



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, DECEMBER 8, 2020 AT 6:15 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, December 8, 2020 at 6:15 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 able to join the virtual meeting online: <https://watertown-ma.zoom.us/j/92991331344>
- C. Public was able 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 able 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 6:15 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, Lisa J. Feltner, Angeline B. Kounelis, Anthony Palomba, Vice President Vincent J. Piccirilli, Jr., Kenneth M. Woodland, and Council President Mark S. Sideris. Councilor Gannon arrived at 6:21 p.m. 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, Joseph Fair, Town Attorney, and Marilyn W. Pronovost, Town Council Clerk.

2. EXECUTIVE SESSION – 6:15 P.M.

To Conduct Strategy Sessions in Preparation for Negotiations with Non-Union Personnel or to Conduct Collective Bargaining Sessions or Contract Negotiations with Non-Union Personnel – Town Manager, Michael J. Driscoll

Councilor Piccirilli moved to enter into executive session; 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

Rebecca Kerr – 222 Main Street – Stated she was speaking on behalf of residents who use How Dog Park and who would like to see some improvements there, such as expansion of the dog walking area, better lighting, especially in the winter, water resources, and improved maintenance of the park. She would be submitting a petition for needed improvements.

6. EXAMINATION OF RECORDS OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

[Minutes of the November 10, 2020 Town Council Meeting](#)

Councilor Piccirilli moved to adopt the minutes of November 10, 2020 as revised on December 8, 2020; Councilor Woodland seconded the motion. The motion was adopted on a roll call vote.

7. PRESIDENT’S REPORT

A. Request from the Charter Review Committee for an Extension to Continue the Review until June 30, 2021

The Charter Review Committee requested an extension of the Town Charter review. The review normally should have been completed; however, due to COVID, the work is incomplete. The Committee is requesting an extension until June 30, 2021 to complete its review. Councilor Piccirilli moved to extend the review of the Town Charter until June 30, 2021; Councilor Woodland seconded the motion. The motion was adopted unanimously on a roll call vote.

B. [Statement on Racism in Watertown](#)

Council President Sideris stated that there was an alleged issue of racial based incidents at the Schools. The issue is being addressed by the Schools. It is important though that the Town Council assist in the solution of such concerns. There will be a meeting of the School Committee’s Policy Subcommittee with the desire of establishing a Citizen Advisory Board to consist of many parents of children affected by racist actions.

Town Council President Sideris stated that the matter is disheartening and that the issue is broader than just this one issue. He offered a Proclamation as a public statement of community sentiment regarding the issue.

Councilor Piccirilli moved to approve the Proclamation Opposing Racism and Bullying in Watertown; Councilor Woodland seconded the motion.

In the discussion, Councilors stated their thanks for completing a public statement allowing the Town Council to take a position on the recent matter. While this is a universal problem, the Town needs to do what it can to affect change as all have a responsibility to state what our feelings are about this problem. They recognized that racism is not a problem limited to the schools and that the Town is not immune to the same issues and problems.

They also expressed their concern about hearing the comments made at the Public Forum that made the community aware of the extent of the problem; people were urged to watch the video of the meeting to view the raw emotion expressed by those affected. Although it was upsetting to hear, as a community it is necessary for all to help and work to peacefully live with one another. The Town Council can assist the School Committee and the community to affect positive change.

The motion was adopted unanimously on a roll call vote.

8. MOTIONS, ORDINANCES, ORDER, AND RESOLUTIONS

- A. First Reading on a Proposed Loan Order Authorizing the Town Treasurer, with the Approval of the Town Manager, to Borrow and/or Expend Monies in the Amount of \$1,771,000 under M.G.L. c. 44, §7(1) or Pursuant to Any Other Enabling Authority for the Purpose of Paying Costs of [Town-Wide Radio Infrastructure Improvements](#), Including the Acquisition and Installation of Radio Infrastructure and Related Upgrades at Town Facilities, the Acquisition of Portable Radio Equipment, and All Costs Incidental and Related Thereto and to Issue Bonds or Notes of the Town Therefor. Any Premium Received Upon the Sale of Any Bonds or Notes Approved by this Order, Less Any Such Premium Applied to the Payment of the Costs of Issuance of Such Bonds or Notes, May be Applied to the Payment of Costs Approved by this Order in Accordance with M.G.L. c.44, §20, Thereby Reducing the Amount Authorized to be Borrowed to Pay Such Costs by a Like Amount.

Mr. Driscoll provided background on the matter and said that it would be taken up at the next Town Council meeting on January 12, 2021.

- B. Resolution Authorizing a Transfer of Funds in the Amount of \$103,000 from the Fiscal Year 2021 Debt Retirement – Authorized/Unissued Account to the Fiscal Year 2021 Transfer to Capital Projects – School Account in

order to Move Forward with the [Remodeling of Six Middle School Bathrooms](#)

Mr. Driscoll provided some background information on the remodeling of the bathrooms.

Lori Kabel, Director of Public Buildings, stated that six bathrooms in the Middle School would be fixed – four for students, two of which are gender neutral, and two for staff. This renovation would replace items that are broken, corroding, or in need of change and provide in its place items that are touchless which will address COVID-19 concerns.

Councilor Piccirilli moved to authorize a transfer of funds in the amount of \$103,000 from the Fiscal Year 2021 Debt Retirement – Authorized/Unissued Account to the Fiscal Year 2021 Transfer to Capital Projects – School Account in order to move forward with the remodeling of six middle school bathrooms; Councilor Kounelis seconded the motion. The motion was adopted unanimously on a roll call vote.

- C. An Order [Accepting a Public Use Park and Pathway Located at Pleasant Street and Waltham Street](#) and Authorizing the Town Manager to Execute the Acceptance of said Public Use Park and Pathway

Mr. Driscoll provided background on the public use park.

Mr. Magoon stated the developer had agreed to remove the billboard located on the property corner and replace it with stormwater features and landscaping. Property on 16 Waltham Street was purchased to provide a public use park and pathway. The easement enables this plan to be completed. The park will connect the Greenway along the Charles River and sidewalks on both sides of Pleasant Street. The purchased property was sold to a third party with the carryover of the easement.

Councilor Piccirilli moved to accept a public use park and pathway located at Pleasant Street and Waltham Street and authorize the Town Manager to execute the acceptance of said public use park and pathway; Councilor Woodland seconded the motion.

In the discussion that followed, a concern was raised as to whether the Developer could bind the third party owner to the easement. Based on these concerns and the feeling that they should be clarified, Councilor Piccirilli moved to table the matter to the next meeting; Councilor Woodland seconded the motion. The motion was adopted unanimously on a roll call vote.

9. NEW BUSINESS

Referral to the Committee on Education and School System Matters to Address Recent Incidents of Racism in the Watertown Public Schools

Councilor Palomba requested a [referral to the Committee on Education and School System Matters](#) after recent race based reports were made at the Middle School and how these concerns were being addressed.

Council President Sideris asked to make a friendly amendment to the request and Councilor Palomba agreed. The amended request read as follows:

Recent local ~~news-media outlets~~ highlighted ~~incidents reports~~ of on-line and in-person race-based harassment of a student at the Middle School. In addition, the Watertown School Department recently hosted a community-wide zoom meeting to discuss the issue of racism and racial-based bullying. At one point, nearly 160 individuals participated in the zoom meeting. During this meeting, parents spoke about incidents of racism ~~experienced~~ **reported** by their children and about students not feeling safe at school. In addition, residents and parents wondered aloud what steps the district takes when a student reports that she or he is a victim of a racist slur or act. Attendees also asked how are students held accountable if they are the source of a racist act racial-based harassment.

Watertown parents who have children in Watertown schools have approached me to ask what the Town Council is doing about issues of racism in Watertown Public Schools.

Therefore, I would like to make a referral to the Committee on Education and School **System** Matters to discuss what the protocol is when a student reports racial-based harassment, ~~and~~ how a student is held accountable if she or he is responsible for the harassment, ~~—As well as well as~~ what steps the Watertown School District is taking to address racism, and how can the Town Council assist the District in their efforts.

Councilor Piccirilli seconded the motion as amended. A question regarding the scope of the referral arose and it was determined that the referral should be limited to racial based matters only. The motion was adopted unanimously on a roll call vote.

Councilor Piccirilli stated that he would be requesting a referral to the Committee on Parks and Recreation regarding the issues raised earlier in the meeting about How Park.

10. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE TOWN MANAGER

Mr. Driscoll wanted to remind everyone that Governor Baker was returning Massachusetts to step 1 of phase 3 of the COVID restrictions on Sunday, December 13, 2020 to in response to increased infections of COVID and hospitalizations.

In addition, he mentioned that Town Hall would be closed on December 24, 2020 at noon and December 31, 2020 at noon for the holidays. He wished everyone safe holiday season.

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

There were no requests for information.

12. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councilor Feltner stated she wanted to respond to constituents as to the large number of roll call at Town Council meetings; it was because it is a required state mandate during the COVID-19 remote access meetings.

She also mentioned that there is a developers meeting on December 9, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. regarding Arsenal Street.

Councilor Kounelis stated that on December 21, 2020 at 6:30 p.m., there was a community meeting to discuss proposed plans for the Tufts Building at 705 Mount Auburn Street and 64 Grove Street.

Councilor Bays stated there would be a Personnel and Town Organization meeting on equity and diversity in employment in Watertown.

Council President Sideris wished everyone happy holidays. He also asked citizens to be mindful of COVID restrictions so that we all assist in taking care of all members of the community.

Councilor Feltner thanked all Public Health and Public Safety personnel and officials for their services.

13. PUBLIC FORUM

Libby Shaw – Stated that she was very pleased with the new tree warden. Since September, 92 trees were planted and 270 trees have been requested by citizens.

Mary Russo – 201 Boylston Street – She commended the proclamation but stated the word “allegations” minimized the student’s issues and that it took great courage for the student to make a public statement. She felt that only when the matter was publicized through media that the community addressed the matter.

Jackie Van Leeuwan – Stated that she appreciated Ms. Russo’s statement and that the Town needs to face the problem. The Town Council needs to look at what situations are made known but not dealt with and provide a way to address them.

14. 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 8:19 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 January 12, 2021.

Mark S. Sideris, Council President
s:/MWP

**TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2020 AT 7:00 P.M.
MEETING HAD ONLY REMOTE OPPORTUNITIES
FOR PARTICIPATION WITH PUBLIC ACCESS
LIST OF DOCUMENTS**

1. Minutes of the November 10, 2020 Town Council Meeting – Item 6
2. A Proclamation Opposing Racism and Bullying in Watertown – December 8, 2020 – Item 7B
3. Agenda Item – Proposed Loan Order Regarding Town-Wide Radio Infrastructure Improvements – Michael Driscoll, Town Manager, to Town Council – December 4, 2020 – Item 8A
4. Agenda Item – Transfer of Funds Request Regarding Improvements to Bathrooms in Watertown Middle School – Michael Driscoll, Town Manager, to Town Council – December 3, 2020 – Item 8B
5. Agenda Item – An Order Accepting a Public Use Park and Pathway Located at Pleasant Street and Waltham Street and Authorizing the Town Manager to Execute the Acceptance of Said Public Use Park and Pathway – Michael Driscoll, Town Manager, to Town Council – December 3, 2020 – Item 8C
6. Referral to the Committee on Education and School System Matters Regarding Reports of Racially – Based Matters – Councilor Anthony Palomba – December 8, 2020 – Item 9