



Watertown Town 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

Caroline Bays
Councilor At Large

Anthony J. Donato,
Councilor At Large

John G. Gannon,
Councilor At Large

Anthony Palomba,
Councilor At Large

Angeline B. Kounelis,
District A Councilor

Lisa J. Feltner,
District B Councilor

Kenneth M. Woodland,
District D Councilor

SPECIAL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING MONDAY, JUNE 8, 2020 AT 6:00 P.M. MEETING WILL ONLY HAVE REMOTE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTICIPATION WITH PUBLIC ACCESS MINUTES

In accordance with the provisions of Rule 2.6 of the Rules of the Town Council, and pursuant to the Call of the Council President, the members of the Town Council of the City known as the Town of Watertown are hereby notified of a Special Meeting of the Town Council to be held on Monday June 8, 2020 at 6:00 p.m., in accordance with the Governor's Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G. L. c. 30A, § 20, relating to the 2020 COVID-19 emergency and to avoid group congregation, this meeting had only remote opportunities for participation with public access provided as follows:

ACCESS INFORMATION:

- A. The meeting will be televised through WCATV (Watertown Cable Access Television): <https://wcatv.org/government-channel/>
- B. Public may join the virtual meeting online at: <https://watertown-ma.zoom.us/j/91777824276>
- C. Public may join the virtual meeting audio only by phone: 877 853 5257 (Toll Free) or 888 475 4499 (Toll Free) and enter Webinar ID: 917 7782 4276#

1. ROLL CALL

Council President Sideris called to order a special meeting of the Town Council at 6:00 p.m. in accordance with the Governor's Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G. L. c. 30A, § 20, relating to the 2020 COVID-19 emergency and to avoid group congregation, through remote opportunities for participation with public access. Those present were Councilors Caroline Bays, Anthony J. Donato, John G. Gannon, Lisa J. Feltner, Angeline B. Kounelis, Anthony Palomba, Vice President Vincent J. Piccirilli, Jr., Kenneth M. Woodland, and Council President Mark S. Sideris. Also present was Michael J. Driscoll, Town Manager.

2. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE TOWN MANAGER

Submission of the Fiscal Year 2021 Budget

Mr. Driscoll provided background on the budget presentation. When the preliminary budget was presented, there was an anticipated \$575,000 surplus; however, since the inception of COVID-19, there has been a loss of \$4,004,661 in revenue: \$2,640,612, a 20% reduction of state aid, and a \$1,364,049 loss in local receipts.

Under the recently passed federal CARES Act, Watertown is scheduled to receive \$3,169,982 to pay for COVID-19 related costs. This amount will be distributed in both FY20 and FY21. The CARES Act requires that these funds may only be used for necessary expenditures due to the COVID-19 public health emergency; they may not be used to substitute for lost revenue or to supplant state or municipal spending; and they must be used for expenses incurred after March 1, 2020 up to December 30, 2020. Mr. Driscoll stated that he urged state representatives to request that the Act be amended to allow for COVID-19 revenue shortfalls.

Basic highlights of the FY21 Budget:

- There will be no layoffs in Town and School personnel
- The Elementary Schools project will continue to be funded: \$6,473,376 debt service will be incurred and \$64,000,000 is expected to be bonded in August 2020
- The Retirement System will be fully funded on July 1, 2021 with a payment of \$14,588,179
- The OPEB obligation of \$115,370,918 is expected to be fully funded in FY 2029 with an FY21 payment of \$2,379, 017
- There will be initial funding of IT Assessment Recommendations for IT staffing and website content management
- Staffing of Police is expected to have 52 officers and Fire is expected to have 87 firefighters
- The Town maintains a AAA bonding level from Standard and Poor for long-term bonding and an SP-1+ rating for notes; both ratings are S&P's highest ratings
- The Community Preservation Committee (CPC) is completing a required planning process that should be finished by the fall 2020. Budgeting will be completed with a special revolving fund.
- ICube, which originally included 10 infrastructure projects, was delayed due to the sale of Athena to Alexander Real Estate Equities. The owners are submitting documentation to the State to determine if the site qualifies for ICUBE funding. If so, the owners would need to submit a new Economic Development Proposal for the Town's approval and submission to the Commonwealth.

- State Aid was projected to be level funded at \$13,205,612 but it is anticipated that it will be reduced by 20% for an amount of \$10,565,000, which would be \$2,640,612 less than the FY20 allocation.

The FY 21 Budget financial highlights:

- The submitted budget includes revenues and expenditures of \$152,442,000, an increase of \$2,530,191 or a 1.69% increase
- Real and personal property taxes show a growth of \$3,100,000. Local taxes of \$122,210,655 represent 80.17% of the budget. In FY 20, these taxes represented 77.62% of the budget.
- Local receipts are assumed to decrease by \$1,364,049:
 - * Motor Vehicle Excise – (\$435,000)
 - * Medicaid Reimbursement – (\$320,000)
 - * Ambulance Fees – (\$250,00)
 - * Hotel Excise – (\$ 5,000)
 - * Meals Excise – (\$137,500)
- Other Financing Sources are anticipated to be \$430,324
- The Capital Improvement Program budget represents 7.28% of the budget
 - * The budget for FY2021 – 2025 totals \$524,150,500, an increase of \$21,054,000 from the previous budget
 - * Of this amount, \$353,500,000 is set aside for the three elementary schools and the high school projects
 - * \$9,281,000 will be used for remodeling the Middle and Phillips Schools
 - * The rental of St. Jude in Waltham will serve as swing space for the Cuniff and Lowell Schools and will allow the school projects to be completed 2 years earlier than originally anticipated. By bidding the construction of the two schools together, this allowed for better bids and will provide that the same materials and amenities are available for both schools.
 - * The Cuniff School will be completed by the end of calendar year 2021 and the Hosmer School will be completed the summer of 2022
 - * The Town is currently working with the Massachusetts School Building Authority to build a new Watertown High School; \$200,000,000 has been included in the CIP and a debt exclusion vote will be held in 2021
 - * The budget for streets and sidewalks includes \$1,114,600 in excess of the Chapter 90 grant received from the state
- Water and Sewer Enterprise budgets total \$19,070,250, a decrease of \$270,652 from the current appropriation, and will include \$24,170,000 for Water and Sewer CIP related projects

Administration Highlights include:

- In 2013, the Division of Local Services, recommended naming a Deputy Town Manager and establishing a Finance Department. A top budget FY21 guideline priority was to create the position of Deputy Town Manager; however, due to the constraints that COVID-19 has placed on finances, this position will not be funded in this budget

- General Government:
 - * Expenses will be \$6,716,547, an increase of \$544,390,
 - * 50 full time employees and 7 part time employees within 14 general government departments will be funded
 - * Two IT positions will added
 - * The Town Council Reserve will be \$1,375,000, a decrease of \$1,344,629 from FY 20
- Community Development and Planning
 - * The Department is developing a Climate and Energy Plan and seeking grant funds
 - * It is working to improve transportation through the TMA and a Pilot Shuttle Bus program to reduce single occupancy vehicle use along the Arsenal and Pleasant Street corridors
 - * Two new positions were requested but will not be added due to current economic conditions
- Open Space and Recreation
 - * A Plan has been developed for open space use and a budget will be developed once a final policy direction has been adopted
 - * Items for consideration include the reuse of Town Buildings, record storage management, DPW staging areas, and acquisition of open space
- Information Technology
 - * Based on a recent IT assessment, the budget will address its needs by adding staff (a Chief Information Officer, an IT Infrastructure Leader, and a Website and Social Media Leader) and increasing funding of contracted services and equipment replacement
 - * The budget will be \$1,193,498, an increase of \$395,724.
 - * Future loan orders and transfers of \$575,000 are included for IT improvements
- Department of Public Buildings
 - * The appropriation is \$1,013,656, an increase of \$532,468
 - * \$346,016 of that increase is due to the merger of the Town Hall Maintenance budget into the Department of Public Buildings budget
- State and County Charges
 - * The appropriation is \$2,816,632, an increase of \$99,154
 - * The MBTA assessment is \$2,415,906 or 86% of these charges
- Retirement Benefits
 - * The recommended funding level by PERAC is \$14,588,179, an increase of \$1,407,566
 - * The return on retirement benefits for calendar year 2019 was 18.6%; however, due to current conditions, this item needs to be monitored
- OPEB
 - * The Town began funding OPEB in FY2020 with the objective of fully funding the plan by FY2029
 - * The projected appropriation will be \$2,379,017, a decrease of \$5,637,186

- Insurance and Employee Benefits
 - * The Town's participation in the Group Insurance Commission's Health Plan has allowed the Town to provide quality health care at a reasonable cost
 - * The appropriation of \$16,996,300 for Insurance and Other Benefits is only \$3,642,587 more than the FY2009 appropriation of \$13,353,713, an annual average increase of 2.27% increase over twelve fiscal years
 - * The Health Insurance appropriation is \$14,365,186, an increase of \$858,539
- Police
 - * The appropriation of \$10,308,183, an increase of \$69,482, funds 70 uniformed officers: 52 Patrol Officers; 9 Dispatchers; 4 Civilian Employees; and Crossing Guards
 - * In FY 20 an additional officer was assigned full time to the Southern Middlesex County Drug Task Force
 - * The Department requested two additional officers; however, due to the effects of COVID-19, these were not added in the FY21 budget
 - * The Department is committed to the Community Policing philosophy and will continue to provide training based on President Obama's 6 Pillars of 21st Century Policing
 - Building Trust and Legitimacy
 - Policy and Oversight
 - Technology and Social Media
 - Community Policing and Crime Reduction
 - Training and Education
 - Officer Safety and Wellness
- Fire
 - * The appropriation is \$11,285,841, an increase of \$26,083
 - * This will fund 87 Firefighters and 2 Civilian positions who will provide services from three stations and provide both Basic and Advanced Life Support services
 - * Personnel include: Fire Chief; Assistant Fire Chief; 4 Deputy Chiefs; 7 Captains; 16 Lieutenants and 58 Firefighters
- Department of Public Works
 - * The Department's appropriation is \$5,871,584, an increase of \$102,711; this does not include the costs of waste disposal and snow and ice removal
 - * The Department is involved in the Mount Auburn Street redesign
 - * The Department is also working on the reconstruction of Waverly Avenue from Orchard Street to the Belmont Street Town Line. The design and bidding are expected to be completed in FY21.
 - * The snow and ice removal is funded at \$1,500,000, an \$85,000 increase

- * The contract with Wheelabrator for solid waste disposal was extended for five years until FY 2025; the appropriation is \$3,388,265, an increase of \$201,028
- Department of Health and Human Services (Health, Senior, and Veterans' Services)
 - * The Health Department will be involved with establishing bio-tech regulations; updating noise ordinance regulations; creating strategies to address climate change and its environmental impact; and providing COVID-19 response services.
 - * The Veterans' Agent was able to continue to maintain service levels during the COVID crisis including the processing of claims and to provide a Memorial Day tribute to Veterans with the assistance of CATV
 - * The Senior Center continued to provide assistance during the COVID crisis and kept open the Food Pantry
 - * The FY21 budget level funds these programs
- Recreation and the Ryan Skating Arena
 - * COVID-19 caused the Town to cancel all Recreation programs and close all of its facilities
 - * As a health precaution, Camp Pequotsette will be closed for this year
 - * Recreation will continue to provide activities that are consistent with the State's reopening standards
- Library
 - * Usage of the Library rose: In FY 2019, there were 679,797 materials provided for use; over 36,000 visits per month to the Library; 7,383 people participated in Library programs; over 5,400 times the study rooms were booked; and over 2,000 times the meeting rooms were booked
 - * The budget will allow for the hiring of a Part-Time Local Historian
 - * The appropriation of \$3,233,367, an increase of \$78,145, is in compliance with the Municipal Appropriation Requirement which permits the Town to receive grants and to participate in the Minuteman Library Network
 - * As of July 1, 2020, late fees will be eliminated; however, cards will be blocked for items overdue for an extended period of time and lost items will need to be paid for
 - * During the health crisis, the Library has increased its digital resources and provided virtual programs such as Story Time and adult programs via Zoom
 - * As of May 11, the library has offered curbside pickup
- Education
 - * The Elementary Schools and the High School Projects and the development of comprehensive multi-year budgets are among the top priorities of Education
 - * The appropriation is \$51,937,315, an increase of \$1,495,891
 - * The town will be bonding in the near future for the elementary schools

Expenditure Forecast

- The Departmental expenditures will increase by 2.5%
- Education will increase by 3.5%

Mr. Driscoll concluded his remarks thanking all for their assistance with the budget and for the help of the community during these unusual circumstances.

Council President Sideris thanked Mr. Driscoll and Mr. Tracy for their efforts to prepare the budget. He stated that while the Town would not be able to complete many initiatives this year, he was happy that the Town was able to produce this budget without any employee layoffs.

3. RECESS OR ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Piccirilli moved to adjourn the meeting; Councilor Woodland seconded the motion. The motion was adopted unanimously on a roll call vote. The meeting adjourned at 7:32 p.m.

[ADDENDUM](#)

I hereby certify that at a regular meeting of the Town Council for which a quorum was present, the above minutes were adopted by a vote of _9_ for, _0_ against, _0_ present on June 23, 2020.

Mark S. Sideris, Council President
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**SPECIAL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
TUESDAY, JUNE 8, 2020 AT 6:00 P.M.
MEETING HAD ONLY REMOTE OPPORTUNITIES
FOR PARTICIPATION WITH PUBLIC ACCESS
LIST OF DOCUMENTS**

Town of Watertown Annual Budget 2020-2021 – Submitted by the Town Manager – June 8,
2020 – Item 2