



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

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2020 AT 6:00 P.M. MEETING WILL ONLY HAVE REMOTE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTICIPATION WITH PUBLIC ACCESS MINUTES

The Town Council of the City known as the Town of Watertown held a public meeting on Tuesday, November 10, 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 was televised through WCATV (Watertown Cable Access Television):
<https://cloud.castus.tv/vod/#/watertown/video/5f490e6f9e1d640008a803ae?page=HOME&type=live>
- B. The Public was permitted to join the virtual meeting online: <https://watertown-ma.zoom.us/j/92991331344>
- C. Public was permitted to join the virtual meeting audio only by phone: (877) 853-5257 or (888) 475-4499 (Toll Free) and enter Webinar ID: 929 9133 1344 #
- D. Public was permitted to comment through email: vpiccirilli@watertown-ma.gov

1. ROLL CALL

Council President Sideris called to order a regular 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 were Michael Driscoll, Town Manager, Steve Magoon, Director of Community Development/Assistant Town Manager, Thomas Tracy, Town Auditor and

Assistant Manager for Finance, Mark Reich, Town Attorney, and Marilyn W. Pronovost, Town Council Clerk.

2. EXECUTIVE SESSION – 6:00 P.M.

To Consider the Purchase, Exchange, Lease, or Value of Real Property as an Open Meeting May Have a Detrimental Effect on the Negotiating Position of the Public Body – 165-183 Grove Street

Councilor Piccirilli moved to enter into executive session to consider the purchase, exchange, lease, or value of real property as an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the public body – 165-183 Grove Street; Councilor Woodland seconded the motion. The motion was adopted unanimously on a roll call vote.

3. RETURN TO SESSION – 7:00 P.M.

4. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

5. PUBLIC FORUM

Rick Kalish – 270 Pleasant Street – Thanked the Town Manager and Town Employees for running a smooth election. He spoke about the hiring of a new DPW Superintendent, a department that will play a major role in helping the Town to reach 100% renewable energy in 2035. He urged the hiring of someone who shares the Council's commitment to sustainability; has the willingness to try new approaches; is knowledgeable about environmentally friendly strategies; is willing to improve communication regarding road construction; and be open to input from residents.

Susan Ladue – 5 Stearns Road – Stated that that the Town is unable to require a net zero construction because the State Code does not include it; however, in order to reach the goal, the State needs to include the stretch code into its building code. To wait another legislative cycle is difficult as it reduces the time the community has to reach the goal by 2035. Time is of the essence and the legislation needs to be enacted this year.

Jocelyn Tager – 103 Robbins Road – Asked the Town Council to send a letter to the Legislature requesting the enactment of stretch building codes. Municipalities could enact the stretch building codes that would provide for energy protections. The costs would be the same as those for conventional buildings with the benefit of paying off in the future.

Alan Fox – Raised [concerns regarding the closure of Greenough Boulevard](#). He felt it was not necessary; the purpose of the road closure was social distancing not recreation. There is already an extensive network of paths along the Charles. Greenough Boulevard is a vital connection between Arsenal Street and North Beacon Street; closing it off will force drivers to use other residential

neighborhood roads mainly Louise Street. There will be an issue of who will be responsible for maintaining signage in the area.

Russ Arico – Fayette Street – Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, it is reasonable to provide accommodations for a handicapped person to use the parking lot close to North Beacon Street and allow those with disabilities access to the river.

Amy Plovnick – 29 Ashland Street – Stated that many are working to have Greenough Boulevard closed to traffic during the summer months. The proposed letter is a request for the Town Council to ask DCR to study this issue to close the road to provide residents recreational opportunities in a safe atmosphere.

There being no other speakers, the Public Forum was closed.

6. EXAMINATION OF RECORDS OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

[Minutes of the October 13, 2020 Town Council Meeting](#)

Councilor Piccirilli moved to adopt the minutes of the October 13, 2020 Town Council Meeting as written; Councilor Woodland seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously adopted on a roll call vote.

7. PRESIDENT’S REPORT

Council President Sideris thanked the Town Manager, the Town Clerk, the Town Clerk’s staff, and all who participated to make the election a smooth and efficient process.

A. Letter from the Watertown Environment and Energy Efficiency Committee Regarding the Establishment of Appending a [Net Zero Stretch Energy Code](#) to the State Building Code

Councilor Piccirilli moved to authorize the Council President to send a letter requesting the appendage of a Net Zero Stretch Energy Code to the State Building Code as requested by the Watertown Environment and Energy Efficiency Committee; Councilor Woodland seconded the motion. The motion was adopted unanimously on a roll call vote.

B. Letter from the Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee Requesting the [Closure of a Portion of Greenough Boulevard in Watertown to Vehicular Traffic](#)

Council President Sideris noted that there are some issues relating to nearby developments regarding the closure of Greenough Boulevard. Rather than send the letter, he stated that it was more appropriate to refer the matter to the Committee on Economic Development and Planning to work with Mr. Magoon to provide recommendations. Councilor Piccirilli moved to refer

the request of the closure of Greenough Boulevard in Watertown to vehicular traffic to the Committee on Economic Development and Planning so that the Committee works with Mr. Magoon to provide recommendations regarding the closure; Councilor Feltner seconded the motion.

During the discussion, Town Council President Sideris stated there were concerns related to developments in the area and was concerned that any request be adequately studied before making the recommendation. Councilor Kounelis stated that she would [not support this request to close the Boulevard](#).

The motion was adopted unanimously on a roll call vote.

8. PUBLIC HEARINGS

A. Public Hearing and Vote on a Proposed Order Allocating the Property [Tax Levy Among or Between Property Classes for Fiscal Year 2021](#)

Mr. Driscoll provided background and stated that the Town Council has in the past decided to provide a 175% shift of the Tax Levy to commercial properties to aid residents.

Mr. Smith, Board of Assessors Chair, summarized the current status of Town properties. He stated that Massachusetts allows for the classification of property to personal, commercial, or industrial and permits different tax rates for these uses. The shift is most beneficial for residential property.

	FY 20	FY 21
Average Residential Assessment	\$723,586	\$733,688
Residential Tax Rate	\$12.14	\$12.25
Average Tax Bill	\$8,784	\$8987
Residential Exemption	-\$2,108	-\$2,246
Average Residential Tax with Tax Exempt	\$6,676	\$6,741
Total Value – Residential Property	\$7,209,091,371	\$7,342,750,000
Total Value – Commercial, Industrial, & Personal Property (CIP)	\$1,889,513,137	\$2,055,620,344
Total Value – Real and Personal Prop	\$9,098,604,508	\$9,398,370,344

The average taxes (residential) is increasing by less than 1% due to the increase CIP. In FY 2011, the residential taxation was derived from 80.59% while CIP provided 19.41% of the tax base. In FY 21, however, the residential taxation was derived from 78.13% while CIP will provide 21.87% of the tax base. As CIP properties have increased, the residential responsibility has decreased.

If there were no tax shift, the tax rate would \$13.13 per \$1,000 of property value in order to raise \$123,391,323 in taxes for the Town. New Growth

for this year has diminished some due to closures related to COVID-19; it is anticipated that FY 22 will be better.

The Town has completed a the maximum tax shift since FY 2002 and the 175% tax shift for FY 21 will save residents \$20,249,820. In comparison to surrounding communities, Watertown's residential rate is in the middle range.

The Board of Assessors is recommending a 175% tax shift and a 25% residential exemption.

In the discussion that followed, the following comments were made

- Watertown does make an effort to favor the residential class and to do this, the community needs to have a growing commercial class, which it does. Also Watertown is one of only 19 communities that has a residential exemption that helps the Town have one of the lowest rates, and that this is the culmination of sound fiscal policy
- The 25% residential exemption is welcomed by the community

Council President Sideris opened the Public Hearing; there being no speakers, he closed the public hearing.

The Council discussion continued:

- The Board of Assessors' careful consideration, the use of sound fiscal strategy, and the development of an economic mix allows the community to be in this favorable economic position
- The rate is fair for residential payers
- The new growth relating to the sale of the Tufts building would be captured in FY2022

Councilor Piccirilli moved to maintain the 175% tax shift in allocating the Property tax levy among or between property classes for Fiscal Year 2021; Councilor Woodland seconded the motion. The motion was adopted unanimously on a roll call vote.

Councilor Piccirilli moved to increase the residential property exemption to 25%; Councilor Woodland seconded the motion. The motion was adopted on a roll call vote.

B. Public Hearing and Vote on a Proposed Order [Setting Optional Tax Exemptions for Fiscal Year 2021](#)

Mr. Driscoll provided background and stated that this is the annual consideration regarding the tax exemptions. There are seven exemptions and this request would allow the Town to continue providing an amount that is 100% above the maximum amount statutorily permitted. This amounted

to \$173,163 from the last budget year; the exempted amount was paid for through the Overlay Account.

Council President Sideris opened the Public Hearing; there being no speakers, the Public Hearing was closed.

Councilor Piccirilli moved that the Town maintain the same optional tax exemptions for Fiscal Year 2021, as those provided in Fiscal Year 2020; Councilor Gannon seconded the motion. The motion was adopted unanimously on a roll call vote.

9. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE TOWN MANAGER

A. Section 18: [Repositioning E. Joyce Munger Building Federal Public Housing Units](#)

Mr. Driscoll stated that Michael Lara, Executive Director of the Watertown Housing Authority (WHA), on behalf of WHA, is requesting to convert 50 federal public housing units to 50 Section 8 vouchers. He requested that the item be sent to Committee for further review.

Councilor Piccirilli moved to refer the matter to the State, Federal, and Regional Government Committee; Councilor Gannon seconded the motion. Councilor Bays moved to add the Committee on Human Services to the referral; Councilor Palomba seconded the amended motion.

In the discussion that followed, members stated

- This was a matter where the federal issues needed to be addressed first
- The matter was an administrative policy issue and the request does not relate to creating more housing; it does not reflect a substantive change
- It a way to obtain more funding for the housing units and the decision does not require service input
- This matter is not an affordable housing matter and does nothing to increase or decrease housing
- Is it believed that there would be no impact on the mix of housing
- For purposes of expediency, it might be wiser to limit the matter to one committee

Councilor Bays withdrew her motion and Councilor Palomba withdrew his seconding.

The motion to refer the matter to the State, Federal, and Regional Government Committee was adopted unanimously on a roll call vote.

B. [Relocation of NS AJO Holdings, Inc.’s Medical Marijuana Treatment Center and Adult Use](#)

Mr. Driscoll stated that correspondence regarding the relocation of NS AJO Holdings, Inc. was provided to the Council and that he was requesting policy guidance on the matter. Councilor Piccirilli moved to refer this matter to the Economic Development and Planning Committee for review; Councilor Woodland seconded the motion.

Comments made in the following discussion:

- This is a request regarding the move of location from Elm Street to Arsenal Street of the medical marijuana facility
- Another review process should be completed due to the change in location
- The Council will determine if the location is appropriate; Planning and Zoning will review the building considerations

The motion was adopted unanimously on a roll call vote.

Mr. Driscoll spoke to successful efforts regarding the November 3rd state election; his feelings were shared by the Board of Election Commissioners, who also thanked everyone for their support. During the primary season, over 12,000 ballots were requested with the submitted ballots being permitted to be processed on the election day. During the general election, more than 18,000 ballots were requested with the Town Clerk being permitted to open the ballots prior to the election but only one precinct at a time. The Board of Election Commissioners thanked in particular John Flynn, Town Clerk, Tom Tracy, Town Auditor, and Noelle Gilligan, Principal Account Clerk – Elections. Mr. Driscoll added his congratulations to a job well done.

Mr. Driscoll stated he was informed that [Gerald S. Mee, Superintendent of the Department of Public Works, will be retiring.](#) Mr. Mee has served the Town for 31 years honorably; he was appointed Deputy Superintendent on May 15, 1989 and later as Superintendent on September 23, 1993. He has administered a Department that provides a vast array of community services for parks, forestry, transportation, highway, recycling, water and sewer, stormwater control, cemetery, buildings and property, snow removal, street lighting, and traffic signal maintenance. Mr. Mee championed innovative changes to help residents and provide sound public safety measures for the community. He provided exemplary and professional service on April 18/19, 2013 assisting with the provision of a safe environment for the community in a time of crisis. He has worked hard and tirelessly and has provided the highest levels of services to improve the quality of life of the community. Mr. Driscoll applauded Mr. Mee's diligence and dedication and wished him much happiness in his retirement.

Council President Sideris added his thanks for Mr. Mee's services on behalf of the Town Council.

10. REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION/REVIEW OF LIST OF PENDING MATTERS

Councilor Feltner requested information regarding [Town/Group Subscriptions](#) that could be made available to the Council to help Councilors perform their duties and eliminate the need for individual subscriptions.

11. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councilor Feltner stated that Michael McNamara would be made an Eagle Scout on Saturday, November 14, 2020. She wanted to extend her congratulations. Mr. McNamara was being called up for US Marine Corps boot camp soon.

Councilor Kounelis stated that on Monday, November 23, 2020, there would be a developer's presentation regarding 23 Elm Street. Information was available on the Town's website.

Council President Sideris stated that the Charter Review Committee would be meeting on Tuesday, November 17, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. The new Chief IT Officer for Watertown would be discussing information that will be available online.

12. PUBLIC FORUM

Steve Owens – Stated that the MBTA has a Forging Ahead Program that will announce changes to services, including some cuts to Watertown. He urged members of the Council and community to participate at the November 11, 2020 meeting at 6:00 p.m.

Doug Orifice – Watertown Business Coalition – He stated that many restaurants with liquor licenses are requesting the liquor license be waived for this year. The renewal of License fees consists of \$147,000 for the budget and the waiver would be essential for many to stay open. Other communities are offering 50% relief and Melrose, Malden, Springfield, and Quincy are waiving them entirely. NOTE: Council President Sideris stated that the item would be taken up by the Licensing Board on November 19, 2020 and encouraged those interested to take part in the meeting.

Mark Deschenes – Arsenal Yards – Spoke regarding a penalty assessed due to a late payment which the Yards feel was due to an error at the Town Hall.

NOTE: Mr. Driscoll stated that the Town Hall never received the payment delivered by Fedex within the time due and that by state law, the Town is required to collect all revenue in accordance with that law.

13. RECESS OR ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Piccirilli moved to adjourn; Councilor Woodland seconded the motion. The motion was adopted unanimously on a roll call vote. The meeting adjourned at 7:48 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 December 8, 2020

Mark S. Sideris, Council President
s:/MWP

**TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2020 AT 7:00 P.M.
MEETING HAD ONLY REMOTE OPPORTUNITIES
FOR PARTICIPATION WITH PUBLIC ACCESS
LIST OF DOCUMENTS**

1. Statement Regarding the Resolution to Close Greenough Boulevard – Alan Foxx – November 10, 2020 – Item 5
2. Minutes of the October 13, 2020 Town Council Meeting – Item 6
3. Letter Regarding the Need for a Net Zero Stretch Energy Code to Be Appended to the State Building Code – Watertown Environment and Energy Efficiency Committee – October 19, 2020 – Item 7A
4. Letter Requesting the Closure of Greenough Boulevard – Andy Campagna, Chair, Watertown Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee – October 19, 2020 – Item 7B
5. Fiscal Year 2021 Tax Classification Hearing – November 10, 2020 – Item 8A
6. Fiscal Note – Exemptions – Michael Driscoll, Town Manager, to Town Council – October 22, 2020 – Item 8B
7. Section 18: Repositioning E. Joyce Munger Building Federal Public Housing Units – Michael Driscoll, Town Manager, to Town Council – November 5, 2020 – Item 9A
8. Relocation of NS AJO Holdings, Inc.’s Medical marijuana Treatment Center and Adult Use Marijuana Retailer – Michael Driscoll, Town Manager, to Town Council – Item 9
9. Remarks Regarding the Retirement of Superintendent of Public Works Gerald S. Mee Jr. – Michael Driscoll, Town Manager, to Town Council – November 10, 2020 – Item 9
10. Request for Information Regarding Group Subscriptions to Related Papers, Journals, and Materials for Councilors – Councilor Lisa Feltner – Item 10