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To: Honorable City Council

From: George Proakis, City Manager

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RE: Logo Next Steps

At the June 11, 2024, Committee on Personnel and City Organization Meeting, the Committee discussed the prospective Watertown brand strategy. At that meeting, the Committee asked that I work with my staff to identify a cost-effective, time-conscious approach to gathering community input about a logo for the City. I have connected with the Deputy City Manager and the City's communications team to identify the best available approaches to effectively integrating public input into the City's efforts to establish a logo.

While gathering public input on a logo may be the ideal approach in theory, it is challenging in practice for several reasons:

1. As with any public input process that is open to anyone who chooses to participate, the feedback will disproportionately represent those members of the community who have the strongest opinions and/or who feel the most comfortable expressing those opinions with the City and will underrepresent the rest of the community.
2. There are many factors that are considered when developing a logo – such as ADA compliance, scalability, and the extent to which it can be adapted for use by different departments – and it is an iterative process. It can be challenging to effectively communicate the logo-development process and its accompanying information to a broad audience in a concise way.
3. Logos (and graphic design in general) trigger emotional responses that can change over time and with repeated exposure.

I chose to keep the logo-development process internal because I did not think it would be resource-efficient to undertake a public process that would effectively address these challenges. Ultimately, no public process with a reasonable time limitation can truly address challenge #3. To address challenges #1 and #2 as effectively as possible, a process would entail, at a minimum, the formation of a logo committee, putting the project out to bid, multiple rounds of design and review with the committee, and gathering feedback through one or more public surveys, ideally that capture a representative sample of the community. I outline below in further detail the steps that would be necessary for this process, which will be resource-intensive from a cost, time, and staffing perspective.

Nonetheless, I hear clearly the Committee’s directive to gather public input, so I am proposing the following:

The communications team has worked with FlashVote to assess the community’s opinion of the logo that was presented to the Council and reviewed in depth with the Committee – what we refer to as the “waves logo.” We will utilize Likert scales (rating 1 to 5) to understand the community’s overall opinion of the waves logo. Because FlashVote’s methodology delivers the survey to a representative random sample of the community rather than allowing residents to opt in to the survey, it effectively addresses challenge #1. This process admittedly would not address challenge #2, but since we already have the FlashVote infrastructure in place, it is extremely resource efficient.

We will analyze the FlashVote survey results to determine if the results indicate that the Watertown community is generally in support of the waves logo (with positively skewed data that includes mostly 3s (neutral), 4s (like it), and 5s (love it). If this is the case, I would propose that we move forward with the waves logo, using any supplemental qualitative data gathered from the FlashVote survey to finalize the design. A member of the communications team or I would be available to present the findings to the Committee and/or the Council before proceeding.

In the case the FlashVote survey results do not indicate community support (with negatively skewed data that includes mostly 1s (really don’t like it) and 2s (don’t like it), we will return to the Committee to seek feedback on which of two potential approaches the Committee would like us to pursue:

**Approach 1 if initial FlashVote does not indicate community support for waves logo:
full public process**

Resource (cost, time, staffing) intensity: high¹

A full public process would include, at a minimum, six steps before a logo is selected, including:

1. Forming of a logo committee (this would likely include a combination of City staff, a Council representative, and community representatives)
2. A procurement process to select a designer²
3. Conducting research and gathering feedback from the logo committee to inform the logo development
4. Developing a first round of logo options, reviewing the options with the committee, and gathering committee feedback
5. Designing a second round of logo options that take into consideration committee feedback, reviewing the new/adjusted options with the committee, and making further adjustments as necessary/appropriate
6. Gathering broad public input on the second round of logo options

¹ As a reference point: the current process in Newton to develop a new seal was awarded for \$30,000 (excluding costs to support the City after the new seal is launched).

² This project would need to undergo the full procurement process, including putting the project out to bid. After discussions with the City’s on-call staff designer, it was determined that engagement in a full public process would be outside their current scope of work.

The public input that is gathered will allow the committee to determine the next steps with regards to sending it to the Council or working with the designer to incorporate further adjustments.

This option would address challenge #1 if FlashVote or a similar methodology is used in step 6 to gather broad public input. It would partially address challenge #2 because the committee would be deeply involved in the logo-development process, but we would ultimately still face the challenge of communicating this information to a broad audience concisely and effectively in step 6.

Approach 2 if initial FlashVote does not indicate community support for waves logo: present two designed logos

Resource (cost, time, staffing) intensity: medium

The second approach is for the communications team to work with our current graphic designer to refine the drafted sketch bridge logo that was included in my June 11th presentation and modify the waves logo based on the feedback we receive from the initial FlashVote. We would then present the refined bridge logo and the modified waves logo to the public, either using FlashVote or a more traditional, non-scientific participation process that would allow anyone in the community to provide feedback on the two logo options. We would also solicit feedback about what is liked and disliked about the two options to understand how to potentially further improve the community's preferred design.

This approach will allow the community to participate in the logo selection and refinement process, while utilizing existing design work, making this approach more resource effective than a full public process. Similar to option 1, it would address challenge #1 if FlashVote or a similar methodology is used to gather broad public input. It would only modestly address challenge #2 since there would not be an in-depth, iterative logo development process.