

Town of Watertown
Town Council
PUBLIC WORKS SUBCOMMITTEE
Regular Meeting Minutes

Date: August 10, 2026

Time: 6:00 p.m.

Location: Watertown Town Hall

Town Council Chambers

61 Echo Lake Road

Watertown, CT 06795

1. Call Meeting to Order

Meeting called to order at 6:00 P.M. by Subcommittee Chairperson, Robert Retallick.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Roll Call

Present: Robert Retallick, Robert Desena, Ken Demirs, Rachael Ryan

Also Present: Jerry Lukowski, Mike Zoller, Joe Millette

Absent: Dan Cocchiola

4. Public Participation

None

5. Minutes

Robert Retallick asked for approval of June 15, 2026, Special Meeting Minutes. Desena makes a motion to approve the minutes. Seconded by Rachael Ryan. All in favor.

6. Correspondence

The Department reported that it continues to receive numerous items of correspondence through email, voicemail and the work order system, which are addressed at the departmental level whenever possible.

The Subcommittee requested that recurring concerns be identified so members can better understand issues generating multiple complaints and determine whether any should receive additional attention or prioritization. Staff advised that the three most common areas of concern currently involve sidewalks, Japanese knotweed and drainage. It was noted that while the Department attempts to remain responsive, certain issues can take six to twelve months to resolve due to available funding and competing priorities.

Public Works agreed to compile additional information regarding the most common recurring concerns and provide a more detailed summary.

7. Old Business

A. Paving Program

Public Works provided an update on approximately \$10 million in ongoing infrastructure work, including \$6 million in paving and \$4 million in other projects. Staff discussed challenges associated with deteriorated drainage infrastructure, limited roadway base material and recent severe weather.

An emergency repair on Hillside Road near the Oakville Post Office was successfully completed, and improvements in the Steele Brook area have helped reduce sediment concerns. The Subcommittee commended staff and contractors for the timely Hillside Road work.

Cold-in-place recycling and micro-paving operations are underway, with work completed or progressing on several roads. Rubber chip seal work is also scheduled, weather permitting.

The initial \$6 million paving allocation has been committed, and the Department is seeking access to the remaining \$4 million previously authorized. If available soon, additional roads may be addressed this season; otherwise, the funds will be used beginning in spring 2027.

Staff estimated that approximately \$30 million in roadway infrastructure needs will remain after the current investment and discussed the likelihood of seeking an additional \$10 million for the 2028 paving season. The Department continues to balance reconstruction of failed roads with preventive maintenance of roads that can be preserved at a substantially lower cost.

Bunker Hill Road was added to the program after field staff determined that immediate treatment was necessary to prevent further deterioration.

B. Steele Brook Greenway #2 – Construction – Rebar/South Abutment/Paving/Bridge

Rebar has arrived on site and construction of the south abutment is underway. Following completion of the abutment, paving will proceed toward the Unico Bridge while work continues on the north abutment.

The pedestrian bridge is currently being fabricated in Alabama and will be transported to Watertown for installation. Project completion is anticipated in late October 2026, at which time the Greenway will extend from French Street to the Unico Bridge.

Public Works also reported that funding for the remaining portion is anticipated to be 100% State reimbursable. The Department expects to return to the Subcommittee for the necessary funding authorization.

C. Main St Watertown – T & B at 90% Design

The estimated cost of the full Main Street project from French Street to Baldwin Street is approximately \$6.2 million, while approximately \$3 million in federal grant funding is currently available.

Public Works recommended preparing a reduced project of approximately \$3.1 million, generally extending from Atwood Street to Echo Lake Road, while continuing to pursue additional State and federal funding for the remaining corridor. The reduced project would include sidewalks, curbing, bump-outs, lighting, trees and other streetscape improvements.

Staff reviewed several potential funding sources but noted that some are highly competitive or would not be available within the necessary project timeline. The Department therefore

recommended moving forward with the portion that can currently be funded rather than risking delays to the existing federal grant.

The project is expected to be bid in the fall, awarded during the winter and begin construction in spring 2027. It was clarified that the federal grant will not be used to pave the State roadway; the improvements will instead be coordinated with future Connecticut DOT paving work.

8. New Business

A. St John Wall & Sidewalk

Relocation of the school's fire suppression lines has been completed. Unexpected ledge encountered during construction required modification of the original plan. Due to the proximity of a 36-inch water main, blasting was not considered appropriate. The contractor instead utilized drilling and chemical expansion methods. To avoid substantial additional costs, the remaining rock will be incorporated into the project and the sidewalk alignment adjusted accordingly.

Foundation work is underway and the project remains on schedule despite the unforeseen conditions. Most of the heavy construction is expected to be completed before the start of the school year, with overall completion anticipated by the end of September.

The project will also include a grass snow shelf along the roadway and accommodate a future bus stop area.

B. Equipment/Vehicle Purchasing Plan 2027

Public Works presented a proposed approximately \$1.1 million vehicle replacement plan intended to address the Department's aging fleet, which currently averages approximately 17 years old.

The proposed funding plan would combine approximately \$321,000 from the existing capital equipment account with available FEMA reimbursement funds. Under the scenario presented, approximately \$800,000 would be available to purchase the first five vehicles outright and provide a down payment toward a sixth vehicle, reducing the amount that would need to be financed.

Staff emphasized that reducing reliance on financing would save the Town substantial interest costs and allow vehicles to be replaced on a more appropriate life cycle. Earlier replacement could also allow the Town to recover some trade-in or resale value.

The Department discussed equipment failures experienced during winter storms, when frontline and backup vehicles were unavailable and smaller vehicles had to be used for snow removal operations. Staff stated that the age and condition of the fleet are beginning to affect operational efficiency.

The Fiscal Office is reviewing the remaining FEMA reimbursement balance. If additional funds are available, the Department may be able to purchase all six proposed vehicles without financing.

C. FEMA/Swift Grant – Knight St: Gowans & Knight

FEMA Swift Grant application for the Gowans & Knight property on Knight Street has been approved. The application was submitted in 2025, with approval received in August 2026. Because of the property's history of repetitive flood losses, the acquisition was approved for 100% FEMA funding, rather than the originally anticipated 75/25 funding arrangement.

Following acquisition, the existing building will be demolished and the property maintained as flood-compatible open space in accordance with FEMA requirements. Staff noted that the business has relocated elsewhere within Watertown.

The Town must respond to 19 follow-up questions from FEMA and is coordinating with Town and State officials to complete the required documentation.

D. NVCOG – TTAC Deputy Chair

Public Works discussed its participation in the Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments Transportation Technical Advisory Committee (TTAC), representing 19 communities.

Serving as Deputy Chair provides Watertown with increased awareness of regional transportation initiatives and potential State and federal funding opportunities. Continued participation was viewed as beneficial to the Town's efforts to secure outside infrastructure funding.

E. Next Public Works Subcommittee Meeting – 14 SEPT 2026

The next Public Works Subcommittee meeting is scheduled for September 14, 2026.

The November meeting may be cancelled or rescheduled due to a scheduling conflict surrounding Veterans Day. The matter will be discussed at the September meeting.

9. Transfers and Appropriations

None

10. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Robert Retallick, seconded, and approved. The meeting adjourned at approximately 6:45 p.m.