meetings of the City Council shall be held in the Richard E. Mastrangelo Chamber unless an emergency, of which the Council President shall be sole judge, shall require such meeting to be held elsewhere, in which case the nature of the emergency and the location of such special meeting shall be clearly stated in the notice required by these rules.
- 2.8** The City Manager or designee shall be expected to attend all regular and special meetings of the City Council, unless otherwise specified by the Council President.
- 2.9** Except as otherwise authorized or provided by General Law, all sessions of the City Council and every committee or subcommittee thereof shall be open to the public and the media.
- 2.10** At the discretion of the Council President, an executive session may be called. Executive sessions shall be convened as allowed under Massachusetts General Law. All matters discussed in an executive session shall remain confidential until a vote is taken by the Council to release the minutes of the meeting or report publicly said discussions.
- 2.11** The presence of five members shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. Except as provided by General Law, the City Charter or these rules, the affirmative approval of not fewer than five members shall be required to adopt any ordinance or appropriation order.
- 2.12** The minutes of regular and special meetings of the City Council shall consist of the proceedings of the Council's order of business, including motions and second, votes, and questions of order along with the decisions thereon; said minutes shall list those members of the Council or of the public speaking on a given issue and shall provide only in summary form the major points raised by speakers. The minutes shall also include:
- a) a copy of all items that were linked to the meeting agenda, including all items that were presented at the meeting;
 - b) a copy of all Committee reports presented during the meeting;
 - c) a copy of any statement presented by a member during a meeting which has been delivered in written form prior to the end of the meeting;
 - d) a copy of the tally sheets for each roll call vote of the Council indicating the vote of each member; and
 - e) a copy of any other written document submitted during the meeting by any person.
- 2.13** No subcommittee or committee of the City Council may schedule or hold any meeting before 5:00 p.m. during the week or at any time on weekend days. The only exception being when the City Council President has deemed the matter being discussed time sensitive and/or determines that the meeting time would not be a detriment to public discourse.

Rule 3. PRESIDING OFFICER

- 3.1** The President of the City Council, if present, shall preside at all meetings. In the absence of the President, the Vice President shall preside. In the absence of both the President and the Vice President, a temporary chair shall preside who shall be the senior member in length of service, provided however, that in the event that two or more members shall have similar seniority in service, then the member who

shall be senior in both service and age shall have precedence and serve during the absence of both the President and the Vice President.

- 3.2** It is the duty of the presiding officer to preserve the decorum and order of a council meeting. They may speak to questions of order in preference to other members. They shall decide all questions of order, subject to an appeal of the City Council, which appeal shall be seconded; and no other business shall be in order until the question on the appeal from the ruling of the chair shall be decided by the members by a call of the roll, and the ruling of the chair shall stand unless a majority of members shall vote to the contrary. The chair shall be permitted to vote on any question of appeal.
- 3.3** The presiding officer shall declare all votes or other action of the members and, if the result shall be in doubt, may call for a roll call vote. Such declarations by the presiding officer shall stand unless reversed by a call of the roll.

Rule 4. VOTING

- 4.1** All final votes of the City Council on matters involving appropriations, expenditures, transfers of monies and/or bonding, shall be taken by a call of the roll and the result of such call of the roll shall be entered into the records. Additionally, the roll shall be called upon any other pending matter at the request of any member. In the calling of the roll, the order in which the names of the members are called shall be rotated following each such call of the roll.
- 4.2** When a question is put by the presiding officer, every member shall be entitled to vote yes, no, or present.
- 4.3** Prior to any vote, the Council Clerk shall record and may be asked to read aloud the exact language of the measure or motion to be voted on.
- 4.4** Members shall not participate in the consideration of, nor vote on, any question, nor serve on any committee in which their private interest shall be immediately considered distinct from that of the City or the public.
- 4.5** Prior to the announcement of the result of a call of the roll by the presiding officer, any member may ask to have their name called again for the purpose of confirming their vote or being recorded differently.
- 4.6** Any use of Charter Privilege shall follow Charter Section 2-8(b) of the Watertown Home Rule Charter.
- 4.7** A member who invoked the Charter Privilege may present a motion to withdraw the Charter Privilege. The motion will be treated according to Rules of the Council. If the members vote in favor of the motion, the presiding officer shall place the original measure before the Council.

Rule 5. DEBATE

- 5.1** Every member, when about to speak, shall respectfully address the presiding officer and await recognition. Once recognized, such members shall avoid personalities and confine themselves to the question under debate.

- 5.2** No member shall speak more than twice to the same question without leave of the presiding officer, nor more than once until all other members desiring to do so shall have spoken. No member shall have or hold the floor for more than ten consecutive minutes of debate, unless such time shall be extended by the affirmative vote of two-thirds of the members. Discussion shall be limited to the subject of the agenda item currently before the Council.
- 5.3** Once stated or read by the presiding officer, a matter shall be deemed to be in the possession of the City Council and shall be disposed of by vote or other appropriate action, provided however, that the mover may withdraw the motion or other matter at any time prior to amendment or other action by the members.

Rule 6. PRECEDENCE OF MOTIONS

- 6.1** During consideration of any matter properly before the members, the presiding officer shall receive no motion except those listed herein, which motions shall have precedence in the order listed: To adjourn
To recess
To lay on the table
To take from the table
To move the previous question
To limit or extend the limits of debate
To postpone to a date and/or time certain
To refer
To amend
To postpone indefinitely
- 6.2** Following a vote of the City Council, it shall be in order for any member who shall have voted with the prevailing side to move reconsideration thereof at the same meeting at which said vote was taken, or to file with the Council Clerk not later than noon on the next business day following such meeting, a written motion for reconsideration. Following receipt of such a written motion for reconsideration, the Council Clerk shall place said motion on the calendar for the next regular or special meeting of the City Council, and cause the same to be included in the call thereof, and the Council Clerk shall also notify each member in writing of the filing of any such written motion for reconsideration. If any matter shall have been decided by a tie vote, the prevailing side shall be considered to be that side in whose favor the question was decided. Not more than one motion for reconsideration shall be entertained for any one vote, and no vote upon any motion to adjourn, to lay upon the table, to take from the table or to move the previous question shall be subject to reconsideration.

Rule 7. CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

- 7.1** The Council Clerk shall attend and keep records for all regular and special meetings of the City Council, shall record the names of members present, and shall have the care and custody of all records, documents, maps, plans, papers and other records and materials pertaining to the business of the City Council, including a compilation of voting records which can also be found in Council Minutes.
- 7.2** Matters to be placed on the agenda for the City Council, including but not limited to reports and communications from the City Manager and other city officials, boards, departments and commissions, and any ordinance, order, resolution, proclamation or other matter of business to be presented to the

members for action at a regular meeting of the City Council shall be submitted to the Council Clerk not later than 5:00 p.m. on the Thursday preceding the regular meeting at which such matter is to be considered by the City Council, or not later than 5:00 p.m. on the Wednesday preceding the regular meeting when it follows a Monday holiday. With concurrence of the Council President, an item may be added to the Council agenda up to noon Friday, or up to noon Thursday preceding a Monday holiday. Items for placement on the agenda of upcoming Council meetings shall, in the absence of the Council Clerk, be submitted to the office of the City Manager. Every effort shall be made to have all matters that are submitted for placement on the agenda accompanied by materials sufficient to inform Council members of the nature and purpose of the agenda item.

- 7.3** If the timing of an event does not allow a proclamation to be submitted in accordance with Rule 7.2, any member shall notify the Council President and the Council Clerk as soon as possible. Any proclamation issued in this manner shall be subject to ratification by the City Council at its next meeting, at which time the proclamation shall be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.
- 7.4** Items submitted by members shall be placed on the agenda if they have a direct bearing on the business of the City Council, unless the Council President removes an item and informs the sponsoring member why such action was taken. In the instance that an item is removed from the agenda by the Council President, said item may be placed on the agenda of the subsequent meeting, at the request of the sponsoring member.
- 7.5** The agenda for each regular meeting of the City Council, together with copies of matters to be considered shall be delivered by the Council Clerk to the members not later than 5:00 p.m. on the Friday preceding such regular meeting.
- 7.6** The Council Clerk is authorized and directed by these rules to order and publish notice of hearings on petitions presented which require such public hearing by the City Council. Such petition/s and supporting materials, including signatures shall be forwarded to Council members prior to the public hearing.
- 7.7** The Council Clerk shall prepare the draft minutes of each regular City Council meeting and shall provide a copy to each member ideally no later than 5:00 p.m. on the Monday following the meeting, or by 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday following a Monday holiday, or by 5:00 p.m. on the third business day following a special meeting. If necessary, exceptions to this timetable may be made by the Council President.
1. The draft minutes shall include a copy of Council Clerk's summary of the meeting, including motions and seconds, votes, and major points raised by Council members and members of the public. The names of the public speakers will be included as possible.
 2. The Council Clerk shall note in the official minutes of all regular and special meetings of the City Council the names of all elected officials and invited guests as possible.
 3. Members shall provide the Council Clerk all agenda submissions in electronic form.
 4. Members may propose corrections of factual errors/or additional comments. Corrections of factual errors shall identify the specific information in the draft minutes that is in error and, if approved

by the Council, shall result in a change in the body of the minutes. Additional comments shall elaborate upon remarks and comments made by the members at the Council meeting and if approved by the Council, shall be appended to the final minutes. Additional comments shall be limited to one page. Corrections or additions shall be delivered to the Council Clerk no later than 5:00 p.m. of the Thursday, or 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday when there is a Monday holiday preceding the next regular Council meeting. In the case of a special meeting, such submission deadline shall be at noon on the fifth business day following the day of delivery of the draft minutes. In voting on the acceptance of the minutes at the following City Council meeting, the City Council shall take a single vote on the draft minutes including corrections and additions, unless any single member requests separate votes.

5. In the event that a member submits a written request for a correction or addition on the publication of the agenda prior to a regular City Council meeting, the minutes shall be automatically laid on the Table at the City Council meeting, and not taken up until the subsequent Council meeting so as to allow members the opportunity to consider fully such corrections or additions prior to the vote for the acceptance of the minutes.
6. If a motion is made to table the draft minutes for the purpose of amending or modifying the minutes, and this motion is approved by the City Council, the councilor who made this motion shall provide to the Council Clerk such amendments/modifications in writing within 5 business days of the action to table the minutes. All amendments/modifications will be provided to the Council Clerk and included in materials forwarded to councilors for the next meeting of the City Council.
7. Other than typing errors, any correction or addition to the draft minutes must be approved by a majority vote of the City Council.
8. Upon acceptance of the draft minutes by a vote of the City Council, the Council Clerk shall revise the draft minutes to incorporate corrections and append additions accepted by the City Council, and shall file the final minutes with the City Clerk within one week of the City Council's vote of acceptance.
9. Typing errors, whether in the draft or final minutes, should be reported to the Council Clerk who will be responsible for correcting the errors. The correction of typing errors in the draft or final minutes will not require a Council vote.

7.8 The Council Clerk shall distribute all Council-related documents electronically. Paper copies of any Council-related document can be provided upon request.

7.9 Pursuant to release of Executive Session minutes, every three months the Council President shall consult with the City Attorney to determine whether the purpose of keeping Executive Session meeting minutes and accompanying material withheld from the public is still met. Once it has been agreed that such records are no longer exempt from the Public Records Law, the City Council shall vote to release such minutes and other materials in the same manner as with meeting minutes of open meetings. The City Council President and the City Attorney shall report to the City Council their findings after each periodic review.

7.10 Requests for Information raised by Council members and accompanying responses and answers will be posted to the Council web page within a 14-day period.

7.11 Referrals to Committee will be posted to the Council web page within a 14-day period.

Rule 8. ORDER OF BUSINESS

8.1 The Order of Business for regular meetings of the City Council, which order shall not be departed from except by the affirmative vote of a majority of the members present, shall be as follows: Call of the Roll

Pledge of Allegiance

Public Forum

Examination of records of previous meetings

President's Report

Presentations of petitions, proclamations, and similar papers and matters

Motions for reconsideration

Unfinished business from prior meetings

Public Hearings

Informational Presentations

Motions, Ordinances, Order, and Resolutions

Reports of Committees

Communications from the City Manager

Consideration of nomination for appointments

Requests for Information/Review of List of Pending Matters

Announcements

Public Forum

Recess or adjournment

8.2 The posted notice of the Agenda for the City Council shall state this order of business.

8.3 All matters and items of business appearing on the agenda of the City Council shall be taken up in the order in which they appear on said agenda, shall be subject to full and open debate, and shall be disposed of by vote or other action of the City Council prior to consideration of any other item of business. The City Council President may alter the order of the Council Agenda.

8.4 To comply with the Open Meeting Law, each Committee report on the agenda shall specify the action items, if any, that the City Council will be asked to vote on during the meeting.

8.5 No matter or item of business shall be referred to committee except for one or more of the following purposes:

- a) for study and report to a subsequent meeting;
- b) for the purpose of drafting an ordinance, order, or resolution;
- c) for the purpose of gathering information from persons with knowledge of or interest in matters of importance to the Council, or
- d) for any other purpose by an affirmative vote of the members.

- 8.6** Action by the City Council regarding appointments by the City Manager or other persons, which appointments shall require confirmation by the City Council, shall be received and automatically referred to the appropriate committee for hearing, review, and recommendation. If within thirty days of the City Council meeting where the appointment was presented, the committee takes no action to schedule a meeting for interviews; or if subsequent meetings are required and the committee takes no action to schedule subsequent meetings, then the Council Clerk shall automatically place a motion for a confirmation vote on the agenda of the next scheduled City Council meeting.
- 8.7** Each committee shall provide a report to the City Council on any meeting it held, ideally within thirty days. The report will subsequently be included on the next regularly scheduled City Council meeting agenda in compliance with all applicable Council rules.
- 8.8** A member who makes a request for information shall, no later than the next business day, provide a written summary of their request to the City Manager and a copy to the Council Clerk for inclusion in the minutes of the meeting when the request was made. A member who considers the response to their request for information to be inadequate or incomplete may repeat or supplement the request at one subsequent meeting. If, after the second request, the member feels that the response is inadequate or incomplete and wishes to request further information on the same or substantially the same matter, they must make a motion seeking a vote of the majority of the Council for their request.
- 8.9** No ordinance, order, resolution, or proclamation shall be received or acted upon unless submitted by a member of the City Council or the City Manager.
- 8.10** A petition or other matter which shall have been rejected by the members shall not be presented to the City Council for consideration in the same form or in a petition or other matter embodying substantially the same subject matter until the expiration of six months following said rejection, unless reintroduced shall have received prior approval in writing by not less than two-thirds of the entire City Council.

Rule 9. ENACTING STYLE

- 9.1** All laws enacted by the City Council shall be entitled ordinances and the enacting style shall be: “Be It Ordained by the Watertown City Council”. All actions by which the City Council expresses its will shall be entitled orders and the enacting style shall be: “Be it Ordered by the Watertown City Council”. In all actions by which the City Council expresses its opinions, principles, or purposes shall be entitled resolutions and the enacting style shall be: “Be it Resolved by the Watertown City Council”. In all actions by which the City Council congratulates or thanks an individual(s) or organization(s), or marks a holiday, occasion, or event shall be entitled proclamations and the enacting style shall be: “Be it Proclaimed by the Watertown City Council”.
- 9.2** All ordinances, orders, resolutions, and proclamations approved by the City Council, and other matters in the discretion of the Council, shall be signed by the Council President and the Council Clerk. Ordinances, orders, and resolutions shall also be signed after each meeting by an additional individual councilor (other than the Council President) on a rotating basis according to seniority. For proclamations, the additional councilor may be the sponsoring councilor. If no documents requiring

signature are approved at a meeting, the councilor with signature responsibility at that meeting continues in that role until such time as a meeting requires their signature. If a councilor misses their turn in the rotation due to absence or other reason, the signature responsibility rotates to the next councilor.

Rule 10. ORDINANCES

- 10.1** Upon introduction, every proposed ordinance shall be referred for hearing and consideration to the Committee on Rules and Ordinances singly, or jointly with another appropriate committee, or singly to another appropriate Committee. Referrals shall be made by the Council President, unless a motion is made and a vote of the Council determines otherwise.
- 10.2** Except in the instance of a special emergency involving the health and safety of the people or their property, no ordinance, loan order, borrowing or bond authorization shall be passed finally on the date of its first introduction. Any such emergency shall first be defined and declared in a preamble to the vote of the City Council, said preamble to be adopted upon a separate call of the roll and receive the affirmative votes of not less than two-thirds of all the members.
- 10.3** When a proposed ordinance is reported out of a committee for a recommended first reading, it will be published in a future agenda as a first reading. At a subsequent meeting, it will be subject to debate and vote by the City Council.
- 10.4** Every ordinance, or order involving a bond issue or other action pledging the credit of the City shall, before final action and passage by the City Council, be referred to the City Attorney or Bond Counsel, who shall forthwith examine same and advise the members regarding legality and notify the City Council of their findings in writing.

Rule 11. COMMITTEES: See chart which aligns referrals to committees for confirmations

- 11.1** As soon as practicable following the organization of the City Council, the President shall appoint chairs, vice-chairs, secretaries, and members of the following standing committees:

Committee of the Whole: To consist of all members of the Council with the President as Chair, to deal with all matters referred to it by the Council.

Committee on Budget and Fiscal Oversight: To consist of three members of the Council, to consider matters pertaining to the City Budget and any other fiscal matters referred to it by the Council.

Committee on Climate and Energy: To consist of three members of the Council, to monitor and consider policy guidance on the implementation of the Watertown Climate and Energy Plan, and matters pertaining to the Environment and Energy Efficiency Committee.

Committee on Economic Development and Planning: To consist of three members of the Council, to consider matters pertaining to planning, development, redevelopment, zoning, land use, transportation networks, marketing, promotion of current and prospective businesses in Watertown, and the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Historic District Commission, Community Preservation Committee, Public Arts and Culture Committee.

Committee on Education and School System Matters: To consist of three members of the Council, to consider matters involving the School Department and education generally, and pertaining to the Watertown Cable Access Corp. Board.

Committee on Human Services: To consist of three members of the Council, to consider matters pertaining to Senior Services and the Council on Aging, Social Service programs, Veterans Services, Public Health, Affordable Housing, and the Board of Health, the Watertown Housing Authority, the Affordable Housing Trust, and the Human Rights Commission.

Committee on Parks and Recreation: To consist of three members of the Council, to consider matters pertaining to Parks, Recreation, the John A. Ryan Skating Arena, and the Conservation Commission.

Committee on Personnel and City Organization: To consist of three members of the Council, to consider matters involving City personnel, including Civil Service and proposals for organization or reorganization of the City's departments and agencies, and the Board of Assessors.

Committee on Public Safety: To consist of three members of the Council, to consider matters pertaining to Emergency Management, Police, and Fire departments of the city, and the Traffic Commission.

Committee on Public Works: To consist of three members of the Council, to consider matters pertaining to the Department of Public Works, the Stormwater Advisory Committee, and the Solid Waste & Recycling Advisory Committee.

Committee on Rules and Ordinances: To consist of three members of the Council, to consider the advisability and merit of proposed new ordinances or amendments to current ordinances, including the form and legality thereof; and all related legal matters, together with the City Attorney; and the Licensing Board.

Committee on State, Federal, and Regional Government: To consist of three members of the Council, to consider matters involving the Election Commission and City Clerk, and to serve as a liaison between the City and Federal Government and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and its authorities, regional bodies, and political subdivisions.

11.2 City Council may from time to time establish other special or standing committees as it shall deem necessary or appropriate, which special or standing committees shall be appointed by the President as soon as practicable following the establishment thereof.

11.3 The terms of membership on committees shall be the same as the terms of the City Council.

11.4 Following the President's appointment of all committee members, the Council shall determine whether matters referred to committee but not acted upon by the prior Council shall be referred to a committee of the current Council. No matters referred to committee by a prior Council which have not been acted upon shall be taken up by a committee of the current Council unless referred by vote of the

current Council. Referrals for matters that have been acted upon by a Council committee shall be considered ongoing.

- 11.5 Every committee to which a matter has been referred shall meet within a reasonable time to consider such matter. If the chair of the committee fails to call a meeting within 30 days of a referral, a majority of the committee may call a meeting. The Council may at any time vote to revoke a referral and take up a matter previously referred to committee or refer the matter to a different committee.
- 11.6 Each committee shall cause records to be kept of its proceedings.
- 11.7 It is the goal of the City Council to actively involve residents in the work of city government through Council committees. All committees are encouraged to work with community and neighborhood groups and committees on issues that relate to these groups' mandates and interests.
- 11.8 If appropriate, City Council members shall make referral(s) to standing Committee(s) after first having communicated the essence of said referral(s) to the appropriate Department Head(s) or equivalent and received a response from said Department Head(s) or equivalent, regarding said referral. Referrals customarily made to Committee on an annual or otherwise regular basis, for example as required by City Charter, or deemed an emergency or time sensitive by the Council President, are exempt from this provision.

Rule 12. COMMUNICATIONS TO THE COUNCIL

- 12.1 The Council Clerk shall provide each member with a copy of all communications addressed to the City Council as a body or to the President or Clerk on matters of interest to the entire City Council, which would not in the course of regular business of the City Council be referred thereto for appropriate action.

Rule 13. ADMISSION WITHIN THE RAIL

- 13.1 No person shall approach the Council table in the Richard E. Mastrangelo Chamber or enter the Council Office, except upon permission of the President or other presiding officer.
- 13.2 No member of the City Council shall take the podium without the permission of the Council President or other presiding officer.

Rule 14. RECORDING OF MEETINGS

- 14.1 Except as otherwise authorized by General Law, any member or member of the public shall be permitted to make an audio or video recording of any regular or special meeting of the City Council, provided however, that such member or member of the public, shall have given notice of their intent to make such a recording to the presiding officer prior to the start of any such meeting to be so recorded and that the presiding officer shall announce at the start of each meeting that it is being recorded.

Rule 15. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- 15.1** All members of the public are invited to speak at the first Public Forum at the beginning of a City Council meeting. A member of the public wishing to speak at the first Public Forum must place their name on a list that the Council Clerk will make available at the meeting location prior to the scheduled start of the meeting. The presiding officer shall recognize speakers at the first Public Forum in the order in which their names appear on the list. All members of the public are also invited to speak at the second Public Forum at the end of a City Council meeting.
- 15.2** At the first Public Forum, a member of the public shall state their name and address before making any remarks or asking any questions, shall limit their remarks or questions to matters of City business or to items that are on the posted agenda for the meeting but are not scheduled for a public hearing, and shall speak for no more than two minutes.
- 15.3** At the second Public Forum, a member of the public shall state their name and address before making any remarks or asking any questions and shall speak for no more than two minutes.
- 15.4** During any public forum, there shall be no direct reply to the speaker or comment from Council members. Should the topic be a policy matter, the City Council President shall provide a response, which shall also be provided to the full City Council and posted on the Council web page. Should the topic be an administrative matter, the City Manager shall provide a response, which shall also be provided to the full City Council and posted on the City website.
- 15.5** All members of the public are also invited to speak at any Public Hearing at the presiding officer's recognition on the topic of the Public Hearing. The presiding officer shall recognize those wishing to speak in the order they raise their hand.
- 15.6** All members of the public recognized by the presiding officer to speak during a Public Hearing on the topic of the Public Hearing shall state their name and address before making any remarks or asking any questions, shall limit their remarks or questions to matter of the Public Hearing, and shall speak for no more than two minutes. They may be recognized by the presiding officer to speak a second time on the topic of the Public Hearing for no more than two minutes but only after all other members of the public wishing to speak have spoken once.
- 15.7** Copies of Rule 15 shall be made available to the public at all meetings of the Council.

Rule 16. PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY

- 16.1** In all matters of parliamentary procedure not provided for in General Law, the City Charter, City bylaws, or ordinances, or these rules, the City Council shall be governed by "Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised".

Rule 17. AMENDMENT OR SUSPENSION OF THE RULES

- 17.1** In so far as these rules are not statutory in source or origin, the same may be amended, suspended or repealed at any meeting by two-thirds vote of all the members. In the event that action taken by the City Council shall be inconsistent with these rules, such action shall be deemed to have been taken in suspension thereof, provided however, that the members concur in such action.

Rule 18. DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROCESS

18.1 This dispute resolution process is intended to provide a framework to resolve disputes pertaining to work-related matters and the professional manner in which Councilors and employees of the City Council interact. Disputes may arise from a variety of issues. This process may be used to resolve disputes arising between Council employees as well as between Council employees and Councilors. This process is not intended for use in resolving disputes between Councilors. This process does not replace any rights that City Councilors or Council employees have under any applicable Federal or State Laws.

It is hoped that most disputes will be resolved fairly and amicably among the parties without having to utilize this formal process. It is further hoped that matters not resolved informally between the parties can be resolved working with the Council President.

The process consists of three steps as follows:

Step 1: Council President

To initiate the Dispute Resolution Process the employee(s) or Councilor(s) shall file a written complaint with the Council President outlining the matter under dispute. After receiving a complaint, the Council President must meet with both parties to the dispute within fifteen days (or by the date of the next regularly scheduled full City Council meeting, whichever is later) to attempt to resolve the matter. After meeting with the parties, the Council President must make a decision on the matter within seven days. If either party disagrees with the Council President's decision, they may appeal the decision in writing within seven days. If the decision is not appealed within seven days, the decision is considered final.

Appeals involving the City Council employees, except the City Manager, must be made in writing to the Chair of the Personnel and City Organization Committee for an appeal hearing at Step 2. Appeals involving the City Manager must be made in writing to the Council President for an appeal hearing at Step 3.

The Dispute Resolution Process begins at Step 1 except in the following instances:

- (a) In the event that the Council President is a part to the dispute, the City Council employee(s), except the City Manager, must file their written complaint with the Chair of Personnel and City Organization Committee and proceed directly to Step 2.
- (b) In the case of a dispute between the Council President and the City Manager, the written complaint must be filed with the Vice President of the City Council for a hearing before the full City Council at Step 3.

Step 2: Personnel and City Organization Committee

Upon receipt of a complaint or appeal, the Chair of Personnel and City Organization Committee must schedule a hearing on the dispute within fifteen days (or by the date of the next regularly scheduled

full City Council meeting, whichever is later). The hearing will be held in Executive Session unless the employee requests an open session in writing. After hearing the dispute, the Committee will meet in Executive Session to make their decision on the matter by simple majority. The Chair of Personnel and City Organization Committee must then issue the Committee's decision within seven days. If either party disagrees with the Personnel and City Organization Committee's decision, they may appeal the ruling in writing within seven days. If the decision is not appealed within seven days, the decision is considered final. Appeals must be filed in writing with the Council President (or Vice President if the Council President is a party to the dispute).

Step 3: Full City Council

Upon receipt of a complaint or appeal, the Council President (or Vice President if the Council President is a party to the dispute) must schedule a hearing on the dispute before the full City Council within fifteen days (or at the next regularly scheduled full City Council meeting, whichever is later). The hearing will be held in Executive Session unless the employee requests an open session in writing. After hearing the dispute, the Council will meet in Executive Session to make a decision on the dispute by simple majority. The Council President (or Vice President if the Council President is a party to the dispute) must then issue the City Council's decision on the matter within seven days. The decision of the full City Council shall be final.

Rule 19. SANCTIONS FOR VIOLATION OF RULES

- 19.1** The Council may, by a majority vote, approve a motion to sanction any member who, after being given a warning by the presiding officer, again violates the Rules of the Council or the City Charter. Sanctions that the Council may impose include a reprimand, censure, and loss of committee chair or membership. All proceedings and actions related to this motion shall be conducted in executive session and shall comply with provisions of the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law, including but not limited to the provision that the subject member shall be given written notice at least forty-eight hours prior to consideration of any such action by the Council. If the Council chooses to consider such action in open session or the subject member exercises their right under the Open Meeting Law to require that the action be considered in open session, the subject member may speak on their own behalf and may have counsel or a representative present to advise them. However, the counsel or representative may not speak in the meeting.

City Council Rules Referrals Chart, 2026 Recommendations

Blue text clarifies current practice. Red caps text is desirable but also TBD with proposed draft Admin Code; more discussion is needed concerning Biosafety Committee

WATERTOWN COUNCIL COMMITTEE	RELATED BOARD/COMMITTEE/COMMISSION	Per City Charter Art 3, Sec 3-2, 3A) Prior to posting and beginning the search for a department head position, the city manager shall meet with the city council to discuss priorities for the department and desirable qualifications and qualities of candidates for the position.
<i>Committee of the Whole:</i> City Manager, City Auditor, Analyst, Clerk of the Council*, City Attorney**	By Affirmative vote of at least five members; *nominated by the President; **appointed by City Manager, approved by City Council	
<i>Budget & Fiscal Oversight:</i> City Budget and any other fiscal matters referred to it by City Council		Assessor; Treasurer-Collector
<i>Climate & Energy:</i> Monitor and consider policy guidance on the implementation of Watertown's Climate & Energy Plan (see "Resilient Watertown")	Environment & Energy Efficiency Committee	Public Buildings Dir.
<i>Economic Development & Planning:</i> Planning, development, redevelopment, zoning, land use, transportation networks, marketing, and promotion of current and prospective businesses in Watertown	Planning Board; Zoning Board of Appeals; Historic District Commission; Community Preservation Committee; Public Arts & Culture Committee; TBD= BICYCLE-PEDESTRIAN COMMITTEE; HISTORICAL COMMISSION; CULTURAL DISTRICT PARTNERSHIP; CULTURAL COUNCIL	Asst. City Manager for Community Development & Planning
<i>Education & School System Matters:</i> involving the School Department and education generally	Watertown Cable Access Corp. Board	
<i>Human Services:</i> Senior Services, Council on Aging, Social Services, Veterans Services, Public Health, Affordable Housing	Board of Health; Housing Authority; Affordable Housing Trust; Human Rights Commission TBD: BIOSAFETY COMMITTEE or to Public Safety?	Public Health Dir; Human Services Dir; Senior Services Dir.
<i>Parks & Recreation:</i> Recreation, Parks, and the John A. Ryan Skating Arena	Conservation Commission	Recreation Dir; Skating Rink/Ryan Arena Manager
<i>Personnel & City Organization:</i> involving City personnel, including Civil Service, and proposals for organization or reorganization of the city's departments and agencies	Board of Assessors TBD the Chair to be appt by Manager-only; TBD: RESIDENTS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE	Human Resources Dir; Chief Tech Officer/Information Technology Dir.
<i>Public Safety:</i> Police, Fire, Emergency Management	Traffic Commission TBD: BIOSAFETY? or to Human Services?	Fire Chief; Police Chief
<i>Public Works:</i> Public Works	Solid Waste & Recycling Advisory Committee; Stormwater Advisory Committee; Memorialization Committee; TBD: COMMISSION ON DISABILITY	Public Works Dir.
<i>Rules & Ordinances:</i> considers the advisability and merit of proposed new ordinances or amendments to current ordinances, including the form and legality thereof, and all related matters, together with the City Attorney	Licensing Board	City Attorney

<i>State, Federal, and Regional Government:</i> involving the Election Commission and City Clerk, and to serve as a liaison between the city and federal government and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and its authorities, regional bodies, and political subdivisions	Election Commissioners	City Clerk
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Definitions

Approved at the April 23, 2024, City Council meeting.

Order – *an enactment that expresses the will of the City Council and is adopted by a vote. The enacting style of an Order shall be: “Be it Ordered by the Watertown City Council”.*

Ordinance – *any City Council enactment that regulates or governs people and provides a penalty for its violation and is adopted by a vote. Ordinances have the effect of law. The enacting style of an Ordinance shall be: “Be It Ordained by the Watertown City Council”.*

Proclamation – *an enactment of the City Council only for the purpose of congratulating or thanking individuals or organizations for their accomplishments or contributions to the community or marking important holidays, occasions, or events and is adopted by a vote. The enacting style shall be: “Be it Proclaimed by the Watertown City Council”.*

Public Forum – *an opportunity for a member of the public to address the City Council for no longer than two minutes and limit his or her remarks or questions to matters of City business or to items that are on the posted agenda for the meeting but are not scheduled for a public hearing. Members of the public must give their name and address before speaking. Public Forum will take place at the beginning and the end of the City Council meeting.*

Public Hearing – *a discussion that takes place before action is taken by the City Council on a particular matter before it and during which members of the public are invited to speak. The members of the public must give their name, address and limit their comments and questions to the matter of the public hearing and speak for only two minutes. Upon the presiding officer’s discretion, a member of the public may speak during the Council’s discussion of the topic. A member of the public may be recognized by the presiding officer to speak for a second time after all other members of the public wishing to speak have spoken once.*

Request for Information – *a formal action by a member of the City Council to the City Manager or Council President for administrative, operational, or financial information related to the City of Watertown.*

Resolution – *an enactment of the City Council that formally expresses its opinions, directives or principles and is adopted by a vote. The enacting style shall be: Be it Resolved by the Watertown City Council. A resolution differs from an ordinance in that a resolution provides direction, while an ordinance permanently amends the code of the city and enforcement of that code.*

Councilor Proposing Change	Section & Existing Language	Proposed Change	Committee Decision
Gardner	2.6 Special meetings of the City Council shall be held at the call of the Council President, or at the call of any three or more members, with such call to be by written notice to each member or by email; any such notice shall contain a listing of the specific matters to be acted upon. Except in the case of emergency, of which the Council President shall be sole judge of the time set for such meeting, a copy of any such notice shall be delivered not less than forty-eight hours in advance of the time set for such meeting, and a copy of any such notice to the members shall forthwith, be posted upon the City bulletin board and all other sites where meeting notices are regularly posted	Special meetings of the City Council shall be held at the call of the Council President, or at the call of any three or more members. Notice to each member shall be provided by email and shall list the specific matters to be acted upon. Except in the case of emergency, of which the Council President or designee shall be sole judge of the time set for such meeting, notice shall be delivered at least forty-eight hours in advance, and be posted upon the City website in the same manner as other meeting notices.	Withdrawn
Gardner	7.9 Pursuant to release of Executive Session minutes, every three months the Council President shall consult with the City Attorney to determine whether the purpose of keeping Executive Session meeting minutes and accompanying material withheld from the public is still met. Once it has been agreed that such records are no longer exempt from the Public Records Law, the City Council shall vote to release such minutes and other materials in the same manner as with meeting minutes of open meetings.	Pursuant to release of Executive Session minutes, every three months the Council President shall consult with the City Attorney to determine whether confidentiality is still warranted. Once records are no longer exempt from the Public Records Law, the Council shall vote to release such minutes and other materials in the same manner as open meetings minutes.	Approved adding "The City Council President and the City Attorney shall report to the City Council their findings after each periodic review" to the end of existing language
Gardner	7.10 Requests for Information and questions raised by Council members and accompanying responses and answers will be posted to the Council web page within a 14-day period.	Remove "and questions"	Approved removing "and questions"; 2/9 insert ", and emailed to all members of the City Council."
Gardner	N/A	7.11 Referrals to Committee will be posted to the Council web page within a 14-day period.	Approve

Gardner	None	11.1 I would like to request the Council President and Analyst research best practices in which committee oversight of Board of Health in other communities – Committee for Board of Health – Public Safety or Human Services.	Not added as a rule but to be discussed further
Gardner	Committee on Public Works: To consist of three members of the Council, to consider matters pertaining to the Department of Public Works, the Stormwater Advisory Committee, and the Solid Waste & Recycling Advisory Committee	To consist of three members of the Council, to consider matters pertaining to the Department of Public Works, [DELETE and] the Stormwater Advisory Committee, and the Solid Waste & Recycling Advisory Committee	Approved deletion of "and"
Gardner	15.3 At the second Public Forum, a member of the public shall state their name and address before making any remarks or asking any question, and shall speak for no more than two minutes.	At the second Public Forum, a member of the public shall state their name and address before making any remarks or asking any question, shall limit their remarks or questions to matters of City business or to items that are on the posted agenda for the meeting but are not scheduled for a public hearing, and shall speak for no more than two minutes.	Withdrawn
Gannon	2.10 At the discretion of the Council President, an executive session may be called. Executive sessions shall be convened as allowed under Massachusetts General Law. All matters discussed in executive session shall remain confidential until a vote is taken by the Council to release to minutes of the meeting or report publicly said discussions.	The Council President and the City Attorney shall meet every four months to review executive session minutes to determine if confidentiality is still needed, with disclosure required once the reason for secrecy no longer applies, unless exemptions like attorney-client privilege apply, pursuant to the state Open Meeting Law and Public Records Law. The City Council President and the City Attorney shall report to the City Council their findings after each periodic review.	Approved addition of "The City Council President and the City Attorney shall report to the City Council their findings after each periodic review" to the end of the existing language for Rule 7.9

Gannon	11.7 It is the goal of the City Council to actively involve citizens in the work of city government through Council committees. All committees are encouraged to work with community and neighborhood groups or committees on issues that relate to these groups' mandates and interests.	Addition: Chairs of committees shall endeavor, unless an urgent circumstance exists, to schedule committee meetings to provide residents with seven or more days' posting notice.	Withdrawn
Bays	5.2 No member shall speak more than twice to the same question without leave of the presiding officer, nor more than once until all other members desiring to do so have spoken. No member shall have or hold the floor for more than ten consecutive minutes of debate, unless such time shall be extended by the affirmative vote of two-thirds of the members	Discussion shall be limited to the subject of the agenda item currently before the Council.	Approved as an addition to the last sentence: "In compliance with the open meeting law, discussion shall be limited to the subject of the agenda item currently before the Council."
Feltner	8.8 A member who makes a request for information shall, no later than the next business day, provide a written summary of their request to the City Manager and a copy to the Council Clerk for inclusion in the minutes of the meeting when the request was made. A member who considers the response to their request for information to be inadequate or incomplete may repeat or supplement the request at one subsequent meeting. If, after the second request, the member feels that the response is inadequate or incomplete and wishes to request further information on the same or substantially the same matter, they must make a motion seeking a vote of the majority of the Council for their request.	Proposal to allow a Councilor to make an RFI in writing prior to a meeting.	Leave as is. An RFI can already be in writing prior to a meeting.

Committee as a whole	10.1 Upon introduction, every proposed ordinance shall receive its first reading and shall then be referred for hearing and consideration to the Committee on Rules and Ordinances singly or jointly with such committee that shall be appropriate with such recommendation by a vote of the full Council.	Upon introduction, every proposed ordinance shall be referred for hearing and consideration to the Committee on Rules and Ordinances singly, or jointly with another appropriate committee, or singly to another appropriate Committee. Referrals shall be made by the Council President, unless a motion is made and a vote of the Council determines otherwise.	Approved
Gardner	10.3 When a proposed ordinance is reported out of a committee, it is subject to debate and amendment by the City Council. The proposed ordinance shall be published in accordance with Section 2-8 (c) of the Watertown City Charter prior to a public hearing.	When a proposed ordinance is reported out of Committee for a recommended first reading, it will be published in a future agenda as a first reading. At a subsequent meeting, it will be subject to debate and vote by the City Council .	Approved
Gardner	11.1: Committees	Add memorialization committee to public works	Yes
Gardner	11.7 It is the goal of the City Council to actively involve citizens in the work of city government through Council committees. All committees are encouraged to work with community and neighborhood groups and committees on issues that relate to these groups' mandates and interests	Change "citizens" to residents.	Yes