

TO Town Council
FROM Mark A. Raimo, Town Manager
DATE October 5, 2026
SUBJECT Town Manager Progress Update 2020 to 2026



This memorandum summarizes the Town’s major progress from November 2020 through September 2026, including completed projects, funding secured, operational improvements, and initiatives still in implementation. As the Town’s Administrative Executive, the Town Manager implements the policies and direction set by the Town Council and the Town’s boards and commissions, and provides the information and analysis that support their decisions. Policy decisions rest with those bodies. This progress reflects a team effort among the Town Manager’s office, department heads, Town employees, and the boards and commissions that serve Watertown. Within that effort, the Town Manager has led or directly carried a significant share of the work, from writing early grant applications and creating the Citizens Academy and the Citizens Guide to the Budget, to establishing accountability standards, carrying departmental work during leadership vacancies, and providing the training, oversight, and counsel that have helped change the way Watertown does business. The items that follow reflect the full range of that effort, and the organization today is more stable, accountable, and transparent as a result.

Context: Three Phases of Work

The current administration began in November 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic. The years since have required the Manager’s office and Town staff to carry an unusually heavy project and transition workload alongside the normal daily operation of the Town. That work has moved through three overlapping phases.

Stabilize. The Town Manager led the pandemic response and recovery as the Town worked through the turnover of multiple department heads. During those vacancies, the Manager carried each department’s work forward with its staff, keeping services running until new leadership was in place.

Rebuild. The Town Manager restarted stalled capital projects and aggressively pursued grant funding, writing many of the early applications directly, to address infrastructure that was overdue for investment. As projects matured, their management passed to department heads and their staff, while the Manager led the repair and improvement of processes in finance, payroll, human resources, and records.

Sustain. With leadership positions filled and core processes stabilized, the Manager’s role has returned to a steadier balance of oversight, planning, and long-range management. The organization now operates with clearer standards, stronger financial controls, and more consistent processes, and is positioned to maintain its progress.

Throughout this period, the Town’s mission statement has served as the guiding standard, and each section below is organized around its commitments.

Town Mission Statement

In Watertown, we strive to be Litchfield County’s most citizen/employee centric town. We seek to be a town where citizens, businesses and employees are valued; where all can count on efficient services, fiscal responsibility, engaging schools and a safe community.

At a Glance

\$19M+ grant and external funding secured	\$6.4M ARPA funding managed	~\$10M road paving program, current and next cycle	\$34M water and sewer notes converted to long-term bonds
~100 manufacturing jobs added (Forum Plastics)	13 department leadership positions recruited	AA S&P bond rating maintained	15-day monthly financial close

Looking Ahead. Priorities include completing road, sidewalk, and communications projects; the Water and Sewer rate plan; the building and funding review with the Board of Education; and continued documentation and policy process improvement (see Work Underway).

Capital Investment, Infrastructure and Grants

Mission: A safe community and fiscal responsibility

#	Project	Funding	Status
1	Road paving and bond program A multi-year road program that includes approximately \$6 million in paving during the current construction cycle and approximately \$4 million planned for the next. The \$6 million road bond anticipation note (BAN) was converted to bonds, and an additional \$4 million was authorized for continued road work.	~\$6M current cycle; ~\$4M next cycle	In Progress
2	St. John's School wall Addressed a significant safety concern and improved the surrounding area, supported by an approximately \$800,000 connectivity grant.	~\$800K connectivity grant	Complete
3	Steel Brook Linear Park Park construction supported by approximately \$489,000 in grant funding and a \$250,000 bond grant.	~\$489K grant; \$250K bond grant	In Progress (80%+)
4	Sidewalk accessibility and downtown improvements Approximately \$2.6 million in ADA sidewalk connectivity work and Main Street sidewalk design. The next construction cycle is expected to include approximately \$3 million to \$6 million in additional sidewalk and downtown improvements, subject to final scope, funding, and approvals.	~\$2.6M; \$3M–\$6M next cycle	Upcoming (out for bid FY2026-27)
5	Greenberg property municipal parking New municipal parking at the Greenberg property, supporting Main Street access and economic-development planning.	—	Complete
6	Guernseytown Road and West Road Approximately \$3 million in road improvements.	~\$3M	Complete
7	Wilson Street Bridge Approximately \$1.4 million in bridge improvement and safety work.	~\$1.4M	Complete
8	Heminway Park Road and Highway Garage State STEAP grants of approximately \$300,000 for Heminway Park Road and approximately \$600,000 for Highway Garage improvements.	~\$300K STEAP (road); ~\$600K STEAP (garage)	Road: In Progress Garage: Complete
9	Board of Education capital improvements Town bonding coordination and oversight for major school improvements, carried out with the Board of Education, including the Watertown High School roof, turf and track; Swift Middle School turf and roof maintenance; John Trumbull Primary School roofing, HVAC, flooring, boiler plant, and related work; John Trumbull Preschool roofing and water-pipe heat trace; Judson Elementary School boiler burner replacement; and Watertown High School security-camera upgrades.	Bonding coordination	Complete (HVAC in progress)
10	Parks, greenways and community facilities Watertown Foundation Park, approximately \$300,000 for the Naugatuck River Greenway, and approximately \$500,000 in bond funding for the Munson House.	~\$300K Greenway; ~\$500K bond (Munson House)	Ongoing In Progress
11	Watertown Foundation Centennial Corner Honors the Watertown Foundation and recognizes the Town's volunteer organizations, while transforming a prominent corner into a true entrance from the business park to the downtowns of Oakville and Watertown. The project also improved sightlines for UPS, FedEx, and other business-park traffic.	With the Watertown Foundation	Complete
12	Watertown Housing Authority infrastructure Working with the Watertown Housing Authority, secured an approximately \$2 million Small Cities grant to invest in Housing Authority infrastructure.	~\$2M Small Cities grant	Grant secured

Public Safety and Emergency Communications

Mission: A safe community

- 13. Public safety communications** - Working with the Police Department, advanced a major public-safety communications upgrade that includes approximately \$4 million identified in the original program. The upgrade is funded largely through grants and strengthens emergency communications, reliability, and interoperability. **In Progress (95%)**
- 14. School and emergency preparedness funding** - Secured approximately \$300,000 in STEAP funding for school safety improvements and continued management of the annual Emergency Management Performance Grant of approximately \$12,500. **Substantially Complete (closeout underway)**
- 15. Fire and public safety capital** - Coordinated capital and bonding oversight for public-safety needs, including fire apparatus and related equipment planning.
- 16. Flood mitigation** - Reduced flooding risk by maintaining the Town's detention basins and dredging Steel Brook and Turkey Brook.
- 17. Storm-event cost recovery** - Working with the Highway Department and administrative staff, improved the tracking, recording, and reporting of the Town's response to major storm events, allowing the Town to recover more than \$1 million in reimbursements.
- 18. Connecticut E911 Commission** - Appointed to the Connecticut E911 Commission in May 2026, giving Watertown a direct voice in statewide decisions on emergency-communications policy, funding, standards, and technology.

Financial Stewardship

Mission: Fiscal responsibility

- 19. Grant and external funding** - Wrote many of the Town's early grant applications and, with department staff, secured, administered, or advanced more than \$19 million in grant and external funding across infrastructure, public safety, schools, parks, accessibility, emergency management, and community development.
- 20. ARPA program** - Managed approximately \$6.4 million in ARPA funding with Council and committee oversight. Funding supported priorities that included municipal parking, Main Street sidewalk design, paving, public improvements, and budget relief during the recovery period.
- 21. Budget and capital planning** - Strengthened multi-year capital and operating-budget planning, including analysis of the municipal expenditure-growth target, contractual cost drivers, education impacts, prior-year spending patterns, and a three-year financial outlook and lookback. Coordinated borrowing plans for roads, public facilities, and enterprise obligations.
- 22. Credit rating, audit, and financial reporting** - S&P Global Ratings rates the Town's general obligation bonds AA. The rating was previously lowered, primarily due to health insurance cost overruns under the Town's former self-insured model. The Town has maintained its AA rating since, and the move to the State of Connecticut health plan (see Board of Education Partnership) addressed the underlying cause. Working with the Finance Department, shortened the time needed to complete the annual audit, continued updating financial policies, issued quarterly financial reports to the Town Council, and implemented a monthly close with reconciliations completed within 15 days. Staff are working toward an improved rating in future reviews.
- 23. Monthly budget reporting** - Provides department heads with monthly budget-to-actual reports, strengthening spending oversight and accountability at the department level.
- 24. Treasurer transition and financial controls** - Worked with the Town Council to transition the treasurer function, streamline financial operations, and strengthen transparency, internal controls, and managerial oversight. The financial staff transition is complete, and work on controls, policies, and procedures continues.
- 25. Financial system remediation** - Identified implementation and training issues associated with the Town's financial software, brought in outside accounting support for a comprehensive process review, and advanced a structured plan to improve financial operations and staff capacity.
- 26. Budget transparency** - Created a Citizens Guide to the Budget and used public events to explain Town finances and capital priorities. Implemented ClearGov as a public budget tool; the platform has since been discontinued.

Water and Sewer Authority Administration

Mission: Fiscal responsibility; citizens valued

- 27. **Administrative leadership** - Led the administrative operation of the Water and Sewer Authority, overseeing its finances, reporting, and ratepayer communication in support of the Authority's policy and rate decisions.
- 28. **Waterbury litigation and rate plan** - Managing the outcome of the Waterbury litigation and its long-term financial consequences, including rate analysis and financing strategy, and supporting the Authority's adoption of a multi-year rate plan through FY2031 to meet debt service, operations, and reserve requirements.
- 29. **BAN-to-bond conversion** - Overseeing the conversion of approximately \$34 million in short-term notes to long-term bonds, using a hybrid level-principal structure.
- 30. **Mid-year budget freeze** - Implemented a mid-year budget freeze in FY2025-26 to reduce expenses ahead of the BAN-to-bond conversion and strengthen the Authority's cash position entering the next fiscal year.
- 31. **Financial reporting** - Improved WSA financial reporting and the presentation of Water and Sewer operations as enterprise funds, including operating results, cash, debt, capital needs, assets, and long-term reserve requirements.
- 32. **Ratepayer communication** - Worked with the Authority and WSA staff to develop a technical report, plain-language summaries, a ratepayer FAQ, a quarterly newsletter, and direct ratepayer mailings.

Board of Education Partnership

Mission: Engaging schools

- 33. **Quarterly financial coordination** - Works with the Superintendent of Schools to hold quarterly meetings with the Board of Education to review financial updates, keeping Town and school finances aligned and giving both boards a shared view of costs and obligations. The Finance Director and Assistant Finance Director also meet regularly with the Board of Education Business Manager.
- 34. **Shared budget development** - Worked jointly with the Board of Education on the FY2026-27 budget, coordinating Town and education priorities within a single fiscal picture.
- 35. **Health insurance stabilization** - Worked with the Board of Education in 2025 to move employee health coverage from a self-insured model to the State of Connecticut plan, reducing cost volatility and improving predictability for both budgets.
- 36. **Educational partnerships** - Supported adult manufacturing courses with the Board of Education and is working with the Board to establish a local government class at the high school.
- 37. **Building and funding outlook** - Working with the Board of Education on a review of all Town-owned buildings, including school facilities (see item 58), and on identifying funding sources to support the education budget. (Upcoming)

Organization, Workforce and Labor Relations

Mission: Employees valued

- 38. **Department leadership recruitment** - Led or supported recruitment for the Police Chief, two Deputy Police Chiefs, two Public Works Directors, the Water and Sewer Superintendent, two Human Resources Directors, the Park and Recreation Director, the Finance Director, two Assistant Finance Directors, the Economic Development Director, and other professional, administrative, public-safety, and labor positions.
- 39. **Departmental continuity** - During each department-head vacancy, carried the department's work through direct involvement and coordination with its staff, maintaining continuity of operations until new leadership was in place. Departments returned to department-head leadership as they stabilized; focused support continues in Human Resources, Park and Recreation, Finance, and Water and Sewer administration.
- 40. **Human resources modernization** - With the Human Resources Director, updated job descriptions, policies, onboarding and off-boarding practices, and employee-handbook materials, building a more consistent and service-oriented Human Resources function.
- 41. **Payroll and timekeeping transition** - Advanced the transfer of payroll administration from Finance to Human Resources, including UKG timekeeping responsibilities, department-head onboarding, staff training, interim support, and evaluation of longer-term staffing needs.

- 42. Payroll automation** - Implementing Andrews Technology payroll automation to improve police payroll integration and reduce manual processing.
- 43. Labor relations** - Responsible for two cycles of collective bargaining agreements, regular union-leadership meetings, grievance administration, and issue resolution. Advanced a wage-compression review and three-year wage model for affected non-union employees.
- 44. Management expectations and accountability** - Established clear standards for department heads, strengthened reporting and follow-through, and held regular department-head meetings to improve coordination across Town operations. Provided direct oversight, coaching, and counsel to department heads and staff to improve performance and change how the Town conducts business. Created a training program for department heads and managers that is now being implemented.
- 45. Employee performance evaluations** - Developing a more consistent employee-evaluation program to set clear expectations, document performance, and support employee development. The program will be phased in and tested before full launch, anticipated in 2027-28.
- 46. Staff engagement** - Recognized staff contributions and milestones and maintained a regular presence across Town operations. The progress in this report reflects the commitment of Town employees, and that recognition remains a priority.

Administrative Modernization and Resident Service

Mission: Efficient services

- 47. Website, social media, and notifications** - Updated and refreshed the Town website, established a stronger municipal social-media presence, and improved resident notification systems.
- 48. Qscend customer-service platform** - Deployed Qscend to improve intake, tracking, routing, and follow-up for resident service requests.
- 49. Records and administrative processes** - Developing clearer records-management, email-retention, and filing practices, with written procedures that preserve institutional knowledge.
- 50. Shared policy and procedure portals** - Updating shared employee and management portals so current policies, procedures, and forms are easy to find and applied consistently across departments.
- 51. Information technology modernization and asset planning** - Directed a significant upgrade of the Town's computer systems in 2026 and, with IT staff, inventoried equipment across the organization, work continuing through FY2026-27. The resulting record of asset condition and replacement needs supports better IT budgeting and a long-term replacement plan.
- 52. Software committee** - Established a staff software committee to identify training needs and system issues and develop solutions, supporting consistent, accountable work product across departments.
- 53. Internal Manager Snapshot** - Created the Manager Snapshot series, giving employees and department leaders concise updates on priorities, decisions, and project status.

Economic Development, Governance and Long-Range Planning

Mission: Businesses valued

- 54. Forum Plastics relocation and expansion** - Working with the Economic Development Director, led negotiations that brought Forum Plastics to Watertown after a multi-municipality site search. The company purchased nearly 25 acres off Seemar Road for \$2.1 million and built a state-of-the-art manufacturing facility of approximately 80,000 square feet, with room for a future expansion of similar size. A five-year tax abatement, approved by the Town Council, helped secure the project, which is expected to produce approximately \$300,000 to \$400,000 in annual property taxes after the abatement period. Forum moved into the new facility in December 2025, adding approximately 100 manufacturing jobs to Watertown.
- 55. Proactive developer outreach** - Maintained outreach to developers, property owners, brokers, and business prospects to attract commercial, industrial, and residential investment. This work includes two major parcel-development opportunities, the Main Street facade-improvement program, and a related state-funding application.
- 56. Development and housing activity** - Recent indicators show continued investment and demand in Watertown. The Building Department issued 125 permits representing approximately \$3.8 million in project value in May

2026. In August, the single-family market had 67 homes in inventory, down 16.3 percent from the prior year; homes averaged 19 days on the market and 101 percent of asking price, while year-to-date sales were up 13.3 percent.

- 57. Town facilities planning** - Initiated a review of Town-owned properties for the Council-led committee, and is working with the Superintendent of Schools to review available sites for bus parking, which could be combined with a future Public Works facility.
- 58. Building condition and lifecycle planning** - Developing an inventory of Town-owned buildings that records systems, age, condition, maintenance history, and future capital needs.
- 59. Town Attorney selection process** - Managed a structured RFP and due-diligence process for Town Attorney services, including proposal review, references, litigation research, Council interview questions, and a scoring rubric, with relevant information shared with the Council throughout.
- 60. Regional and professional engagement** - Earned the Connecticut Certified Municipal Official designation; participated in CCM legislative work and the NVCOG regional Plan of Conservation and Development steering committee; and continued ICMA professional development.
- 61. Council and committee support** - Supported the ARPA Committee, Senior Tax Incentive Committee, and Council decision-making through written analysis, presentations, financing information, and follow-up reporting. Provides the Town Council with monthly department updates on work statistics and project progress.

Public Information and Community Engagement

Mission: Citizens valued

- 62. Resident information initiatives** - Created the Citizens Academy and developed the Did You Know series and Watertown Works podcast to explain municipal processes, projects, finances, and services in a factual and understandable way.
- 63. Capital project communication** - Created project presentations and resident updates connecting completed work, current construction, grant funding, and the next capital cycle.
- 64. Direct community outreach** - Represented the Town at public events and civic organizations, including Rotary, Lions, the Watertown Foundation, the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Library, the Senior Center, military ceremonies, Night Out on Main Street, and the Fall Festival. Speaks regularly at the Senior Center and with seniors living in Watertown Housing Authority properties to keep them informed about Town activities.
- 65. Stakeholder engagement** - Convened special meetings and door-to-door notification when neighborhood concerns required focused attention.
- 66. COVID-19 response** - Led and coordinated Town programs during the pandemic and recovery that assisted residents, employees, and municipal operations.

Work Underway Through 2026 and Beyond

Current priorities include completing active road, sidewalk, downtown, and communications programs; implementing the Water and Sewer financing and rate plan; continuing the payroll and Human Resources transition; strengthening financial reporting and multi-year planning; formalizing department-head standards; continuing to improve documentation, written procedures, and policy processes; expanding resident information; and advancing long-term facility and IT asset-replacement plans. The objective is to complete major capital work and return the highway program to a sustainable maintenance cycle.

I want to thank the department heads and Town employees who carried this work alongside their daily responsibilities, often through difficult transitions. Along with our community volunteers, community partners, and residents, we have moved Watertown forward together, and I am proud of what we have accomplished. I appreciate the opportunity to work with the Town Council and will continue to provide regular updates as this work moves forward. It remains an honor to serve the Town.