

**Human Rights Commission Meeting Minutes**  
**Monday, June 12, 2023, 6:00pm**

Esther Howland Chamber (3rd flr.) City Hall  
455 Main Street, Worcester, MA 01608

Virtual meeting link:

<https://cow.webex.com/cow/j.php?MTID=m9d233db4f78bb0528628acf433e3ce8a>

Meeting number: 2311 007 3698 Password: C6GputMFp79 Phone: 415-655-0001

**Attendance:**

Present: Chairperson Ellen Shemitz, Guillermo Creamer Jr., Elizabeth O'Callahan, Charles Hopkins, Bernard Reese

Absent: Jamaine Ortiz, LaToya Lewis, Jacqueline Yang

Staff: Jayna Turchek

**Call to order and introductions**

Chairperson Shemitz opened the meeting at 6:00pm and welcomed members and the public.

The Chairperson began with an acknowledgement of the traditional, ancestral, territory of the Nipmuc, the first people of Massachusetts and those whose land we are convening on tonight. While the Nipmuc history predates written history, records from the 1600s inform us that the original inhabitants of Worcester dwelled principally in three locations: Pakachoag, Tatesset (Tatnuck), and Wigwam Hill (N. Lake Ave). It is important to make this acknowledgment and to honor the ancestors that have come before us. It is all too easy to live in a land without ever hearing the traditional names and the history of the people who first resided and prospered in these lands and continue to reside and prosper. The Human Rights Commission was established to promote the city's human rights policies. It is the policy of the City to assure equal access, for every individual, to and benefit from all public services, to protect every individual in the enjoyment and exercise of civil rights and to encourage and bring about mutual understanding and respect among all individuals in the city. Our work requires us to address institutional racism so that as a community we can achieve racial equity. Our work also requires us to make visible the unheard, unearned, and unquestioned privilege enjoyed by some members of our community to the detriment of others. We take time to make this acknowledgement, to educate, so a path can be cleared for healing.

The Chairperson shared the terms of the Commission:

The term "institutional racism" refers specifically to the ways in which institutional policies create difference outcomes for different racial groups. The institutional policies

may never mention any racial group, but their effect is to create advantages for whites and the oppression and disadvantage for people from groups classified as people of color. The term “racial equity” is the active state in which race does not determine one’s livelihood or success. It is achieved through proactive work to address root causes of inequalities to improve outcomes for all individuals. That is, through the elimination or shifting of policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race or fail to eliminate them. The term “privilege” describes the unearned social power and informal institutions of society to all members of a dominant group. For example: “white privilege” and “male privilege.” Privilege is usually invisible to those who have it because we are trained to not see it but nevertheless it puts them at an advantage against those who do not have it.

### **Approval of meeting minutes from May 1, 2023**

Commissioner Reese moved to approve the meeting minutes from May 1, 2023. Commissioner O’Callahan seconded the motion. With a vote of 4-0-1, quorum was not established, and the approval of the meeting minutes will be pushed to the subsequent commission meeting.

### **Conversation on Voter Education with City Clerk Niko Vangjeli**

#### **A. Voter Education**

City Clerk Niko Vangjeli joined the Commission via WebEx to discuss voter education to resolve issues surrounding barriers to voting and the dwindling voting rates in municipal elections.

Chairperson Shemitz shared the following statistics from the Research Bureau’s brief on Worcester’s local elections: for the last 3 municipal elections, an average of 17% of the population voted. Districts 1 and 5 reported a 10% voter turnout.

City Clerk Vangjeli explained that for the last 3 decades, there has been a general trend (not only in the city of Worcester, but in Massachusetts as well) of there being higher voter turnout for federal elections, yet low votership during local elections. The City Clerk further elaborated his point by mentioning Boston’s most recent mayoral election only averaging a 23% voter turnout, despite it being a historical election due to there being more minority candidates being represented on the ballot. The City Clerk is optimistic that with the implementation of mail in ballots for local elections, voter turnout will increase. He goes on to mention that 7,500 voters have already opted to vote by mail and hopes that for the upcoming election in September, that more voters will be compelled to cast their ballots.

The City Clerk pivoted to discuss voter education initiatives for the upcoming local election. To eliminate some of the pressure associated with voting, individually

tailored post cards will be mailed to registered voters in Worcester detailing the voter's specific polling address, the election days, and the city council and school committee districts. The election commission webpage on the City of Worcester website was updated to be more user friendly and provide easier access to voting information such as a candidate list and a voter detail search tool for voters to locate their polling address, city council and school committee districts, and voter status. The City Clerk provided a demonstration of the search tool's functionality. Maps of the city council and school committee districts were also added to the webpage for voter ease.

The City Clerk paused the presentation to take questions.

Question to the City Clerk by the Chairperson: in a previous Human Rights Commission meeting, a Harvard professor mentioned media outreach being an effective tool to encourage voting. Does City Hall have any media outreach plans?

Response:

Yes, City Hall will be utilizing "Alert Worcester," the city's alert system, to share voting information. City Hall is also working with cable providers to share public service announcements and cable coverage on the voting process. The city does not have a budget to purchase advertisements from cable services, so the city is relying on local news outlets to assist with sharing voting education resources.

Question to the City Clerk by the Chairperson: is it typical for cities of a similar size to have a budget that could afford a means for better media outreach?

Response:

No, even in state elections there is not a budget for media outreach. The Election Commission's budget prioritizes election administration costs, which leaves out funding for media outreach.

Question to the City Clerk by Commissioner Reese: for clarification, do the election costs total \$60,000?

Response:

No, it costs \$60,000 to mail ballots to the voters. Its costs over \$35,000 for the postage to mail the ballots and that processing is done by a vendor. In terms of election costs per election a few variables need to be accounted for: first, there are 7 days of in-person early voting, which can cost an average of \$3000-\$4000 depending on the voter turnout each day; then there's mail in voting 30 days in advance of in-person voting; there are additional costs in designing and printing the ballots as well as putting the ballot kits

together; postage for mail in voting costs \$0.80-\$0.90 per voter; managing the 65 polling locations needs to be accounted for as well. Everything included makes election costs total a few hundred thousand dollars per election.

Commissioner Creamer abstained from asking questions.

Question to the City Clerk by Commissioner O'Callahan: are there individuals who are taking up the issue of decreased voter turnout in a non-partisan manner?

Response:

Part of the City Clerk's plan is to work with non-profit organizations to brainstorm ways to reach voters directly. The City Clerk has provided fliers, both in English and Spanish, to non-profit organizations to hand out to the communities they serve.

Question to the City Clerk by Commissioner O'Callahan: what are the polling places with the least amount of voter turnout?

Response:

Where there is a heavy population of college students, there is decreased voter turnout since they are voting by mail for their hometown's local election and not Worcester's. The Holy Cross polling precinct has low voter registration and turnout. Some precincts only have a handful of registered voters.

Question to the City Clerk by Commissioner O'Callahan: for clarification, what are the areas with high-density populations, but lower voter turnout?

Response:

Inner-city Worcester has lower voter turnout than the west side. The issue of decreased voter turnout is multi-faceted and is influenced by socio-economic status. The City Clerk is striving to make voting as accessible as possible, but is still struggling to encourage residents to vote despite developing initiatives for densely populated areas.

Question to the City Clerk by the Chairperson: what is the city doing to ensure there are translators to assist voters?

Response:

There are multi-lingual volunteers at each polling location. About 80% of the polling locations have Spanish translators. High School students are volunteering to translate, not just in Spanish but in other languages as well. The city is also relying on the

Language Line on election day and all poll workers have an iPhone they can use to call into the service.

The City Clerk resumed the presentation.

The City Clerk further discussed his hopes for increased votership through the option of mail in voting. Mail in voting is a convenient way to vote since voters are directly receiving the ballot and have access to drop off locations throughout the city. Residents have resonated with the mail in voting process. As well, the City Clerk mentioned the schedule for early voting has been finalized and will be available to the public soon. For election day, the City Clerk is working on making a flyer to explain the voting process. The City Clerk is stressing that voting for school committee districts will not alter the voting process. Voters will still receive one ballot and the poll workers will be fully trained to clarify the voting process.

The City Clerk paused again to take questions.

Question to the City Clerk by Commissioner Hopkins: how effective is the youth voter registration program?

Response:

The Election Commission ran the civic camp again in April and the students who participate in the camp usually volunteer at the polls, which promotes civic engagement. The Commission goes to the Worcester public high schools and registers 700-900 students, who are eligible, to vote. When students are eligible to get their permit, when they go to the RMV, they can get pre-registered to vote—when they turn 18, they will get automatically registered to vote.

Question to the City Clerk by the Chairperson: what can the Human Rights Commission do to support the work of the Elections Commission?

Response:

Having a bigger conversation with the Board of Election Commission for the November election on voter education would be helpful, perhaps one or two sessions during September and mid-October.

The City Clerk will seek commission from the Board to see if the meeting(s) can happen. The Human Rights Commission showed interest in a meeting with the Board of Election Commission.

Question to the City Clerk by the Chairperson: would it be possible to partner with civics teachers to get voting information out to students and their families?

Response:

A similar idea was already presented to the School Committee and the Super Intendant about three weeks ago. There are plans to expand the civics camp and hopefully bring in all 7 public high schools.

Question to the City Clerk by the Commissioner Reeves: how you tried going to religious services or safe spaces for minority groups to encourage voting?

Response:

The Election Commission has partnered with Worcester Interfaith and other non-profits to get the word out to over 100 religious' institutions.

The City Clerk closed his presentation by sharing his intentions to reach out to Director Turchek about planning two joint meetings between the Human Rights and Elections Commissions as well as asking the Chairperson of the Elections Commission to move to approve the meeting.

The Chairperson moved to approve a joint meeting between the Human Rights and Election Commissions. Commissioner Hopkins seconded the motion. Quorum was not established for the vote, and it will be carried to the next meeting in July.

### **Planning for future meetings:**

#### **A. Annual Meeting with Worcester Police Department (July 10, 2023)**

Planning discussion:

- Director Turchek has already sent out an invitation with a list of questions.
- Are there additions questions or concerns that need to be relayed before the department attends the meeting? With increased attention on the Justice Department's investigation and the civil rights lawsuit filed weeks ago, the Chairperson wants to ensure all potential questions are addressed.
- No additional questions were proposed.

#### **B. Human Rights Commission August Meeting (August 7, 2023)**

- There is no formalized topic for the meeting, so the Chairperson is seeking ideas.
- Commissioner O'Callahan suggested readdressing the topic of municipal broadband in a future meeting.
- Commissioners who are attending a summit on the topic will reach out to presenters to see if they are available to meet with the Commission for the August meeting or perhaps future meetings.

**Other:** Commissioner Robinson offered a brief farewell speech as his time serving in the Human Rights Commission came to a close. Commissioner Hopkins requested feedback from the City Manager about the Human Rights Commission receiving extra responsibilities or enforcement capabilities.

**Adjournment at 7:00pm** Next meeting: Monday July 10, 2023, 6pm, Worcester City Hall– Annual Meeting with Worcester Police Department



The City of  
**WORCESTER**

**City Clerk Department**

Nikolin Vangjeli, City Clerk  
Stephen A.J. Pottle, Deputy City Clerk  
Clare M. Robbins, Assistant City Clerk

**BOARD OF ELECTION  
COMMISSIONERS MEETING  
TUESDAY, MAY 23, 2023, 5:30 P.M.  
LEVI LINCOLN CHAMBER, CITY HALL**

**Call to Order by the Chairperson**

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**Roll Call**

**Approval of the Minutes of the April 18<sup>th</sup> meeting**

1. Update on the nomination papers for the 2023 Municipal Elections.
2. Preparation for the September 5<sup>th</sup> Municipal Preliminary.
  - a. Set date for Sept. 2023 ballot name drawing.
  - b. Set hearing date for Early Voting Locations for September, November 2023 and March 2024 .
3. Discussion concerning community engagement efforts.
4. Post card design for the 2023 voter mailing of polling locations and School & Council District for September 5<sup>th</sup>.
5. Discussion regarding FY24 Election budget:
  - a. March 2024 Presidential Primary
  - b. Poll workers pay rate
  - c. November 2023 mailing to the voters
  - d. Early Voting in person locations

**Adjournment:**

**Next Meeting Date:**

**TO PARTICIPATE VIRTUALLY DURING THE MEETING:**

**PHONE NUMBER: 415-655-0001**

**ACCESS CODE: 160-935-9156#**

**ATTENDEE ID: #**

**Log in via your computer:**

**<https://cow.webex.com/meet/ElectionCommissionwebex>**



**Board of Elections, City of Worcester  
Commissioners' Meeting Minutes**

**Date: April 18, 2023**

**Location: City Hall**

**Members Present: Kimberley Vanderspek, Winifred Octave, Paul Franco, John DiCicco, And Cecilio Gonzalez.**

**City Officials Present: Niko Vangjeli.**

**Meeting Called to order: 5:30 pm.**

**Pledge of Allegiance was said.**

**Minutes from March 21, 2023 meeting approved.**

**1<sup>st</sup> Business Item: Commissioners Elections: Kimberley Vanderspek was elected Chair and John DiCicco was elected as secretary. The chair selected Paul Franco as the vice-chair.**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Business Item: Street census is wrapping up. Almost 8500 residents have applied for mail in ballots.**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Business Item: Nomination papers have been available for candidates to pick up. May 30<sup>th</sup> is the deadline for submitting the nomination papers to the clerk's office.**

**4<sup>th</sup> Business Item: City Manager will be submitting budget to the Council with funds for paying poll workers and hopefully the \$50 raise in pay.**

**5<sup>th</sup> Business Item. Results of mail in voting was covered in Item 2 above.**

**Next meeting date: May 23, 2023 at 5:30 pm.**

**Meeting adjourned at 6 pm.**



The City of  
**WORCESTER**

**City Clerk Department**

Nikolin Vangjeli, City Clerk

Stephen A.J. Pottle, Deputy City Clerk

Clare M. Robbins, Assistant City Clerk

Event	Date	Time	Location
Burncoat/Greendale Neighborhood Meeting	Thursday, April 6, 2023	6:00PM	St. Michaels On-The-Heights, 340 Burncoat St
Newton Square Neighborhood Meeting	Wednesday, April 12, 2023	6:30PM	Blessed Sacrament Church, 551 Pleasant St
Green Hill Neighborhood Meeting	Monday, April 24, 2023	6:30PM	St. Bernard's Church, 228 Lincoln St
Webster Square Neighborhood Meeting	Thursday, May 4, 2023	7:00PM	Our Lady of Angels Parish, 1222 Main St
Green Island Information Workshop	Thursday, May 11, 2023	12:00PM	Green Island Neighborhood Center, 50 Canton St
Training Resources of America	Thursday, May 18, 2023	5:00PM	Training Resources of America, 2 Foster St
St. Mary's Albanian Festival	Saturday, June 3, 2023	12:00PM	St. Mary's Assumption Albanian Orthodox Church, 535 Salisbury St
Water Lantern Festival	Saturday, June 3, 2023	5:30PM	Elm Park, 138 Russell St
Tatnuck/Moreland Neighborhood Meeting	Monday, June 12, 2023	5:30PM	First Congregational Church, 1070 Pleasant St
Worcester Caribbean American Heritage Festival	Sunday, June 18, 2023	12:00PM	Institute Park, 126 Salisbury St
Worcester African Festival	Saturday, August 5, 2023	TBD	Worcester Common, 455 Main St
Worcester Public Library Block Party	Saturday, August 19, 2023	11:30PM	Worcester Public Library, 3 Salem Sq
Latin American Festival	Saturday, August 19, 2023	TBD	Worcester Common, 455 Main St
Polish Festival	Saturday, August 26, 2023	TBD	White Eagle, 118 Green St
UMass Chan Cancer Walk	Sunday, September 24, 2023	TBD	Polar Park, 100 Madison St

Candidate Name	Office	Certified Signatures
Thu Nguyen	At Large City Council	174
Luis Bonilla	At-Large City Council	
Khrystian King	At-Large City Council	454
Donna Colorio	At-Large City Council	340
Johanna Hampton-Dance	At-Large City Council	341
Maydee Morales	At-Large City Council	324
Bill Coleman	At-Large City Council	347
Kate Toomey	At-Large City Council	293
Domenica Perrone	At-Large City Council	389
Joseph Petty	At-Large City Council	275
Jonathan Rodriguez	At-Large City Council	
Morris A. Bergman	At-Large City Council	359
Guillermo Creamer	At-Large City Council	197
Jose Rivera	At-Large City Council	111
Nicholas Black*	At-Large City Council	
Nicholas Black*	District 1 City Council	
Jenny Pacillo	District 1 City Council	100* Pending Notary
Joseph Rubino	District 1 City Council	
Robert Diaz	District 1 City Council	
Larry Shetler	District 1 City Council	112
David Peterson	District 1 City Council	123
Candy Mero-Carlson	District 2 City Council	138
Robert Bilotta	District 2 City Council	84
Philip Palmieri	District 2 City Council	
George Russell	District 3 Council	128
Feanna Jattan-Singh	District 3 Council	111
Theodore Kostas	District 4 City Council	166
Maureen Schwab	District 4 City Council	110
Luis Ojeda	District 4 City Council	
James Isaac McBride	District 4 City Council	
Maria Montano	District 4 City Council	91
Katia Norford	District 4 City Council	59
Jose Rivera	District 5 City Council	87
Etel Haxhiaj	District 5 City Council	54
Edson Montero	District 5 City Council	99
Edward J. Peters Jr	District 5 City Council	
Laura Clancey	SC At Large	170
Tracy O'Connell Novick	SC At-Large	246
Susan Mailman	SC At-Large	218
Maureen Binienda	SC At-Large	370
Gabriel Rodriguez	SC At-Large	
Molly McCullough	SC District A	101
Vanessa Alvarez	SC District B	9
Collin Reuter	SC District B	
Dianna Biancheria	SC District C	126
Jermoh Kamara	SC District C	101
Alejandro Guardiola	SC District D	95
John Patrick Reed	SC District E	
Nelly Medina	SC District E	33
Kathleen Roy	SC District E	
Tami Dumphy	SC District E	
Jermaine Johnson	SC District F	115



# WHERE DO I VOTE?

**ELECTION TYPE: MUNICIPAL ELESTIONS**  
**ELECTION DATE: 09/05/2023 & 11/07/2023**

VOTER NAME: *First, Middle, Last*  
VOTER ADDRESS: *Street #, Street Name, Apartment #*

## CITY COUNCIL / SCHOOL COMMITTEE DISTRICT

CITY COUNCIL DISTRICT: *DISTRICT #*  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE DISTRICT: *DISTRICT #*

### ASSIGNED POLLING LOCATION:

*Polling Location Name*  
*Polling Location Address, St #, St. Name,*  
*Worcester, MA Zip Code*

**WARD: # - PRECINCT: #**

Questions? Call 508-799-1134 or visit  
[www.worcesterma.gov](http://www.worcesterma.gov) and click  
"Where Do I Vote?"



# DONDE PUEDO VOTAR?

**TIPO DE ELECCIÓN:**  
**FECHA DE ELECCIÓN: 09/05/2023 & 11/07/2023**

NOMBRE DEL VOTANTE: *First, Middle, Last*  
DIRECCIÓN DEL VOTANTE: *Street #, Street Name, Apartment #*

## CONSEJAL DEL DISTRITO / COMITÉ DE MIEMBRO DE ESCUELAS DEL DISTRITO

CONSEJAL DEL DISTRITO: *DISTRICT #*  
COMITÉ DE MIEMBRO DE ESCUELAS DEL DISTRITO: *DISTRICT #*

### UBICACIÓN DEL LUGAR PARA VOTAR:

*Polling Location Name*  
*Polling Location Address, St #, St. Name,*  
*Worcester, MA Zip Code*

**DISTRITO: # - RECINTO: #**

Preguntas? Llame: 508-799-1134  
[www.worcesterma.gov](http://www.worcesterma.gov) y haga clic en  
"¿Dónde voto?"

Dear Voter:

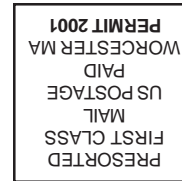
Every 10 years, the City Council District lines are redrawn by the Election's Office. If your City Council District changed, you will likely see new candidates on your ballot this year. The School Committee Election process has also changed and voters will elect District School Committee members. For more information find your School and Council District on the back of this card and visit [www.worcesterma.gov/elections](http://www.worcesterma.gov/elections) to view the candidates.

Estimado votante:

Cada 10 años las líneas de distrito son cambiadas por la oficina de elecciones. Si su distrito ha cambiado, notaras nuevos candidatos en su boleta este año. El proceso de elecciones del comité escolar también ha cambiado y los votantes podrán elegir miembros del comité escolar. Para más información encontraras su distrito escolar y concejal en la parte de atrás de esta tarjeta. visite [www.worcesterma.gov/elections](http://www.worcesterma.gov/elections).

*Voter Name- First, Middle, Last*  
*Street #, Suffix, St. Name, St. Type, Apt # City,*  
*State, Zip-Code*

**2023 VOTER NOTICE - READ CAREFULLY**  
AVISO AL VOTANTE DE 2023 - LEA ATENTAMENTE



Election Commission  
City of Worcester  
455 Main Street Rm 208  
Worcester MA 01608-1886



# MASSACHUSETTS COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Priority Legislation for 2023-2024 Legislative Session

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## 1). Resolutions recognizing the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on women and girls, especially women of color in the Commonwealth (H.3305)

**Lead Sponsor:** Representative Brandy Fluker Oakley

**Status:** Referred to the Committee on House Rules

This resolution urges the Governor to (1) uphold the rights of crisis-affected and forcibly displaced populations further affected by COVID-19, (2) to place mental healthcare as a priority in the Commonwealth, (3) to ask all of the 351 cities and towns to also support this resolution.

## 2). An Act relative to birthing justice in the Commonwealth (S.1415)

**Lead Sponsor:** Senator Liz Miranda

**Status:** Referred to Joint Committee on Public Health

This bill introduces a framework to improve maternal health outcomes and advance recommendations from the Special Commission on Racial Inequities in Maternal Health, including better integrating midwifery care into our maternal health care system to improve access to out-of-hospital birthing options and reducing financial and administrative barriers to the creation of free-standing birth centers.

## 3). An Act providing reproductive health care to incarcerated individuals (H.2371)

**Lead Sponsors:** Representative Jay Livingstone & Representative Kay Khan

**Status:** Referred to Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security

This bill would require access to contraceptive services, counseling, and abortion care for incarcerated people.

## 4). An Act relative to rehabilitation, re-entry, and human rights for incarcerated persons (H.2325/S.1493)

**Lead Sponsors:** Senator Cynthia Stone Creem and Representative Brandy Fluker Oakley

**Status:** Referred to Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security

This bill will establish universal baseline standards for every person incarcerated in Massachusetts state prisons, county jails, and the house of Corrections. Instead of focusing on a culture of punishment, this bill seeks to shift correctional priorities to rehabilitation and re-entry.

## 5). An Act Supporting Parents Running for Public Office (S.348/H.590)

**Lead Sponsors:** Senator Patricia Jehlen and Representatives Mike Connolly and Joan Meschino

The John W. McCormack Building • 1 Ashburton Place, 10<sup>th</sup> Floor, Suite 1018A • Boston, Massachusetts 02108 • (617) 670-8260 •

[www.mass.gov/women](http://www.mass.gov/women)

**Status:** Referred to the Joint Committee on Election Laws

This bill would allow candidates running for public office can use their campaign funds for their childcare needs, regardless of gender or family status.

## **6). An Act to increase access to disposable menstrual products (S.1381/H.534)**

**Lead Sponsors:** Representatives Jay D. Livingstone, Christine P. Barber & Senator Jehlen

**Status:** Referred to Joint Committee on Public Health

Also known as the I AM Bill, this bill would provide access to free menstrual products to all menstruating individuals in schools, shelters & prisons.

## **7). An Act to ensure legal parentage equality (S.947/H.1713)**

**Lead Sponsors:** Senator Julian Cyr and Representatives Sarah K. Peake and Hannah Kane

**Status:** Referred to the Joint Committee on the Judiciary

This bill would ensure that all children can access the security of legal parentage, regardless of the circumstances of their birth, helping to protect diverse forms of families.

## **8). An Act providing for climate change adaptation infrastructure and affordable housing investments in the Commonwealth (H.2890)**

**Lead Sponsors:** Senator Jaime Eldridge

**Status:** Referred to Joint Committee on Revenue

This bill seeks to increase the amount of funding for Governor Bakers initial proposal. The new funding would be implemented in the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness program and the MA Climate Clearinghouse.

## **9). An Act establishing Medicare for all in Massachusetts (S.744/H.1239)**

**Lead Sponsors:** Representatives Lindsay Sabadosa, Denise C. Garlick & Senator James B. Eldridge

**Status:** Referred to Joint Committee on Health Care Financing

This bill would guarantee health care access to all residents without regard to citizenship status, incarceration, financial or employment status, ethnicity, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, previous health problems, or geographic location.

## **10). Study women veterans and long-term effects of combat on motherhood (H.3710)**

**Lead Sponsors:** Representative Shirley Arriaga

**Status:** Referred to Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs

This resolve would establish a special legislative commission to examine female veterans who have experienced combat and whether that experience has either short or long-term impacts on motherhood.



The Research Bureau

**Bureau Brief—Worcester’s 2023 Election, a Primer**

On Tuesday, November 7, 2023, the City of Worcester will hold an election for its major municipal offices: the City Council and the School Committee. These elections are held on odd-numbered years, and each member of the City Council and School Committee serve two-year terms. All of Worcester’s election rules can be found within the [Worcester City Charter](#), which serves as Worcester’s governing document, and on the website of the [Board of Election Commissioners](#).

**Key Dates for the 2023 Municipal Election:**

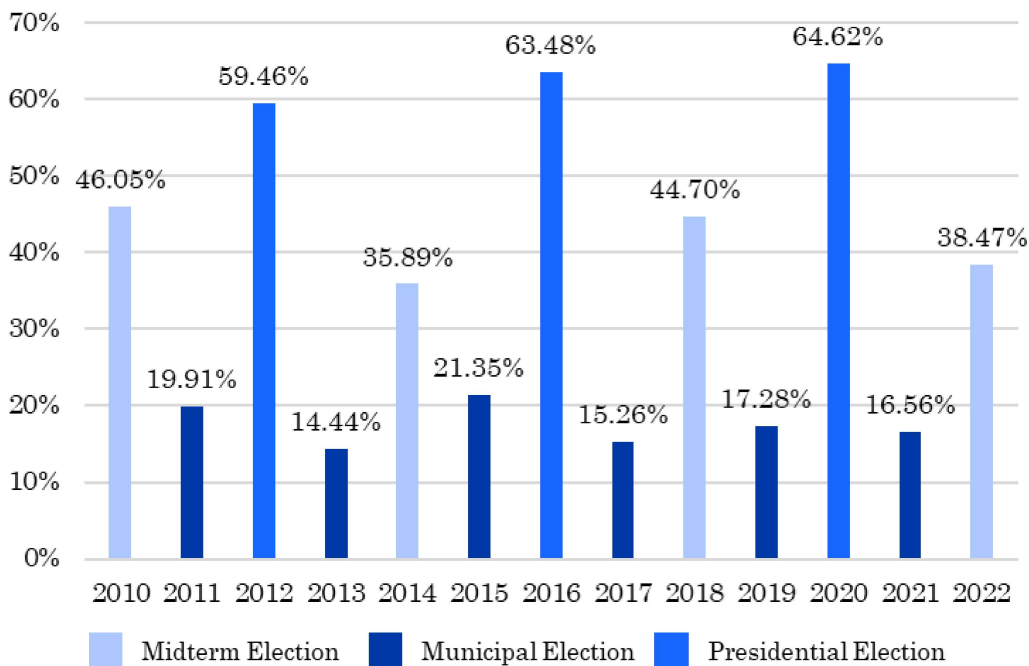
- **May 30:** Last day to submit nomination papers for certification of signatures.
- **June 8:** Last day to withdraw or object to nomination of candidates
- **August 26:** Last day to register to vote in preliminary election.
- **September 5:** Preliminary Election
- **September 12:** Last day to decline nomination for Mayor, Council, or School Committee
- **October 28:** Last day to register to vote in general election
- **November 7:** Municipal General Election

Worcester's City Council consists of 11 members. Six of its members are considered "at-large." Any resident of the city may vote for an "at-large" member. Five Council Members represent one of five City Council districts; residents of those districts may vote for their district’s candidates for City Council. Worcester’s Mayor serves as the Chair of both the City Council and the School Committee, and is the official head of the city for all ceremonial purposes. Every at-large candidate for City Council is automatically a candidate for Mayor unless they choose only to run for councilor at-large and not additionally for mayor.

Worcester's School Committee consists of nine members. As of the 2023 election, the Worcester School Committee consists of two at-large members (for whom any registered voter in the city can vote), and six district committee members (for whom any registered voter living in that district can vote). These districts, labelled "A-F," are distinct from the City Council districts. The Mayor serves as the Chair of the School

Research in the Public Interest

**Turnout Percentage in November Elections Since 2010**



Source: City of Worcester Election Commission, Worcester City Clerk

Committee, but has no additional powers besides the ability to vote on issues before the Committee.

There are generally only two requirements to run for a City Council or School Committee seat: (1) to be a registered voter and (2) pass a residency requirement. At-Large members of either group must have been residents of the City for at least one year before their election. District members of each group must be residents of the district in which they are running for at least one year before their election as well. If both conditions are met, then a city resident can choose to pull nominating papers to run for a particular seat.

Once someone has pulled nominating papers, they need to acquire a certain number of signatures from registered voters living in the city in order to appear on a ballot at all. District based candidates must get 100 signatures from residents living in their districts, and At-Large candidates must get 300 signatures from anyone living in Worcester. For the 2023 election, residents looking to run for office must receive their signatures by May 30—giving them about two months from when the nominating papers are available to when they must return them to City Hall.

Once all nominating papers are in, and signatures have been checked for validity, the final election of members of the City Council and the School Committee may have to potentially pass through one more major step. The "preliminary election," which in 2023 is scheduled for Tuesday, September 5th, is necessary only if there are more than twice as many candidates as there are the number of available seats. This election reduces the number of candidates in the general election in November to two for each district seat, twelve for at-large City Council, and four for at-large School Committee.

Those running for an at-large seat will "win" their seat if they are among the (1) top six vote getters if they are running for a City Council seat or (2) the top two if they are running for a School Committee seat.

Elections for city-wide offices are officially (Section 7-3 of the Worcester City Charter) non-partisan. Even if a candidate personally identifies as part of a political party, that identification is not present whatsoever on any official election materials. In addition, the names are placed on ballots in a random order, based on a drawing done by the Board of Election Commissioners before the election.

Historically, elections for municipal office simply have not had the same turnout as statewide or federal offices (and especially not the same as Presidential years). In 2021, out of 104,595 voters, turnout in the general election was only 16.56% (the preliminary election for City Council Districts 1 and 5 had only 10.38% turnout from voters eligible to vote in those elections!). Compared even to the 2022 midterm election, in which there were 110,357 registered voters and 38.47% turnout was low for the 2021 municipal election. The November 2020 presidential election, in which there were 111,318 registered voters, had 64.62% turnout.

Turnout for municipal elections is crucial; decisions made in City Hall by the City Council or the School Committee have direct and tangible effects on the lives of all City residents, in ways that decisions made in Boston or Washington D.C., sometimes do not. Participation in elections, both in going out to vote in preliminary and general elections and in running for office, is important for a well-run, vibrant, and prosperous city for all.

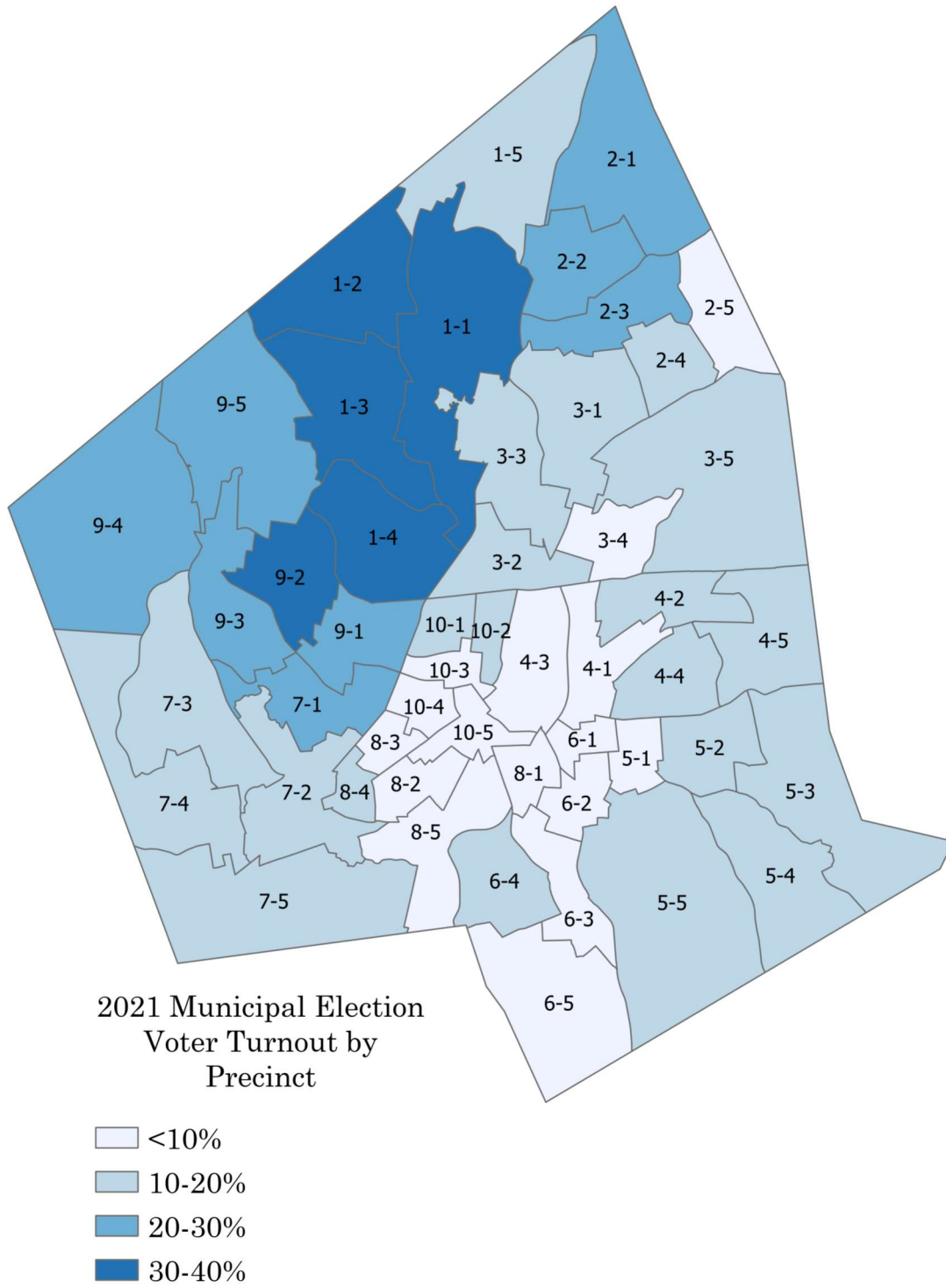
For information about where to vote and in which City Council and School Committee district you reside, The Research Bureau has created an easy-to-use online tool. [You can find that tool here.](#)

Finally, prior to the November election, The Research Bureau will release a report on “Questions for the Candidates” and host a series of debates for City Council and School Committee elections throughout September and October.



Voter Turnout by Precinct in the 2021 Municipal Election

Research in the Public Interest



Source: City of Worcester Election Commission, Worcester City Clerk