

Town of Watertown
Town Council
PUBLIC WORKS SUBCOMMITTEE
Regular Meeting Agenda

Date: March 09, 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 Vice Chairperson, Robert Desena.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Roll Call

Present: Robert Desena, Ken Demirs, Dan Cocchiola

Also Present: Jerry Lukowski, Joe Millette, Bob Grandpre, Carissa Plourde

Absent: Robert Retallick, Rachael Ryan

4. Public Participation

None

5. Minutes

Approval of October 14, 2025 Meeting Minutes

- Discussion noted lack of quorum and new member attendance
- Motion made to table approval, Seconded
- Vote: Approved to table

6. Correspondence

None

Jerry Lukowski states department receives regular public communication, but nothing required escalation to the subcommittee

7. Old Business

A. DPW Update – Positive Work

- Significant accomplishments highlighted:
 - Approximately 54 miles of paving completed over 3 years
 - 100% of town detention basins cleaned
 - Ongoing coordination with Planning & Zoning and Inland/Wetlands
 - Continued work on major drainage areas (e.g., Stop & Shop basin restoration)
 - Completion of highway garage renovations with state funding support
- Emphasis on proactive infrastructure maintenance and stormwater management

B. Paving Program – \$10M Bond & Highway Paving Complete 2025

- Current road surface rating improved to ~67 (up from low 60s)
- Total unfunded road need estimated at \$37.2 million
- Full reconstruction across town estimated near \$150–200 million
- Strategy focuses on:
 - Maintaining good roads to avoid higher long-term costs
 - Addressing worst roads simultaneously
- Noted:
 - Delay in repairs can increase costs 10–15x
 - Annual loss of road value even with investment
- Coordination with utility companies (e.g., gas) to avoid repaving conflicts

C. Steele Brook Greenway – Precon Completed – NTP March 1st

- Preconstruction completed

D. St. John Wall

- This project is an \$800,000 Community Connectivity Grant funded 100% by the Department of Transportation. The town has already approved \$90,000 for the design which is being completed by SLR. Easements—both temporary construction and permanent—have been prepared and signed by the town manager, with assistance from Mr. Jessel, and are currently awaiting final approval from St. John’s Archdiocese in Hartford. Once finalized, the project will move into DOT approvals, permitting, and the bidding phase. The work involves demolishing a historic stone wall near the former rectory site (dating back to before 1912) and constructing a new retaining wall set 10–15 feet farther back. Improvements will include a new sidewalk, a grass strip designed to help manage snow storage, and updated crosswalks and pedestrian signals at the nearby intersection by Woodruff, the post office, and the bank, enhancing safety and accessibility in the area.

8. New Business

The following New Business topics were presented through a slide presentation, refer to YouTube video dated PW Subcommittee 3/9/26 to see in depth details on the following topics.

A. Winter 2026

- Winter operations overview:
 - Use of treated vs untreated salt depending on temperature thresholds
 - Supplemental use of solar salt (higher cost) when needed
- Department expects minimal major storms remaining
- Recognition of staff efforts, including part-time retiree support:
 - Example: Ray Aubin praised for dedication and reliability
- Operational challenges:
 - Aging equipment impacts efficiency
 - Increased workload during storms

B. 2026 Public Works Subcommittee Meeting Dates Reminder

- Next meeting scheduled for April 13, 2026

- Discussion about potentially moving meetings to 5:30 PM for convenience
- Chair to follow up with members regarding availability

C. CIP Book

Discussion Highlights:

- Overview of capital projects, infrastructure planning, and long-term needs
- Identified upcoming retirements of key senior staff, resulting in:
 - Loss of institutional knowledge
 - Need for transition planning and training
- Infrastructure improvements include:
 - Road projects
 - Drainage improvements
 - Safety enhancements (crosswalks, signage)
 - State-supported paving projects (several miles planned)

Motion:

- Motion made to approve the CIP Book for FY 2026–2027
- Second received
- Vote: Approved (all in favor)

D. Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Budget

Key Points:

- Highway department budget includes:
 - ~\$1.3M in employee wages (contractual increases ~5.44%)
 - Adjustments for role-based pay differences
 - Temporary and seasonal staffing considerations
- Equipment & vehicles:
 - Significant cost increases (e.g., plow trucks rising from \$200K → \$350K+)
 - Many vehicles are aging and require replacement
 - Current replacement cycle lags industry standards
- Discussion on:
 - Building a cash reserve for equipment purchases to avoid interest costs
 - Potential bonding vs budget funding strategies
 - Long lead times (2–3 years) for ordering vehicles

9. Transfers and Appropriations

A. None

10. Adjournment

Dan Cocchiola makes a motion to adjourn. All in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 7:44 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Robert Retallick, Chairperson

Jerry Lukowski, Director of Public Works