Summary: Detailed Results from KTC Discussions
By Major Topic – with representative comments

Building Connections/Encouraging Engagement
Welcoming and Engaging New Residents
- Focus on engaging new people in the community – help them learn more quickly about resources, events and opportunities
- Develop a strategy to engage all the newcomers to town
- Outreach/onboarding strategy to welcome and orient all new residents, including individuals, couples, families, homeowners, renters, those whose first language is other than English, the differently-abled, and others.
- Provide info about the town (hard copy and electronic), how to access information, and include a personal welcome at their residence.
- How do we reach out to and integrate folks who are moving into new condos and apartments?
- Avoid encouraging a "new Watertown" vs "old Watertown" divide
- Reach out to new people to go to website for newsletters, welcome packet, auto opt-in for information.

Encouraging Neighborhood Engagement
- Need to build neighborhood connections and excite town-wide participation
- Neighborhood groups should be supported and organized by the town.
- More neighborhood meetings like WCC – get to know neighbors and share ideas
- Designating people to be key contacts between neighborhoods/buildings and town gov't – conduits for 2-way communication
- How to deepen roots within neighborhoods?
- Block parties and other ways for people to meet each other
- Hire a "Neighborhood Engagement" specialist?
- Facilitate formation of groups in neighborhoods similar to Concerned Citizens Group and East End Neighbors

Encouraging Town-Wide Connections and Engagement
- How to meet people beyond neighborhoods? And Invite people more broadly – e.g. to walk & talk with town officials
- It's also up to all of us to be responsive & engaged and to take action
- Residents more informed about town issues and activities
- More voices from different cultures and background being heard
- Conversations with opponents, to understand concerns
- Use art to bridge divides in town
- Ways for all to feel valued and heard

- Cast wider net for younger people and newer residents to get engaged; expand involvement beyond the usual suspects, especially in terms of age, ethnicity and income.

Engaging Children, Youth and Families
- Time of most engagement is often when kids are enrolled in schools – use schools for community events
- Ways to automatically get info about the town through schools and other existing channels
- Information about what's happening in town at library and FOTS
- Engage young people in understanding that this is THEIR town and they can be engaged
- Young people want a voice but don't know how

Events and Activities
- Create an arts district that would support community and economic development
- More dog park-like spaces
- More adult recreation – eg. more public skating rinks
- Develop a robust mix of music, visual arts, theatre, literature, poetry etc. with opportunities for younger and older residents to meet, interact and create together. Could include public art (eg. murals), plays, classical and other music (Watertown symphony?), poetry slams, etc. Use the Mosesian Center, Library and other venues.
- Set up community gardening based on a model of shared space (as opposed to individual plots), with produce distributed to food pantries and others in need, to build community and help others.
- More well-publicized town-wide events/festivals to bring people together to celebrate what is unique about Watertown (river, schools, natural and local history).
- More activities that bring people together
- Support multi-cultural events to celebrate Watertown's diversity
- More fun gatherings with town officials present – e.g. Faire on the Square & Farmers' Market
- Bandstand with band on Sunday
- Consider hiring an arts & culture person to engage diverse community members through the arts
- More use of civic banners, like "Historic People", in public places. Makes the town feel alive.

Town Vision and Accountability
Defining Vision and Tracking Progress
- Revisit Watertown's Vision to promote green spaces, appropriate density, parking and transportation, biological diversity, equity. Involve the public robustly and communicate widely through improved channels. Set targets and build toward them.

- Improve accountability of town government, departments and committees:
- Report out priorities, goals and evaluate outcomes
- Town departments inform residents about their priorities and goals and performance evaluations
- Communicate the overarching development plan to residents and allow them to participate in planning
- Need more communication and accountability about road and sidewalk work – both better response to requests for fixing roads/sidewalks and more public notice about upcoming road work
- Improve Watertown Square – more gathering places, more pedestrian access
- Zoning decisions and development projects – public doesn't seen anything until too late
- Promote increased safe use of roads and bike paths; distribute helmets and lights; conduct workshops; police to educate the public and enforce laws; important for all, including Perkins School students.
- Parking needs to be rethought
- Increased transparency and accountability
- Human Rights Commission
- Do we have a clear town vision, to hold Town Manager accountable?
- Use the Town Charter Review to revitalize town values and renew commitment to the town, with a multi-lingual and inclusive process
- Link State of the Union report to the town's Annual Report as a information resource
- Consider a quarterly State of the Union report
- Revisit past plans (Comprehensive Plan, major zoning decisions, Open Space Plan, etc.) to assess results and consider adjustments
- Include residents in decision making process

Educating Citizens about Issues
- More education about issues provided to help residents understand the issues
- Use upcoming charter review as a way to educate residents and encourage more people to get involved. Inform citizens about the process and how they can participate
- Provide data on new development i.e. occupancy rates; how taxes from new development are being used.
- Develop "town center" where residents can gather and exchange ideas - make Town Hall more welcoming and inviting
- Walking tours – open eyes to history and engagement
- Town Council or staff could run "seminars" or WPS Community Education courses – e.g. about a department's process or a town issue
- Hold candidates debates on social media

Response to Input/Feedback
- Not just more need to reach out – town government also needs to respond to inquiries
- Need more two-way communication between town officials and residents

- Need better ways to provide feedback – places to post a complaint and know that feedback has been received and taken seriously.
- Need to get back to commenters – "Here's what we did with the information you gave us."
- Public meetings as venue for being listened to and feeling heard – need info on how much money is available to spend on an issue, what decisions are being made and why, how public input was used.

Communicating with Town Leaders
- Designate one leader as a visible spokesperson for the town (Town Council President or Town Manager) – to communicate during emergencies or important events (like a Mayor) (Town Manager is invisible)
- Provide more face-time with town councilors – e.g. at events, different days and times
- Numerous meetings have cut into face-to-face time for Councilors to meet with residents
- Town committees and staff listen to and be more responsive to residents
- Forum where interactive dialogue between Town Council members and neighbors would be welcomed
- People in authority listen to input from the community – some who attended meetings didn't feel anyone was interested in feedback
- Open office hours for staff would be good, only if staff are receptive to what they hear (otherwise don't want to waste time)
- Walk and Talks with Town staff or Elected Officials – good idea, could be don't' as part of Live Well Watertown "Watertown Moves"

Improving Town Website and Communication Methods
Improvements to the Town Website – frequently mentioned as a high priority
- Website is not currently user friendly
- Needs significant improvement – is not easy to find things and is only one-way communication
- Needs to be stable, up-to-date, robust, well-coordinated
- Allow Watertown non-profits to post information about their organizations.
- Make it easily searchable, like google: type in a question and get directed to town offices, community organizations, people and resources.
- Add button to website where people could provide feedback/suggestions/grievances
- Improvements needed especially for document retrieval and download

Engage a Communications Professional
- Enthusiasm frequently expressed for a communications professional -- although not all wanted
- Hire/contract with a communications professional to develop plan and identify ways to reach all residents depending on their preferences (social media, mail, etc.)

- Hired or volunteer, full or part-time
- Possibly two – one for town and one for schools
- A "public information officer" or an "info desk" or a 311 #
- Possibly reporting to Town Council
- There are firms in town who might work pro bono.
- Value of a communications specialist would depend on what goals s/he is given

Develop a Communications Strategy
- Develop a multi-modal communications approach that is integrated and connected: websites & social media, more meetings at Senior Center, information distributed at Farmers' Market, Faire on the Square, etc.
- Host and organize information about both town government and the Watertown community.
- Need to publish a clear roadmap for mapping increasing engagement to Action
- Research how people obtain information and reach them where they do
- Learn from other towns – what are the best practices being used by others (e.g. Somerville, South Boston community bulletin bd)

"One Stop Shopping"
- Need one place to go for 'All Things Watertown'.
- Website should host information about both town government and the Watertown community.
- Provide a central place where town groups and committees are listed.
- "I don't know who to call and I get inconsistent answers"
- Many people don't know about available resources – need to publicize more effectively, in a central place
- Centralized social media – one place to go for Watertown information, with a bulletin board and calendar
- Post publicly somewhere all the various groups that people can join: Trees for Watertown, Bike Committee, etc.

Notifications [which Town has but many don't know about it or how to use it.]
- Have ability to get on lists, set alerts to be notified of upcoming events by interest.
- More useable Town calendar with optional notifications
- Increased access to information about what's going on, particularly things that impact them directly.
- Need timely alerts about road closures, need to move cars, water pipe work
- Need more accurate and better written notifications from DPW – especially re street repairs and construction work

Meetings
- All need to include ADA/accessible accommodations
- Consider streaming public meetings (instead of low quality cable) – discussion boards and interactive streaming for non-real-time engagement with meetings
- Arrange for translations in top 2-3 non-English languages
- Alternate meeting times so more people can attend – eg. 7 pm school meetings are at the worst time for parents
- Offer childcare and kids activities at School Committee and Town Council meetings
- Don't schedule on obviously bad days (like Valentine's Day mtg. re police station)
- Have daytime meetings as well
- Public meeting format – everyone should hear the same presentations, have a change to speak
- Use neutral facilitators for community input meetings – not run by someone with a position.
- Town meetings are often contentious and exhausting/discouraging.

Communications Methods – General Suggestions
- Better communication about upcoming events – sandwich boards, electronic, disseminate at events
- Town needs to do more to recruit applicants for town boards – describe mission, activities and qualifications needed.
- More use of regular newsletters
- Printed newsletters sent to all residents – not just property owners who receive a tax bill
- More electronic/web capacity
- Interactive "Town Center" concept
- Accessibility to voice concerns and ideas
- Improve quality of local news outlets
- Better and broader use of social media – where many people go for info
- Distribute information in different languages
- Want paper mailings
- Facebook or blogs with opportunities for conversation
- An overview of how the town works – mailed to everyone, display at the library
- Small group format dialogues – to connect government to people, on different topics
- Push information more, instead of people needing to find the info.
- Town send out weekly digest via email with one-page summary of all meetings and special event
- Create an app for real time updates
- State of the Union – use to report hot topics, celebrate accomplishments, and note things to work on
- State of the Union could be too politically charged
- Town Facebook page

- Town Manager newsletter? Facetime with citizens at Watertown Family Network or Library events to connect with engaged families
- Use water/sewer bills and/or tax bills to distribute newsletters
- Distribute information about candidate forums more broadly – sandwich boards around town are helpful
- Infographics – use more visual methods for communicating information
- Need clearer information about recycling requirements
- Watertown CATV needs a YouTube channel
- More press releases to TAB/Patch
- In email alerts, put more info in email itself, so don't need to click through
- Consider foreign language translations of newsletter, website
- Use church bulletins, school bulletin boards, Commonwealth Connect

General Comments
- Don't want to lose the strengths and values of Watertown with economic development
- Need more conversations about race and across race
- More diversity in school teaching staff
- Losing small town feel?
- Public transportation not keeping up with growth
- Affordability and rapid growth are concerns
- Library is core – more funding and programs
- Many emails are tedious & bureaucratic; need to be more concise
- Need to have on-going two-way communication, not just in a big controversy or crisis.
- Interest in volunteering – want information on opportunities, and town needs to be responsive to offers
- Lack of public engagement not the problem – rather power is in the hands of too few people.
- Might be time to switch to a (strong) Mayor form of government
- Ideas for promoting engagement are good – but how do people find out about them?
- Questions about what a Citizens Town Hall Academy or a 311 program is
- Need improved town newspaper with adequate resources