



Watertown City Council  
Regular Meeting

Mayor Steve Washburn  
Lindsay Guetzkow  
Adam Pawelk  
Michael Walters  
Dan Schuette

9/20/2021 - Minutes

1. Call To Order And Roll Call

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, the special meeting of the Watertown City Council was called to order in the Council Chambers of City Hall at 6:00 p.m. Monday, September 20, 2021, by Mayor Steve Washburn.

Council Members present: Washburn, Mike Walters, Adam Pawelk, Dan Schuette and Lindsay Guetzkow.

City Staff present: Interim City Administrator Jeff O'Neill, Administrative Services Director Lynn Tschudi, City Attorney Jared Shepherd, and Administrative Assistant Nancy Pysick.

Those who signed in were: Megan Glenn, Charlotte Johnson, Todd Geske, Mike Rosenau, Brad Kipp & Donna Kipp, Scott Qualle, Norm Bauer, Kyle Jarvis, and Amy Mandt.

2. Adopt Agenda

**WALTERS MOVED, SCHUETTE SECONDED A MOTION TO ADOPT THE AGENDA AS PRESENTED.  
MOTION CARRIED 5-0.**

3. Open Forum

Kyle Jarvis from 1175 Landings Lane approached council to state that he is very pleased with the current building services model. He commended the building official, Scott Dornfeld, as he is very educating during the building process. He would like to see the current system improved rather than contracting out.

4. New/Old Business

4.A. Building Services Model - Discuss And Possibly Vote On Alternative

City Attorney Jared Shepherd said the special meeting has been called by two council members, Michael Walters and Dan Schuette. Notice was provided in accordance to the open meeting law and follows the code of conduct and council bylaws. Shepherd noted that because this is a special

meeting, the content that will be discussed is very narrow and the meeting must be kept to that content.

Mayor Washburn noted there are two items for discussion: 1) move forward with a new building services model immediately or 2) move forward in a thoughtful and pragmatic approach.

Council Member Schuette noted that the City Administrator at the City of Delano has contacted the City of Watertown and notified them the JPA for building services will soon be dissolved. Schuette said he would like the search process to begin quicker than what has been laid out by the Interim City Administrator. The reason for this is that permits will continue to come in and get assigned to the current building services and continue to lengthen the timeline of separation.

Mayor Washburn asked Schuette his thoughts on hiring a full-time building official. Schuette said he would support hiring a full-time building official and building inspector if it makes sense for Watertown. He said it is important to know the costs, benefits and roles and responsibilities of each option. Washburn asked Administrative Services Director Tschudi the average lead time on a permit. Tschudi said she can not provide that information as each permit is so different and complex.

Council Member Walters said that the building services is a serious issue that needs to be addressed immediately. He said the previous City Administrator recognized this was an issue prior to his departure and instructed staff to seek proposals. Walters showed the audience a list of permits and completion days where most permits were taking over two weeks. He shared permit completion dates from other cities, all of which were under two weeks. Walters read through the list of pros and cons as composed by staff. Walters pointed out the risk of hiring an internal building official if new home construction slows. Walters is prepared to make a motion tonight to move forward with a new model.

Council Member Guetzkow said option B is the approach that makes the most sense in order to find the best solution for Watertown. Guetzkow noted the system has been overwhelmed since the 2019 hailstorm and she applauds staff and Scott Dornfeld for getting those permits out. She gave the history on council's efforts to address code enforcement issues. Guetzkow noted that there may be a difference between the other cities business days and our presentation of calendar days. She also said the time a permit is reviewed varies due to the complexity of each permit. Guetzkow agrees with Schuette's approach and wants to thoughtfully make a decision that is best for the residents as well as staff.

Council Member Pawelk addressed that the previous City Administrator did request staff to go out for bids in May of 2021 noting there was an issue with the current model. Pawelk noted that if a vendor is hired it will still be at least 45 days before they are able to start. Pawelk shared his concern that hiring a full-time building official may not be feasible because the City would definitely need at least a part-time inspector as well.

Mayor Washburn noted that additional time has been added with Delano as well as services have been added with Bolton & Menk for erosion and soil control to address the the shortcomings of the current service. Washburn asked residents to go back and watch the August 10 workshop meeting where council directed staff to consider new building service options. Washburn would like to see what residents have to say on this issue. He said there are two options: hire a contractor or hire a full-time building official.

Washburn invited residents to approach the podium for comment:

Amy Mandt 303 Monarda Way- She asked what the League of MN Cities recommends for a City our size and whether they use a contractor or have their own building official. Amy said she is disgusted at Mike Walters' Facebook posts and how he threw staff under the bus. She said his job is to put ideas out there for problems that need to be solved and not to post on social media.

Charlotte Johnson 127 Lewis Ave N - Asked council to put differences aside and clarify what they would like done and what will accomplish it. She said there are a lot of facts presented in front of them and

that is what the council should be acting on.

Donna Kipp 1053 Trebbiano Ln N– She stated she has a background in appraisals and real estate. She asked if there is a possibility of partnering with the City of Cologne who has their own inspector. She asked if the issue of timing was with the paperwork or the inspector.

Brad Kipp 1053 Trebbiano Ln N – Kipp asked how the City of Watertown calculates the pay for the City of Delano.

Norm Bauer 1260 Bishop Cir – Asked who put the study together. Interim City Administrator O’Neill said he did. Bauer would like to see a full-time inspector hired and they could enforce codes and ordinances.

Scott Qualle Building Official with MnSpect– Qualle informed Council that there will be another fall rush with building that the City will experience. Qualle summarized the concerns he heard from Council and stated that residents should be served well. Qualle said MnSpect does offer office hours for cities, easily accessible software, fast communication. The company average on turnaround time was just over 8 days last year. Qualle stressed that a comprehensive plan review is very important. Qualle said MnSpect would be ready to transition Watertown on October 1.

Todd Geske Building Official with MetroWest –Todd said his company speaks for itself as they do all the nearby cities. They work closely with homeowners and contractors.

Council Member Pawelk asked if a decision is made tonight if there is any flexibility in switching models in the future. Mayor Washburn said there are two options in the packet. Guetzkow is concerned that a decision is being made too quickly. She would like to involve the community and staff to find the best fit. Washburn asked how long it would take to put together a job description for a building official and an RFP/RFQ.

O’Neill suggested a target of the September 28 meeting for a draft of an RFP. He suggested visiting the communities that are served by both MNSpect and MetroWest.

**WALTERS MOVED TO HIRE MNSPECT/SAFEBUILD TO BEGIN WORKING ON ALL NEW PERMITS AS OF OCTOBER 1, ALLOW CITY OF DELANO TO FINAL OUT OPEN PERMITS, AND CONTINUE TO HAVE MEETINGS TO DISCUSS CODE ENFORCEMENT.**

Motion died with no second.

**SCHUETTE MOVED, GUETZKOW SECONDED A MOTION TO instruct staff to start to draft an RFP and RFA for the September 28, 2021 meeting that will help council understand the service workflow, identify software and services required, identify software needs, identify roles and responsibilities from an internal or subcontracted service, and identify who owns the process and how the transition from the interim to our full-time City Administrator is handled for building services moving forward. Motion carried 5-0.**

5. Other Reports

6. Adjournment

**WALTERS MOVED, SCHUETTE SECONDED A MOTION TO ADJOURN AT 8:15 PM. MOTION CARRIED 5-0.**

**309 Lewis Avenue South; P.O. Box 279, Watertown, MN 55388**

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Steve Washburn, Mayor

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_

Lynn Tschudi, Admin. Services Director