

Flag and Delta Lighting Policy
for the
City of Watertown
March 2023

PURPOSE:

This policy regulates: (1) the exhibition of the flag of the United States of America, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts flag, the City of Watertown flag, and the National League of Families POW/MIA flag from all City of Watertown properties and assets, as those specific properties and flagpoles are defined below; (2) the display of street flags for parades and holidays; (3) the display of ceremonial flags; and (4) the display of City lighting at the delta in Watertown Square.

POLICY:

The following policy shall be followed with respect to the locations and days on which the United States of America, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and City of Watertown flags should be displayed, as well as any approved ceremonial flags or street flags, or ceremonial City light displays at the delta in Watertown Square:

1. The City Manager of Watertown, with review and comment from the Superintendent of the Department of Public Works, shall be responsible for approving all flags erected on flagpoles owned or operated by the City of Watertown and its Departments (the “municipal flagpoles”), or on buildings owned or operated by the City of Watertown and its Departments (the “municipal buildings”). Specifically, the municipal flagpoles include the flagpoles at City Hall (Watertown Administration Building), Parker Annex Building, Watertown Public Library, the Police Station, all three Fire Stations, the Public Works Department and the John A. Ryan Arena, as well as streetlights owned and operated by the City, and signage, poles, fences, and other structures located at 552 Main Street Playground, Arsenal Park, Bemis Park, Casey Park, Filippello Park, How Park, Moxley Park, O’Connell Park, Saltonstall Park, Sullivan Playground, Victory Field and Walker Pond, and on the sites of municipal buildings, as listed above, to which flags may be affixed. Municipal Buildings include City Hall (Watertown Administration Building), Parker Annex Building, Watertown Public Library, the Police Station, all three Fire Stations, the Public Works Department and the John A. Ryan Arena. In addition, the City Manager, with review and comment from the Superintendent of Public Works, shall be responsible for approving all public light displays at the Delta in Watertown Square. **The aforementioned municipal flagpoles, the municipal buildings, and Delta in Watertown Square shall not be considered public fora, but rather, serve only a vehicle for the City of Watertown’s governmental speech and expression of official policy sentiments of the City.**
2. The adoption and implementation of this policy is not intended to create or authorize a forum for free expression by the public, and any ceremonial or street parade flags or lighting displays at the delta in Watertown Square must first be approved by the City Manager as an expression of the City’s official sentiments and policies, subject to non-binding review and comment by the Superintendent of Public Works for a determination of compliance with relevant traffic and signage standards.

3. Flags exhibited from the municipal flagpoles and municipal buildings shall be displayed in conformance with applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and policies, as stated in the Federal "Our Flag" publication of the Congress, House Document No. 96-144, and the Massachusetts statutes and regulations for flags, including without limitation G.L. c. 2, §§ 6-6A, G.L. c. 264, § 5, 950 CMR 34.00 et seq., and this policy.
4. The City Manager is responsible for ensuring the proper execution of this policy at all City properties and assets.

STANDARDS:

A. Federal, State, and City Flags

1. Outdoor flags will be flown at municipal flagpoles and municipal buildings in the following order of precedence: first, the United States flag; second, the Massachusetts State flag; third, the Watertown City flag; and fourth, ceremonial flags that have been approved by the City Manager, in accordance with Section B of these standards.
2. Weather permitting, flags should be displayed daily in front of or at a location near the Watertown Administration Building and all Fire and Police facilities during business hours.
3. Flags should not be displayed in inclement weather; provided, however, that an all-weather flag may be flown on a 24-hour basis if illuminated during the night.
4. The Watertown City flag may be flown wherever there are sufficient poles to do so in accordance with Standard 2 above. The City flag may be displayed on the same pole with, and underneath, the State flag, whenever the pole is of sufficient height. The Federal, State, and City flags shall not be flown on a single pole.
5. No other flag or pennant shall be placed or flown above, or, if on the same level, to the right of the United States Flag.
6. In accordance with 36 U.S.C. § 902, The National League of Families POW/MIA flag may be displayed below the United States Flag.
7. An indoor U.S. Flag, State flag, and City flag shall be displayed in the City Council Chambers. These flags may be displayed in other municipal buildings with approval of the City Manager.
8. On recognized Federal and/or State holidays, and on other special occasions as determined by the City Manager, the U.S. flag, State flag, and City flag should be flown from all locations available. Per the U.S. Flag Code, these holidays include: New Year's Day, January 1; Inauguration Day, January 20; Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday, the third Monday in January; Lincoln's Birthday, February 12; Washington's Birthday, third Monday in February; National Vietnam War Veterans Day, March 29, Easter Sunday (variable); Mother's Day, second Sunday in May; Armed Forces Day, third Saturday in May; Memorial Day (half-staff until noon), the last Monday in May; Flag Day, June 14; Juneteeth, June 19; Father's Day, third Sunday in June; Independence Day, July 4; National Korean War Veterans Armistice Day, July 27;

Labor Day, first Monday in September; Constitution Day, September 17; Columbus Day / Indigenous People's Day, second Monday in October; Navy Day, October 27; Veterans Day, November 11; Thanksgiving Day, fourth Thursday in November; Christmas Day, December 25; and such other days as may be proclaimed by the President of the United States; the birthdays of States (for Massachusetts, February 6); and on State holidays (including Patriots' Day, third Monday in April).

9. If the President of the United States, Governor of the Commonwealth, or other authority of competent jurisdiction orders that the United States or Commonwealth flag be flown at half-staff, no other flag shall be flown higher.
10. Flags shall be constructed of an appropriate material and size per location and will generally be restricted to 3 foot by 5 foot, or, 4 foot by 6 foot

B. Parades/Holidays/Ceremonial Flags and Lighting Displays at the Delta at Watertown Square

1. The City's flagpoles or lighting displays at the Delta at Watertown Square are not intended to serve as a forum for free expression by the public and flags on the municipal flagpoles and lighting displays at the delta are subject to review and approval by the City Manager. In addition to the flags identified in Section A, above, ceremonial flags or ceremonial lighting displays at the delta at Watertown Square may only be displayed by the City as an expression of the City's official sentiments as outlined in this section.
2. Ceremonial flags will be restricted to the flagpoles located at the Library and City Hall, unless specific events are authorized and permitted, as appropriate.
3. Ceremonial flags must be flown and ceremonial lighting displays at the Delta may be placed only with a formal declaration or official action from the City Manager or, consistent with the Charter, after a proclamation or resolution is issued by the City Council, thereby indicating such approval as a formal policy statement of the City.
4. Ceremonial lighting at the Delta will only be displayed with the review and approval by the City Manager to reflect matters of City-wide significance and relevancy to Watertown, including the following:
 - a. Memorializing special or exemplary events or days, including certain times of celebration, recognition, or mourning.
 - b. Supporting local arts and cultural celebrations.
 - c. Recognizing unique or especially successful local activities, including without limitation, those for academics, athletics, or music.
 - d. Supporting public awareness campaigns that have the potential to enhance public health, safety, or wellness.
 - e. Recognizing other exceptional events, activities, and/or people.

5. Ceremonial flags are limited to:
 - a. Flags of Governments Recognized by the United States: Flags of the governments recognized by the United States may be displayed by the City Manager, provided that no other governmental flag may be displayed higher than the United States Flag.
 - b. Flags Displayed in Conjunction with City Official Ceremonial Items: Other flags may be displayed by the City Manager, in conjunction with official actions, ceremonial items, or proclamations of the City Council.
 - c. Flags of Professional Sports Teams: The City Manager may display the flag of a local professional sports team in commemoration of a significant achievement.
 - d. Pride Flag, being inclusive of all members of the community by symbolizing acceptance, understanding, and support.
6. If a particular flag is approved to be raised by the City Manager that is not owned by the City of Watertown, a donated flag or funding for such may be provided by an outside agency or non-governmental party, or at the City's expense and its discretion, provided that the flag complies with these standards and provided that the City shall not be liable for any damage whatsoever to a donated flag.
7. Ceremonial flags shall be constructed of an appropriate material and be of a size appropriate for the location, generally restricted to 3 foot by 5 foot, or, 4 foot by 6 foot. Flags of other countries, when approved for display by the City Manager, should be displayed in accordance with best practices of their jurisdictions, where approved.