

CITY OF WORCESTER
PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

Monday, April 6, 2026
Esther Howland (South) Chamber
Convened: 5:16 P.M.
Adjourned: 6:40 P.M.

MAYOR

Joseph M. Petty

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chairperson Gary Rosen

Vice Chairperson Khrystian E King

Councilor Kathleen M Toomey



CLERK OF THE CITY COUNCIL

Nikolin Vangjeli

www.worcesterma.gov

City Hall - 455 Main Street Worcester, Massachusetts

Present Were:

Chairperson Councilor Gary Rosen

Councilor Khrystian E. King

Councilor Kathleen M. Toomey

Also:

Commissioner of Health and Human Services Seema Dixit

Deputy Commissioner of Health and Human Services and
Interim Officer/Director of Veterans' Services Alex R.

Arriaga

Umass Chan Medical School Professor Dr. Michael P. Hirsh

Board of Health Chairperson Frances Anthes

Professor and Chair of Family Medicine at Tufts University

School of Medicine Dr. Wayne Altman

Deputy City Clerk Clare M. Robbins, clerk

1. Virtual Attendee Call-In Information

- a. Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021 and in order to ensure active, public engagement, the City of Worcester currently allows for both in-person and remote participation at all City Council and Standing Committee meetings. To partake in the meeting, you may attend the meeting in-person within the meeting location, follow the below link to join via Zoom or dial the direct line as indicated. If you join a Zoom meeting by dialing in with a phone number, you can raise your hand by dialing *9.

Public Health and Human Services Committee Zoom Link:
<https://worcesterma.zoomgov.com/j/1610140100>

Public Health and Human Services Committee Zoom Phone Number: +1 646 828 7666

Public Health and Human Services Committee Zoom Access Code: 161 014 0100

2. Approval of the Minutes

- a. Order - That the City Council Standing Committee of Public Health and Human Services hereby approves the minutes of the Public Health and Human Services Committee meeting on February 2, 2026.

Chairperson Councilor Rosen read the item and moved for a roll call vote to adopt the item. Order adopted on a roll call vote of 3 Yeas and 0 Nays

3. Miscellaneous Items

- a. Order of Councilor Gary Rosen - Request Standing Committee on Public Health and Human Services hold a public hearing for the purpose of making a recommendation to the City Council concerning the advisability of endorsing and supporting H.1370 (An Act Relative to Massachusetts Primary Care for You, filed by Representative Rich Haggerty), S.867 (An Act Relative to Primary Care for You, filed by Senator Cindy Friedman), and H.2537 (An Act Relative to Primary Care Access, filed by Representative Greg Schwartz). Said bills have already been endorsed by the Worcester Board of Health, the cities of Springfield and Cambridge, the Mass. Medical Society and UMass Memorial Health, among several other major medical societies and advocacy organizations both regionally and nationally. Said historic Primary Care legislation, known as Primary Care for You (PC4YOU), will increase access to Primary Care making it free for the patients of practices that opt-in (no copays or deductibles), and will dramatically decrease health inequities in Massachusetts.
91 CC January 20, 2026

Chairperson Councilor Rosen read the item and discussed challenges with providing primary care in Massachusetts which included trends relative to the declining amount of primary care physicians resulting with an increase in specialized practitioners with the UMass Chan Medical School Professor.

Chairperson Councilor Rosen then discussed the primary care access crisis, how PC4YOU can double the money invested in primary care, provide a monthly payment per patient in lieu of payments per visit, remove copays and deductibles from primary care, remove health insurance from primary care, and create a primary care taskforce of 25 members, the approximately twenty (20) other states working on legislation with Massachusetts leading the country relative to fixing the primary care crisis, the thirty (30) endorsements of said legislation and the importance relative to Worcester joining as an endorser, and the expected timeline relative to the passage of H.1370, S.867, and H.2537 with the Professor and Chair of Family Medicine at Tufts University School.

Chairperson Councilor Rosen spoke concerning the Board of Health's interest in H.1370, S.867, and H.2537 with the Board of Health Chairperson.

Chairperson Councilor Rosen then highlighted the primary care provider shortage, low reimbursement rates, and overcrowded community health centers with the Commissioner of Health and Human Services.

Chairperson Councilor Rosen discussed the importance of recruiting and retaining primary care physicians with the Professor and Chair of Family Medicine at Tufts University School.

Chairperson Councilor Rosen recognized Councilor Toomey, who discussed short terms funding sources, how said legislation in the long term will pay for itself by reducing unnecessary emergency department visits and hospitalizations, and highlighted that the average family doctor salary is approximately fifty-five percent (55%) of the average specialist salary with the Professor and Chair of Family Medicine at Tufts University School.

Chairperson Councilor Rosen recognized Councilor King, who discussed increased patient wait times in emergency departments, challenges relative to patients utilizing emergency departments as primary care offices, the inadequate healthcare pipeline and the impacts nurse practitioners and physician assistants have as primary care providers to said pipeline, the impact of primary care providers collaborating with mental health professionals, and the importance relative to the ability to provide medical translations with the UMass Chan Medical School Professor and Professor, Chair of Family Medicine at Tufts University School, and Board of Health Chairperson.

Chairperson Councilor Rosen discussed the feasibility of alleviating student loan repayment taken out by medical students if said students decide to practice primary or family care with the Professor and Chair of Family Medicine at Tufts University School.

Chairperson Councilor Rosen then brought forth the following Chairman's Order on a roll call vote of 3 Yeas and 0 Nays: "Request City Clerk work with the City Council Staff to solicit feedback from the city's State Delegates related to H.1370 (An Act Relative to Massachusetts Primary Care for You, filed by Representative Rich Haggerty), H.2537 (An Act Relative to Primary Care Access, filed by Representative Greg Schwartz), and S.867 (An Act Relative to Primary Care for You, filed by Senator Cindy Friedman). Said feedback should include each of their thoughts on the legislation, their recommendations to the City Council related to supporting the legislation, as well as any pros and cons they are aware of concerning its passage."

Chairperson Councilor Rosen then stated for the record that, as Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Health and Human Services, he would be in favor of endorsing and supporting H.1370 (An Act Relative to Massachusetts Primary Care for You, filed by Representative Rich Haggerty), H.2537 (An Act Relative to Primary Care Access, filed by Representative Greg Schwartz), and S.867 (An Act Relative to Primary Care for You, filed by Senator Cindy Friedman).

Chairperson Councilor Rosen recognized Councilor Toomey, who spoke concerning the feasibility of recommending the item be held until the written responses from the city's State Delegates could be provided to the City Council.

Chairperson Councilor Rosen recognized Councilor King, who spoke concerning the importance of recommending approval of the item.

Chairperson Councilor Rosen discussed whether further developments are in process relative to the three (3) bills with the Professor and Chair of Family Medicine at Tufts University School.

Chairperson Councilor Rosen recognized Councilor Toomey and Councilor King, who spoke concerning the item.

Chairperson Councilor Rosen then moved for a roll call vote to recommend approval of a Resolution that the City Council of the City of Worcester does hereby endorse and support H.1370 (An Act Relative to Massachusetts Primary Care for You, filed by Representative Rich Haggerty), H.2537 (An Act Relative to Primary Care Access, filed by Representative Greg Schwartz), and S.867 (An Act Relative to Primary Care for You, filed by Senator Cindy Friedman).

Recommend Approval on a roll call vote of 3 Yeas and 0 Nays

Chairman's Orders

Request City Clerk work with the City Council Staff to solicit feedback from the city's State Delegates related to H.1370 (An Act Relative to Massachusetts Primary Care for You, filed by Representative Rich Haggerty), H.2537 (An Act Relative to Primary Care Access, filed by Representative Greg Schwartz), and S.867 (An Act Relative to Primary Care for You, filed by Senator Cindy Friedman). Said feedback should include each of their thoughts on the legislation, their recommendations to the City Council related to supporting the legislation, as well as any pros and cons they are aware of concerning its passage.

- b. Order of Councilor Gary Rosen, Councilor Morris A. Bergman, Councilor Robert A. Bilotta, Councilor Tony Economou, Councilor John P. Fresolo, Councilor Khrystian E. King, Councilor Satya B. Mitra, Councilor Luis A. Ojeda, Councilor Jose A. Rivera, Councilor Kathleen M. Toomey and Mayor Joseph M. Petty - Request Standing Committee on Public Health and Human Services hold one or more public hearings, far in advance of next winter, in an effort to help the city identify and to secure a sufficient number of safe and secure emergency shelter locations that serve the needs of the unhoused population during the winter of 2026-2027. Further, request said public hearings should also focus on strategies to increase the number of individuals who volunteer at said emergency shelter locations as well as training for said individuals.

9i CC February 3, 2026

Chairperson Councilor Rosen read the item and discussed the city's winter 2025-2026 temporary overflow shelter operations and the development of a new day resource center to be located at 134 Gold St.

Chairperson Councilor Rosen then discussed the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) working with the Housing Development Division to review past and current shelter capacity, and the restructuring of Southern Middlesex Opportunity Council (SMOC) women's shelter to include permanent supportive housing and increase temporary shelter capacity with the Commissioner of Health and Human Services.

Chairperson Councilor Rosen recognized Councilor Toomey, who discussed the increased amount of unhoused women and elderly individuals living in Worcester, the importance relative to providing specialized housing for unhoused individuals with medical conditions, the importance of providing translation services for limited English proficiency (LEP) individuals, and difficulties relative to finding sufficient shelter volunteers with the Commissioner of Health and Human Services.

Chairperson Councilor Rosen discussed the feasibility of recruiting college students to volunteer at shelters with the Commissioner of Health and Human Services.

Chairperson Councilor Rosen recognized Councilor King, who spoke concerning the item.

Chairperson Councilor Rosen moved for a roll call vote to recommend the item be held.

Recommend Hold on a roll call vote of 3 Yeas and 0 Nays