



Watertown Town Government

A First Look

Progressive Watertown
May 22, 2022

Overview of the Presentation



Quick Glimpse of Watertown



Watertown's Type of Government



The City Council



The City Manager



The School Committee



Board of Library Trustees



City Boards, Commissions, and Committees

Quick Glimpse of Watertown

- Population - 35,329
- Registered Voters - 24,339
- School Enrollment - 2,678
- Land Mass - 3.99 square miles
- Public Road Miles - 79.2
- Income Per Capita (2020) \$57,822
- Median Household Income (2020) \$100,343
- Residential Tax Rate FY22 - \$13.25
- Commercial Tax Rate FY22 - \$21.28
- Annual Budget in FY23 \$174,789.000 (proposed)

Watertown's Type of Government

Due to the changes to our Home Rule Charter as the result of the Charter Review Process of 2022 Watertown is call the “**City of Watertown**” and no longer “**the City of Watertown Known as the Town of Watertown**”

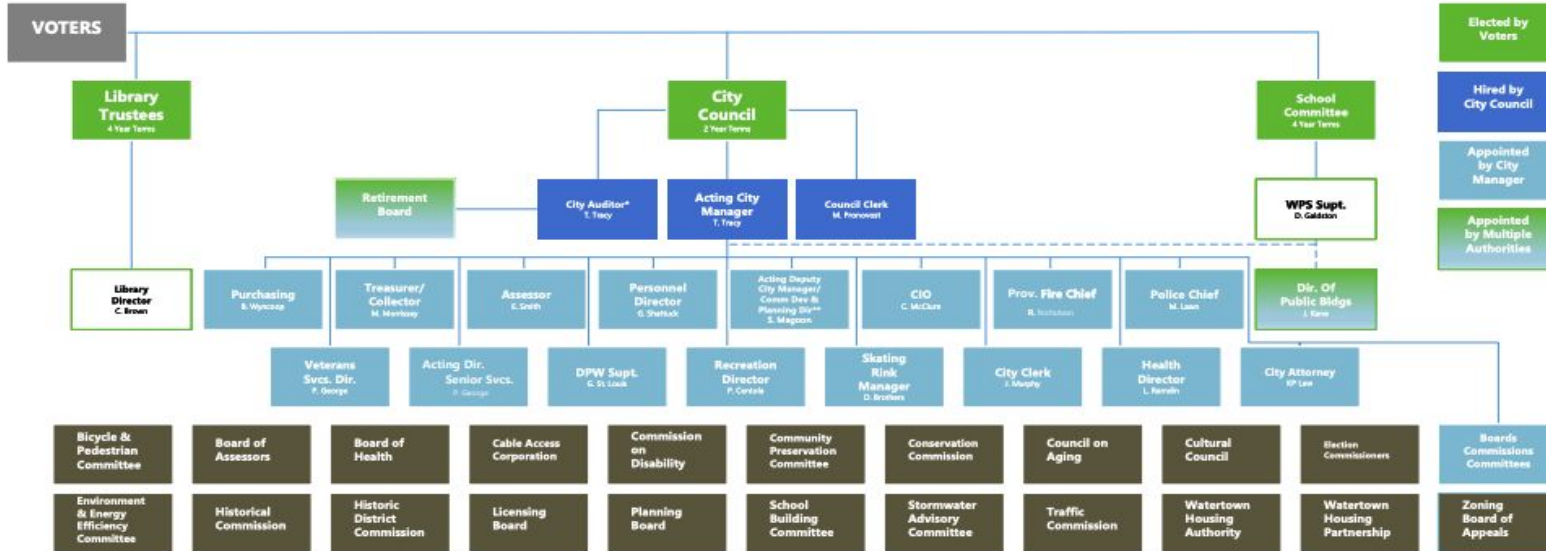
- Watertown has always been a city as defined by state law
- Council-Manager form of government
- Mayor-Council form of government is also a city

Towns have either a **Representative Town Meeting-Board of Select People** or **Open Town Meeting-Board of Select People** form of government.

Organization Chart



Watertown Government at a Glance



- Elected by Voters
- Hired by City Council
- Appointed by City Manager
- Appointed by Multiple Authorities

Click on a box to visit the Department, Board, Commission, or Committee website if available.

To email any elected or administrative official: [[first initial]]@watertown-ma.gov

Visit watertown-ma.gov for more information.

*T. Tracy appointed Assistant Town Manager for Finance in January 2015 to assist with budget preparation & other financial responsibilities.

**S. Magoon appointed Assistant Town Manager in July 2014 to assist with various general management tasks.

City Council - Who are they?

- Four at-large councilors elected by all City voters - **Councilors John Airasian, Caroline Bays, John Gannon, and Tony Palomba.**
- Four district councilors elected by voters living in the district. **Councilors Nicole Gardner (A), Lisa Feltner (B), Vincent Piccirilli (C) and Emily Izzo (D).**
- City council president elected by all City voters. **President Mark Sideris.** He is also a member of the School Committee.
- Councilors terms are 2 years and there are no term limits.

The City Council President is payed \$10,000 annually and receives health benefits.

City Councilors are paid \$7,500 annually and receive health benefits for which they pay 20% and the Town pays 80%.

Town Council - What do they do?

- Legislative branch of government accountable to the voters
- Pass the annual **city budget**
- Pass **ordinances, orders, and resolutions**
- Approve all tax dollars spent by the City and approves all loan orders
- Hire and evaluate the **City Manager, Auditor, Town Council Clerk and now the Municipal Policy Analyst**
- Approve recommendations of the City Manager for all members of the City's various boards, committees and commissions

City Council - What do they do?

- Makes its own rules, except as otherwise provided by General Law or the Charter. The Council Rules are reviewed every two years.
- 12 subcommittees of the City Council
 - Three City Council members on each committee (chair, vice-chair, and secretary)
 - All appointed by the council president
 - Subcommittee meetings are open to the public

Budget and Fiscal Oversight

Climate and Energy*

Economic Development and Planning

Education and School Systems Matters

Human Services

Media and Public Outreach*

Parks and Recreation

Personnel and Town Organization

Public Safety

Public Works

Rules and Ordinances

State, Federal, and Regional Government

City Council - What do they do?

Meets twice a month, on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month. In July, August and December it meets only once on the 2nd Tuesday of the month.

City Council president can call additional meetings at any time during the year.

City Council president chairs the City Council meetings and determines what can be and not be on the City Council agendas.

The City Council president can create ad hoc and temporary committees.

- Ex. the now-dissolved Town Council *Ad Hoc* Committee on Transportation and the Charter Review Committee.

The City Council president also appoints residents to serve on various committees.

City Council - What do they do?

Individual City Councilors are now required to hold one community meeting a year.

The City Council President is now required to deliver a “State of the City”, in conjunction with the City Manager.

The City Council President is also required to hold an “Annual Open Public Meeting” dedicated to discussion with the public.

The powers and duties of the City Council are extensive and are laid out in our Charter in Article 2.

City Manager - George Proakis (proposed)

- Considered the executive branch of City government.
- Appointed by the City Council for an indefinite term of office and does not need to be a resident of Watertown.
- The City Manager appoints, supervises and can remove all department heads, negotiates union contracts, and recommends all members of the City's boards, commissions and committees.
 - He is the chief administrative officer responsible for the "proper administration of all town affairs".
- Responsible for publishing an annual report that provides a review of the operations of city departments, boards, commissions and committees.

City Manager - George Proakis (proposed)

- Responsible for creating that annual City budget, including a Capital Improvement Program, which is presented to the City Council as a preliminary budget and a final budget.
- The City Manager is now required to appoint a “Residents’ Advisory Board” to assist him in selecting candidates to multiple-member bodies.
- The City Manager is to be evaluated by the Town Council each year. The evaluation is available to the public.

The powers and duties of the City Manager are extensive and are laid out in our Charter in Article 3.

School Committee - Who are they?

- Six at-large members elected by **voters from throughout City.**
- The seventh member is the elected president of the City council.
- Term for the six elected School Committee members is 4 years, with three members up for election every two years and there are no term limits.
- The School Committee elects the Committee Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary.
- Meet on the first Monday of each month.

School Committee members:

Kendra Foley (Chair),
Lindsey Mosca (Vice
Chair), Amy Donohue
(Secretary), Jessica
Middlebrook, Lily
Rayman-Read, David
Stokes, and City Council
President Mark Sideris.

School Committee - What do they do?

- Responsible for hiring the Superintendent of the School District as well as approving the Superintendent's hire of the Assistant Superintendent and the Business Office Director
- **Determines policy directives to be administered by the Superintendent**
- Negotiates collective bargaining agreements
- **Makes reasonable rules and regulations for management of the school system**
- Sets the salaries for the Superintendent

School Committee - What do they do?

The School Committee has five standing subcommittees - Athletics, Budget and Finance, Building and Grounds, Curriculum, and Policy. There are three members on each subcommittee and with one member serving as the chair. The Committee can create Ad-Hoc committees for specific purposes.

A detailed explanation of how the School Committee operates can be found in the School Committee Policy manual.

The members of the School Committee received an annual salary of \$4,500, and, as City employees, eligible for health benefits where they pay 20% and the City pays 80%.

Library Trustees - Who are they?

- Six at-large Library Trustees who are **elected by all voters in Watertown**.
- The trustees serve a **four-year term** with three members elected every two years. There are no term limits.
- Trustees are not compensated and are not eligible for benefits.

Members are Leanne Hammonds (Chair), Sheppard Ferguson (Vice Chair), Teddy Kokoros (Treasurer), Sara Keary (Secretary), Rose Mary Su, and Maja Young.

The members elect the chair, vice chair, treasurer, and secretary.

Library Trustees - What do they do?

The **Powers and Duties** of the Library Trustees can be found in 4-2 of our Charter, and include the **selection of the Library Director** and her/his salary within a range set by the City Manager and the **establishment of policies and procedures** to be administered by the Director.

The Director has extensive powers including hiring, firing, setting salaries, defining duties, etc. for all employees.

The rules that guide the Trustees and their meetings are in their By-Laws.

Boards, Commissions, Committees, and Trust

- There are many boards, commissions and committees in Watertown government and now there is one trust. Some have been active for many years, and a few have only been established within the past 12 months.
- **Most** are composed of resident volunteers who receive no compensation for their service and are selected by the City Manager and approved by the City Council.
- Some include a City employee as a member and some have a City employee who staffs the entity as part of their job responsibilities but are not members. There is one where the City Manager is a member of the entity!

Boards, Commissions, Committees, and Trust

- The composition and responsibilities of **most** entities depends on how they were established by the City Council or if they were established by state law and need to abide by state statutes.
- Here are some interesting facts:
 - There are no term limits for members
 - Some have appointees that have 1, 2, or 3 year terms that can be renewed
 - Some have alternate members
 - Most select their own chair
 - Some include members who represent existing committees
 - Some have more employees than residents

Boards, Commissions, Committees, and Trust

- Some are temporary - short and long term
- Some members are appointed Council President
- Some are created by a City department
- Some include members of the City Council
- Some require Republican and Democratic members
- Some require representatives of specific professions
- Some require representative of diverse populations
- Some determine what Watertown's buildings look like
- Some make major decisions that have direct impact on your life
- Some are only advisory

Boards, Commissions, Committees, and Trust

One could organize a meeting to discuss the history, composition, responsibilities, etc. for each entity. Here is only a list with the number of members.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee - 9 members

Board of Assessors - 3 members

Board of Health - 3 members

Cable Access Corporation - 9 members

Charter Review Committee - 15 members (has completed its work)

Commission on Disabilities - 9 members

Boards, Commissions, Committees, and Trust

Community Preservation Committee - 9 members

Comprehensive Plan Planning Advisory Committee - 6 members

Conservation Committee - 6 members

Council on Aging - 9 members

Cultural Council - 16 members

Election Commissioners - 4 members

Environment and Energy Efficiency Committee - 9 members

Boards, Commissions, Committees, and Trust

Historical Commission - 7 members

Historic District Commission - 6 members

Licensing Board - 3 members and 1 alternate

Planning Board - 5 members,

Public Arts and Cultural Committee - 9 members

Resilient Watertown Stakeholder Advisory Group - 39 members

School Building Committee - 14 members

Stormwater Advisory Committee - 7 members

Boards, Commissions, Committees, and Trust

Solid Waste and Recycling Advisory Committee - 6 members

Traffic Commission - 7 members

Watertown Affordable Housing Trust 7 members

Watertown Bio-Safety Committee - 5 members

Watertown Housing Authority - 5 members

Watertown Housing Partnership - 6 members

Zoning Board of Appeal - 5 members, 2 Alternates

Relevant law that may override city/town provisions

A city/town charter is not the only set of rules a town has to follow. Some areas that may conflict with a charter include:

- The Constitution (ex.: the Charter cannot violate the 1st amendment freedom of speech)
- Federal Law (ex.: if there a federal law preventing something then the Charter cannot allow it)
- State Statute (ex.: if there is a Massachusetts General Law on point for an issue then the Charter may be overridden by the state law)
- State Regulations (ex.: if there is a regulation that a state agency set that conflicts with an area that the Charter covers then the regulation overrules the Charter)
- State or Federal Caselaw: If a judge makes a ruling on an issue, then the Charter may not violate that rule
- Collective bargaining agreements: these are separately negotiated and may affect what you can do

Not all state and federal laws override the Charter. It depends on whether there is a “conflict” triggering the “conflict of laws” legal principle.