

TO: Members of the Common Council

FROM: Mayor Stocks

DATE: June 16, 2026

RE: **Withdrawing from the Jefferson County Economic Development Consortium (JCEDC)**

Attached for the Common Council's consideration is a resolution authorizing the Mayor to provide the required six-month notice of withdrawal from the Jefferson County Economic Development Consortium (JCEDC), consistent with the terms outlined in the intergovernmental agreement governing membership in the organization.

This recommendation follows several months of discussion and engagement with JCEDC leadership regarding concerns previously raised by the City related to communication, transparency, accountability, and overall value provided to member communities. Earlier this year, the Finance Committee directed the Mayor's Office to engage directly with JCEDC leadership to determine whether these concerns could be adequately addressed.

During these discussions, it became increasingly apparent that JCEDC is actively considering significant organizational restructuring or reorganization. However, despite ongoing conversations, few specifics have been provided regarding what the proposed structure would mean for current and future member communities.

At present, important and fundamental questions remain unanswered, including:

- What future membership costs or financial commitments would be expected of participating municipalities?
- What specific services, programs, or deliverables would member communities receive under the new structure?
- What level of governance participation or decision-making authority would member communities retain?
- How would accountability, performance expectations, and measurable outcomes be established moving forward?

Given the lack of clarity surrounding these basic operational and governance questions, it is difficult to justify continued membership in an organization that may soon operate under a substantially different model without clearly defining the associated costs, services, expectations, or benefits.

The City has an obligation to ensure that taxpayer dollars are invested responsibly and that organizations receiving public support demonstrate transparency, accountability, and measurable value. While efforts were made to engage constructively with JCEDC leadership regarding these matters, those discussions ultimately yielded limited certainty regarding the organization's future direction or the City's anticipated return on investment.

For these reasons, the attached resolution recommends that the City provides the required six-month notice to withdraw from JCEDC at the conclusion of the current membership term. This recommendation should not be viewed as a withdrawal from regional collaboration or economic development partnerships. The City of Watertown remains strongly committed to regional cooperation and will continue pursuing partnerships and initiatives that support business growth, workforce development, housing, entrepreneurship, and long-term economic vitality throughout the region.

Additionally, nothing in this action would prevent the City from rejoining JCEDC in the future should the organization's restructured model ultimately align with the City's priorities, provide clearly defined services and governance, and demonstrate a sound investment of taxpayer resources.

Thank you for your consideration of the attached resolution.