



Watertown Town Government

A First Look

Presented by the Education Committee
of Watertown Forward
January 10, 2021

Overview of the Presentation



Quick Glimpse of Watertown



Demographic Comparisons in Watertown



Watertown's Type of Government



The Town Council



The Town Manager



The School Committee



Board of Library Trustees

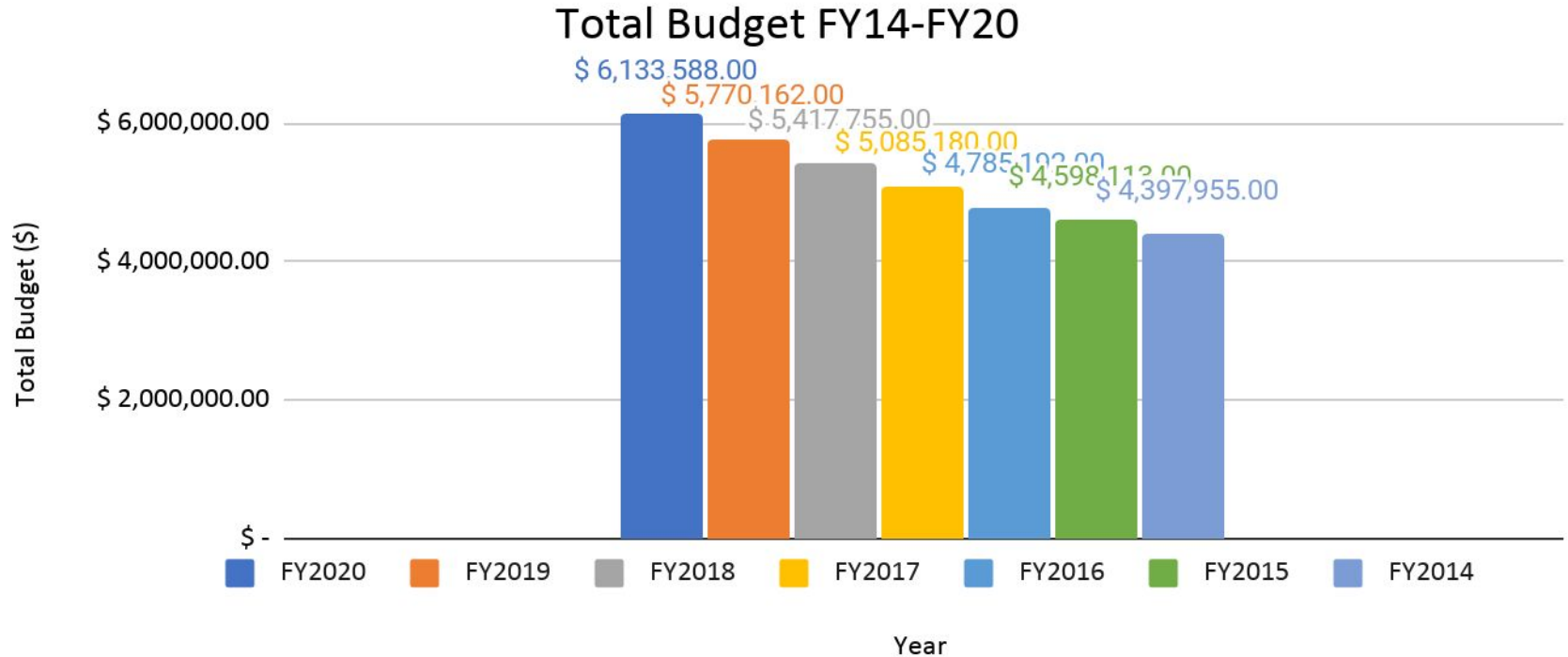


Town Boards, Commissions, and Committees

Quick Glimpse of Watertown

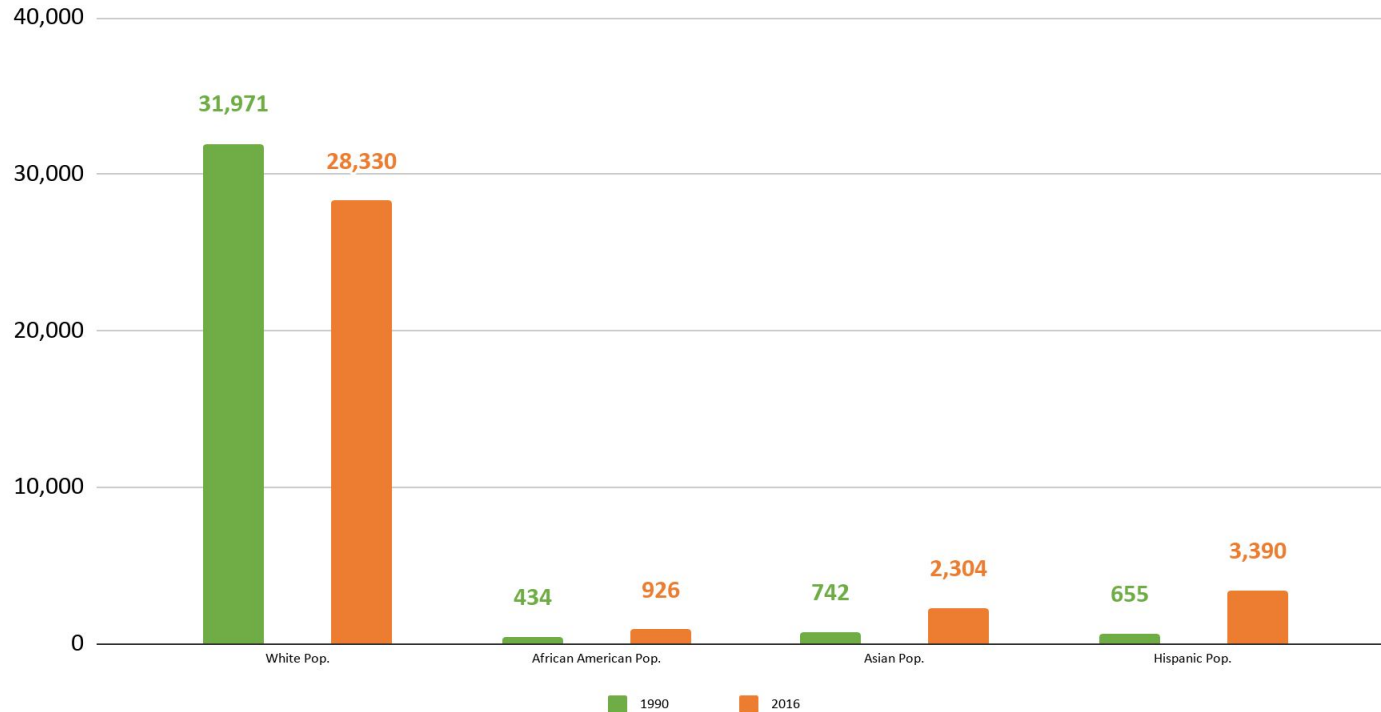
- Population - 35,954
- Registered Voters - 24,339
- School Enrollment - 2,678
- Land Mass - 3.99 square miles
- Public Road Miles - 79.2
- Income Per Capita (2017) \$45,794
- Residential Tax Rate FY20 - \$12.14
- Commercial Tax Rate FY20 - \$22.53
- Annual Budget in FY21 approximately \$152,400,000.
- Budget in 2010 approximately \$91 million. Budget in 2020 approximately \$145 million.

Watertown Budget FY14-FY20



Changes in Demographics

Population Comparison Between 1990 and 2016



Watertown's Type of Government

“the City of Watertown Known as the Town of Watertown”

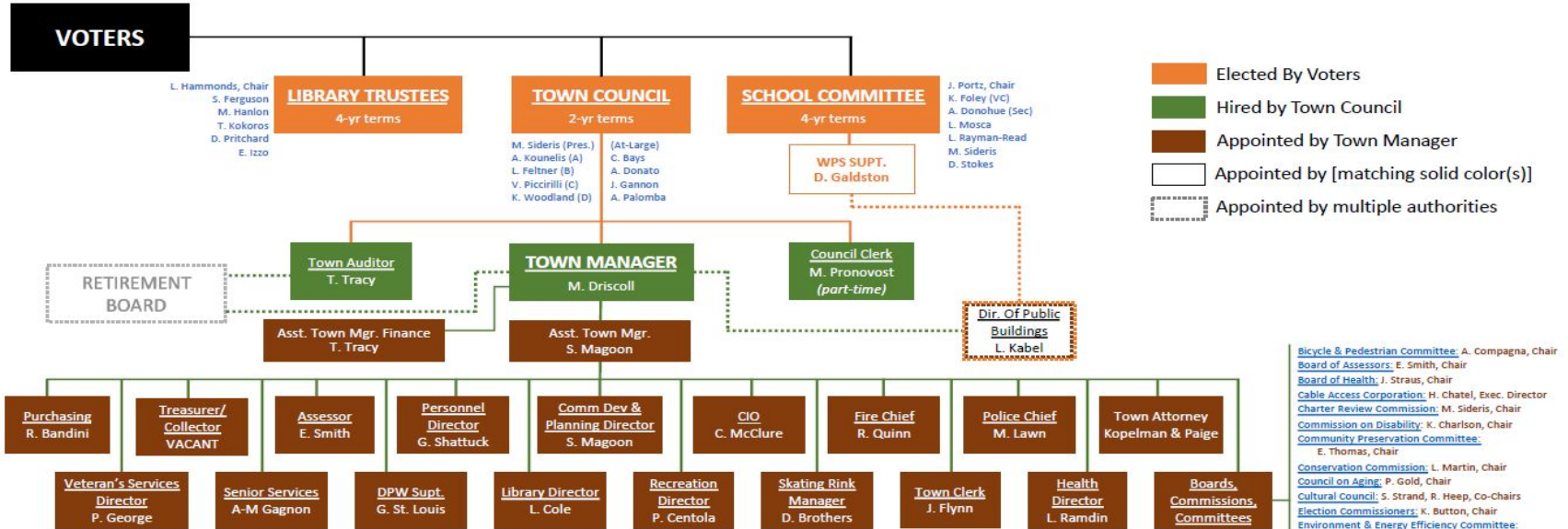
- Council-Manager form of government
- City that likes to be called a town
- Mayor-Council form of government is also a city

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

12/26/20



Click the underlined departments to connect to their webpages.

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

Town Council - Who are they?

- Four at-large councilors elected by all Town voters - **Councilors Caroline Bays, Anthony Donato, John Gannon, and Tony Palomba.**
- Four district councilors elected by voters living in the district. **Councilors Angelina Kounelis (A), Lisa Feltner (B), Vincent Piccirilli (C) and Kenny Woodland (D).**
- Town council president elected by all Town 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 Town President is paid \$10,000 annually and receives health benefits.

Councilors are paid \$7,500 annually and receive health benefits for which they pay 20% and the Town pays 80%. The 20% is roughly equal to the monthly salary amount.

Town Council - What do they do?

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

Description of duties in Section 2-4 of the town charter ([here](#))

Town Council - What do they do?

- Makes its own rules, except as otherwise provided by general law or the charter. (reviewed every two years, and are available [here](#))
- 11 subcommittees of the Town Council
 - Three Town 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

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

Town Council - What do they do?

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

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

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

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

- Ex. the now dissolved Town Council Ad hoc Committee on Transportation, the School Building Committee and the Charter Review Committee.

Town Manager - Michael Driscoll

- Considered the executive branch of Town government.
- Appointed by the Town Council for an indefinite term of office and does not need to be a resident of Watertown.
- The Town Manager appoints, supervises and can remove all department heads, negotiates union contracts, and recommends all members of the Town's boards, commissions and committees.
 - They are the chief administrative officer responsible for the “proper administration of all town affairs”.

The powers and duties of the Town Manager are extensive and are laid out in our Charter [here](#) under Section 3-2.

Town Manager - Michael Driscoll

- Responsible for creating that annual Town budget which is presented to the Town Council as a preliminary budget and a final budget.
- Responsible for publishing an annual report that provides a review of the operations of town departments, commissions and committees.
- The Town Manager is to be evaluated by the Town Council each year. The evaluation is available to the public.

School Committee - Who are they?

- 7 at-large members elected by voters from throughout Town.
- The seventh member is the elected president of the town 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:

John Portz (Chair),
Kendra Foley (Vice
Chair), Amy Donohue
(Secretary), Lindsey
Mosca, Lily
Rayman-Read, David
Stokes, and Town
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

The Powers and Duties of the outlined in Section 4-1 of our Charter [here](#).

School Committee - What do they do?

The School Committee has six 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.

A detailed explanation of how the School Committee operates can be found in the School Committee Policy manual [here](#).

The members of the School Committee received an annual salary of \$4,500, and, as Town employees, eligible for health benefits where they pay 20% and the Town 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), Michael Hanlon (Treasurer), Teddy Kokoros (Secretary), Daniel Pritchard, and Emily Izzo. 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, including the selection of the Library Director and her/his salary within a range set by the Town Manager and establishing 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 that can be found [here](#).

Boards, Commissions and Committees

- 21 boards, commissions or committees, not including the elected School Committee.
- Some have been active for many years, others are only a year or two older, some had members who at one time were elected, and some are established and/or must abide by state law.
- Members are volunteers, not elected, and receive no compensation for their service.
 - However some entities have members who are Town employees.
- The Town Manager makes a recommendation for each position and the Town Council approves the recommendation. **There are not term limits.** One could do a presentation on each body explaining its mission, memberships, and powers and duties. Here we provide only the number of members and length of terms.

Boards, Commissions and Committees

Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee

Board of Assessors - 3 members, 3-year term

Board of Health - 3 members, 3-year term

Cable Access Corporation - 9 members, 3-year term

Commission on Disabilities - 9 members, 3-year term

Community Preservation Committee - 9 members, 3-year terms
(initial terms are 1 - 3 years)

Conservation Committee - 5 members

Council on Aging - 9 members

Cultural Council - 12 members

Election Commissioners - 4 members (2 Republicans & 2 Democrats), 4-year terms

Boards, Commissions and Committees

Environment and Energy Efficiency Committee - 8 members, 1 employee and 7 residents

Historical Commission - 7 members

Historic District Commission - 6 members

Licensing Board - 3 members and 1 alternate, 3-year term (Republican, 1 Democrat, 2 from any party.)

Planning Board - 5 members, 3-year terms

School Building Committee - 14 members, 10 employees, 4 residents

Stormwater Advisory Committee - 7 members, 3 employees, 4 residents

Traffic Commission - 7 members, 5 employees, 2 residents, 2-year terms

Watertown Housing Authority - 5 members

Zoning Board of Appeal 5 members, 5-years term, 2 Alternates, 2-year term

Boards, Commissions, and Committees

Notes:

The information about the Boards, Commissions and Committees comes from our Town website which is not always up-to-date. Also not included are the number of vacancies or the number of members who are serving beyond their terms without being formally re-appointed.

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