



Waterbury Regional Chamber



2023 Municipal Agenda City of Waterbury

Municipal Agenda for the City of Waterbury 2023

Mayor

Neil M. O'Leary

Director of Economic Development

Joseph R. McGrath

Advisors to the Mayor

Judith Mancini

David Lepore

Executive Assistant to the Mayor

Barbara Whitaker

Project Liaison

Ken Stanco

Mayoral Aide

Syreeta Aidoo

Ali DeGirolamo



Board Alderman, by District

1st District:

Ernest M. Brunelli (D-Majority Leader)

Christian D'Orso (D)

Mary Grace Cavallo (R)

2nd District:

Victor Lopez, Jr. (D)

Vernon R. Matthews, Jr. (R)

Belinda Weaver (D)

3rd District:

Paul Pernerewski, Jr. (D-President)

Michael R. Salvio (D)

Kelly Zimmerman (R)

4th District:

Michael DiGiovancarlo (D)

Jeffrey Hunter (D)

George Noujaim (R-Minority Leader)

5th District:

Ivan Roman (D)

Sandra Martinez-McCarthy (D)

Kevin D. Markey (R)



Waterbury Regional Chamber

driving business to business

Dear Member,

The Waterbury Regional Chamber is committed to the future of Waterbury as a premier place to live, work, invest and conduct business. The Chamber is proud of its strong record of success in partnering with city administrations past and present to move Waterbury forward.

The Chamber's Municipal Agenda for 2023 focuses on issues important not only to the business community, but to the Greater Waterbury community as well. Our priorities are in the areas of fiscal management, economic development, and the quality of life, which includes public health & safety and education. These are vital components to the economic and social wellbeing of our city. By focusing on these issues, we can position Waterbury to become a strong, viable location for continued business and job development. Through marketing and ongoing solicitation, developers and businesses continue to express a great deal of interest in working collaboratively with the city, the Chamber, the Waterbury Development Corporation, Naugatuck Valley Regional Economic Development Corporation and Main Street Waterbury.

The Chamber remains committed on assuring that neighborhoods, neighborhood businesses, and commerce & industry remain engaged in the city's future.

By establishing Waterbury as a highly desirable business location and one that is responsive to the needs of the business community, we are building a foundation for future growth and investment that will benefit both businesses and the community, enhance Waterbury's value and image, and facilitate economic development.

Sincerely,

Jack E Traver

Jack E. Traver, Jr.
Public Policy Chairman
Waterbury Regional Chamber

Fiscal Control and City Management

The Chamber continues to support responsible and transparent fiscal oversight, prudent fiscal measures, and effective financial management processes, all of which have rebuilt accountability and performance standards for all city departments. We expect the administration to maintain the gains made in recent years and to remain committed to the goals of prudent financial management, which benefit residents and businesses alike. Proper management of its finances has resulted in Waterbury's improved AA stable bond rating by Kroll Bond Rating Agency, and maintained AA-rating by Standard & Poor's and Fitch Ratings.

The Chamber recommends the city administration continue to support the following:

Sound financial management and accountability practices paired with prudent public investment.

- ▶ Reducing pension liabilities and transparently reporting employee obligations.
- ▶ Seeking legislative reform of binding arbitration and relief from unfunded mandates at the state level.
- ▶ Responsible allocation of \$75 million American Relief Plan Act (ARPA) funds.
- ▶ Five-year phase in of real property tax value increases due to the October 2022 revaluation.



Economic Development

The Waterbury Regional Chamber supports initiatives and programs that seek to expand the commercial and industrial value of the city's grand list. Business growth and capital expansion require a commitment to achieving and maintaining a reasonable tax rate that enables existing businesses to remain and thrive here and attracts new business investment and jobs.

The Chamber recommends the city administration continue to support the following:

- ▶ Central Business District Investment Program to provide grant funds to ground floor retail property owners with a new tenant for building improvements.
- ▶ Projects identified in the RAISE Grant application including Phase II of Waterbury's section of the Naugatuck River Greenway Trail; Jackson Street Riverfront Park; West Main Street Renovation and Improvements; and Electric Vehicle Charging Stations at the Train Station.
- ▶ Efforts of Naugatuck Valley Regional Development Corporation to attract Amazon for a distribution center on the Naugatuck-Waterbury line.
- ▶ Policies that promote job creation.
- ▶ Leveraging state and federal Brownfield revitalization funds to prepare sites for redevelopment.
- ▶ Promoting private investment in the city's Opportunity Zones.
- ▶ Highlighting and promoting the leverage gained by the Grants Office and expanding its ability to leverage future grant funding and opportunities on projects throughout Waterbury, especially capital improvements.
- ▶ Completing the Multi-Modal Regional Transportation Center project leveraging infrastructure funds and support improvements the regional rail freight network.
- ▶ Prioritizing improvements, both in infrastructure and service, to the Waterbury Rail Line.
- ▶ Prioritizing recommended safety improvements to the I-84/Route 8 interchange (the Mixmaster) while working to minimize adverse effects on local businesses as the work is performed.
- ▶ Monitoring and participation in the rebuilding project for the interchange to ensure it minimizes the impact on local businesses (New Mix Program).
- ▶ Aggressively working with public and private partners and the newly established Waterbury Land Bank Authority to rehabilitate underutilized and abandoned spaces in the city to increase the inventory of industrial and commercial space available and optimize potential tax revenues and economic development.
- ▶ Prioritizing coordinated efforts against blight to help improve the safety and security of neighborhoods and increase property values.
- ▶ Efforts and initiatives of local higher education institutions, Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board and Regional Sector Partnerships in health care and manufacturing, Apprenticeship Connecticut Initiative, and the Manufacturing Alliance Service Corporation, to meet the workforce training needs of local businesses and identified industries.
- ▶ Partnering between city officials, the Waterbury Development Corporation, Naugatuck Valley Regional Development Corporation, and Main Street Waterbury in their efforts to revitalize the city, downtown business district, and Freight Street.
- ▶ The Waterbury NEXT Initiative's goals for improving the Central Business District.
- ▶ Working with the arts and culture sector to help promote Waterbury as a tourism destination, while creating jobs and serving as a stimulus for the local economy.

Public Education

The public school system is a critical component of economic growth and development. Public education produces our future business leaders and employees. Apart from the intrinsic benefits of creating opportunities for students, improving the public schools helps maintain property values, retains and attracts residents committed to enhancing education, and supports business investment and growth in Waterbury by providing a skilled and ready workforce. Together, we will continue the dialogue on the state of public education to chart a course for continued value improvement.

The Chamber recommends the city administration continue to support the following:

- ▶ An open, ongoing dialogue with the Board of Education and Superintendent of Schools to ensure student learning targets are reached and students demonstrate consistent progress toward achieving required academic skills at or above their grade levels.
- ▶ Working with public, private, charter, magnet, and technical schools to improve student academic performance and parental participation.
- ▶ Working with public and private local post-secondary schools to ensure city students have opportunities to continue their education despite financial hardships.
- ▶ Building upon the neighborhood school concept to create strong, engaged and education-committed neighborhoods.
- ▶ Management of the Waterbury Promise program, that will help lessen the burden for certain Waterbury students who attend college.
- ▶ Promoting STEM & Trade training opportunities to middle and high school students as a viable option for a post-high school career.
- ▶ Developing career and technical work-based learning opportunities, either for pay or credit, for Waterbury students outside of school.
- ▶ Working with members of the city's state legislative delegation to correct the inequities in the Educational Cost Sharing formula.
- ▶ Continuing to leverage a marketing/public relations campaign promoting Waterbury as a place for minority educators to work and thrive.
- ▶ Extending the robotics program to all city public high schools and middle schools, as well as the fifth-grade level.
- ▶ Continuing to find ways to serve and support refugees without overburdening city schools.



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Quality of Life

The business community is committed to continually improving the city's Quality of Life to make it a desirable environment and location for businesses, families, and consumers. The Chamber has built a vibrant partnership with the city and remains committed to that partnership.

The Chamber recommends the city administration continue to support the following:

- ▶ The city Health Department continuing to work with the two city hospitals and other stakeholders to ensure access to health care for all residents.
- ▶ Collaboration with members of the city's state legislative delegation to mitigate the rise in crime and address the lack of accountability for juvenile offenders.
- ▶ Promote healthy and safe policies in effort to prevent underage use of recreation marijuana.
- ▶ Utilizing the Waterbury Police Department and public & private social services agencies to address gang violence and the opioid epidemic.
- ▶ Increasing participation in addiction treatment services by opioid abusers and working to reduce the number of overdoses and overdose deaths in Waterbury.
- ▶ Continuing to improve city services and the value provided by departments promoting ownership and pride in what Waterbury offers daily.
- ▶ Continuing and, when possible, expanding the Waterbury Police Department's community policing program.



**City Hall
235 Grand Street
Waterbury, CT 203.574.6712**

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Bryan Southworth, University of Connecticut Waterbury

James R. Strub, Esq., Secor, Cassidy & McPartland, PC

