

**MINUTES OF THE COMMON COUNCIL  
DECEMBER 1, 2014**

A special meeting of the Common Council of the City of Oneida, NY was held on the first day of December, 2014 at 6:30 o'clock P.M. in Council Chambers, Oneida Municipal Building, 109 N. Main Street, Oneida, NY.

The Meeting was called to order by Deputy Mayor Helen Acker

PRESENT: Councilors Brahim Zogby, Michael Bowe, Erwin Smith, Helen Acker,  
James Chamberlain and Thomas Simchik

ABSENT: Mayor Alden M. Smith

ALSO PRESENT: City Clerk Susan Pulverenti  
City Engineer Jon Rauscher  
City Comptroller Linda Pease  
Fire Chief Kevin Salerno

**DISCUSSION OF 2015 MAYOR'S BUDGET**

*Sewer Fund Budget*

The City Engineer prepared a power point display of the 2015 Sewer Budget - Wastewater Treatment Plant and Sanitary Sewer Conveyance System, which is attached to these minutes.

City Engineer Jon Rauscher said the City has 40 miles of gravity sewer and displayed a map. He began to go over the proposed sewer budget line-by-line starting with a chart of the category breakdowns and historic expenses/revenues. The salaries line for the sanitary conveyance (piping system) have increased because there will be time spent on the W. Elm Street sewer extension, which is 100% assessed back to the property owners, and he noted there is \$45K on the revenue side. A video inspection unit (push camera) will be purchased for \$50K to look at the conveyance system to see what needs rehabilitation or replacement and catalogued. The GIS mapping software to implement the mapping will also be purchased to go with the current software. It will take 3-4 years to look at and get a handle on the system. Councilor Smith asked if the benefits for DPW workers who work on the sewer could be charged back to the Sewer Fund, and a lengthy discussion ensued. The Comptroller said she will increase the 0109 line by \$15,473 and decrease it in the General Fund fringe benefits line. The City Clerk questioned why the Sewer Fund was being charged \$18,700 for the City audit. Last year the Council approved up to \$21,500 to be spent on the audit, but \$27K was paid without the Comptroller coming back to the Council for further approval. The City Clerk said the new documents for the audit came from D'Arcangelo, and they have projected the cost for the 2014 audit to be \$19,500. The Mayor has to look at the new contract before it is placed on the agenda. The 403 contract line for the D'Arcangelo audit was dropped by \$13,600 to \$5K. A new line for flood damage repairs was added for incidentals, such as motors. FEMA reimbursed 75% of the losses due to the flood, and NYS is planning on reimbursing the City for the additional 25% that the City was not reimbursed for. The City Engineer, while he is waiting for further information from the State, is working on the breakdown of what will be reimbursed and to which fund the monies will be allocated to. The payments to other communities line was increased to \$34,665 based on current bills and contingency was dropped to \$20K. The miscellaneous line was renamed Pipe Conveyance Materials & Supplies. A new line transferring \$61,282 to Water was added to cover the expenses associated with sewer billing/customer service by the Water Department. The City Engineer explained the materials and supplies needs, building/vehicle maintenance, chemicals, laboratory, utilities, and training lines. The projected revenues for 2015 are \$2.3M. The Comptroller noted the updates for the new lines to reflect the budgeted amount, as well as any lines that changed. The Sewer Fund will transfer \$76,481 to the General Fund. City Engineer Jon Rauscher said the sewer rates will not be increased in 2015.

*Council Discussion*

The Council continued to hash over the proposed budget. City Engineer Rauscher said the City received a \$50K grant for sidewalks (locations to be determined), and he will prepare a Capital Project sheet. The Capital Project sheet for the grant for the Kallet Civic Center and Recreation Center will be updated to \$250K (grant) to reflect the \$50K for the Recreation Center boiler. The \$50K was included in the original grant received, but was left out of the proposed budget. Since a determination has not been received from DASNY, another \$23,400 from the General Fund is included in this Capital Project for bidding documents, just in case that part cannot be charged back to the grant. The City Engineer will prepare an updated Capital Project sheet.

The City Engineer said he has two quotes for aerial mosquito spraying. For the top of the line larvicide, it is \$12,250 per application and should be done at least once. The other option, if using lesser quality chemicals, the cost for one application would be \$7,250. The need for a new sprayer was reiterated with

the cost being \$13K. The Comptroller said the useful life of a sprayer is five years and it cannot be bonded for. Financing rates with the different banks were discussed, and the Comptroller said credit unions cannot be used for financing. The City Engineer went over the originally submitted FEMA requests for reimbursement. He stated he could not get a clear answer from FEMA as to why the buildings and equipment reimbursement was lower than requested, but he will continue working on this. The Comptroller went over the amounts received so far in each category. The City Engineer said he received notice today that further reimbursements of \$905K are forthcoming.

Staffing issues, including employee titles and job descriptions were discussed, and the City Clerk said the Civil Service Commission is the authority that makes changes, not the Council. The Motor Equipment Operator in the traffic department will be moved back to the DPW, and a part-time person will fill in as the traffic assistant. Two additional seasonal part-time employees will be hired to handle the City's yard waste needs. The City Engineer said he has requested a "Civil Engineer Tech" as an entry level position to be partially paid from the Sewer Fund (\$22,500) and the General Fund (\$22,500), as well as a part-time account clerk to work hand-in-hand with the Comptroller's office on purchase orders and vouchers. The time frame for when the "Civil Engineer Tech" would commence employment, civil service testing and training were debated, ultimately agreeing to leave this in the budget as requested, starting January 1, 2015 (vote 5-1 Bowe). The City Engineer said he would check with Civil Service for the test date. With the Comptroller also requesting a part-time account clerk, the Council decided (vote 5-1 Zogby) that one new part-time hire (25 hours week/\$13.00 per hour) could split their time between the two offices (15 hours Comptroller/10 hours City Engineer's office).

The Council revisited the purchase of vehicles for the Codes Enforcement Officer and Police Department. Discussion included using an old city car for the Code's vehicle, and the City Engineer said he needs a dependable vehicle. The Council agreed (vote 5-1 Smith) to finance a new vehicle for the Codes office. A debate of the financing term of 3 years versus 4 years for the Police cars and Code's vehicle ended with the majority of Council (vote 5-1 Bowe wanted 4 yrs) agreeing to finance for three years. The Council discussed and decided the equipment for the Police Department would be financed for 5 years versus 7 years (vote 4-2 Bowe wanted 7 yrs., Simchik voted no). The Council (vote 5-1 Bowe) agreed to include \$31K for ground spraying, but declined to approve the aerial spraying for mosquitoes (vote 2 Chamberlain/Acker - 4 no).

The dog enumeration was removed from the City Clerk's budget saving \$10,935 in PT help, \$500 in supplies and \$1,200 for training was also cut. Councilor Zogby suggested lowering the salary paid to the City Chamberlain, and the rest of the Council disagreed. The salaries for buildings are contractual and cannot be changed. The various budget lines in the Law portion were considered, and the "419 line" was cut by \$36K dropping it to \$14K. The line for the Purchase of Property for \$5K was removed, as the Council was unclear what property, if any, was being purchased. Councilor Zogby questioned once again the hourly rates and hours worked for the three clerks in the Police Department, and the City Clerk said they are all in the CSEA union. Councilor Bowe said you would have to negotiate with the union to change hours or hourly rates. Councilor Bowe said the position could be eliminated, but then you cannot hire part-time people to do the same job. Councilor Smith said the City has cut so many people in the past, that now we are at the point where we need people to do the necessary work. Councilor Bowe suggested that the building demolition line be lowered, and the Council (vote 6-0) agreed to cut \$10K making the budget \$25K.

Councilor Zogby recommended that the Memorial Day Parade Committee raise funds themselves and that the City's donation of \$1,500 be cut. The Comptroller said the City has removed funding for non-profits. Councilor Smith, who is on the Memorial Association Committee, spoke passionately in favor of the donation, although he said he would not vote on the decision. Councilor Zogby said when the City gives money to an organization, the City loses control over how it is going to be used and said in his opinion there was misuse of the funds last year. Councilor Zogby said the parade is to honor the veterans and anyone running for political office can get into the parade, and the City underwrites it. Councilor Smith said he is unsure of exactly what the by-laws say relative to who can be in the parade. Councilor Bowe suggested having conditions go along with the donation, and if those conditions cannot be met then pull the donation. Councilor Simchik said we are funding the parade through the insurance costs. Councilor Zogby said this is the only non-profit to be funded. Discussion included the cost of bands and trophies. Councilor Simchik said he would rather meet with the Association and take the funding out of contingency if Council decides to fund the parade at a later date. The Council decided not to fund the Memorial Day Parade (Vote 2 yes; 3 no-Zogby, Simchik, Acker; 1 abstain Smith).

Councilor Bowe recommended that mower for the Recreation Department be included in the 2015 budget. After consideration, the Council agreed to budget \$10K for the mower (vote 5-2 Smith, Simchik wanted \$9K). Councilor Zogby said the Mayor has allocated \$15K for flowers and pots for downtown, and this is not the year to do this without a plan or preparation. Councilor Bowe said there will be a corridor of downtown torn up this summer. Councilor Zogby said there are several organizations who would like to help with creating a floral atmosphere downtown. Councilor Bowe said a special downtown tax assessment district has been used in the past. Councilor Acker said the City has to invest in the community and part of that is to make it look inviting. Councilor Smith said that the Council is debating spending \$15,000 for flowers, but yet they don't want to spend \$1,500 to honor our veterans, and

Councilor Chamberlain concurred. Councilor Acker said the City decided not to fund non-profits. The Council ultimately voted (2 yes Chamberlain, Acker - 4 no) to cut the \$15K from the budget for flowers. The \$700 for the City Historian will remain in the budget, as the Council determined a new historian should be hired.

Councilor Zogby questioned if Civil Service Officer Peg Margo would be in attendance at a meeting, and the City Clerk said she would be here tomorrow night. Councilor Acker said questions to Ms. Margo should be about the position, not the person. The health insurance and open enrollment policies were briefly discussed, and the City Clerk read aloud the various health insurance rate increases. The Comptroller said that the Fund Balance history shows that approximately 40% of what is allotted to come from Fund Balance is actually used, but cautioned the Council not to assume history will be repeated.

The Deputy Mayor said the tax cap rate will need to be determined tomorrow night. The tentative date for adoption of the budget is December 15, 2014. Deputy Mayor Acker asked the Comptroller to prepare the tax rate information with a 9% and a 10% tax rate increase after all the updates from this evening's discussions have been made to the budget.

The revenue expected to be received from the County relevant to Oneida Indian Nation's agreement with the Governor was lowered to \$101,577 per a letter/resolution Mayor Smith received from the Madison County Board of Supervisors. The City Chamberlain will be provided with the list of parcels for her to check in comparison to the tax rolls. Discussion included the initial \$11.2M the County received pursuant to the Governor's agreement with the Nation, the \$3.2M in revenue the County expects to receive next year from the Nation, and the County's resolution that the payment to the City of Oneida is a one-time payment. Councilor Zogby requested that the City Clerk make a list of the items that need to be addressed during the next year, so a plan for next year's budget process can be created. Councilor Bowe said one gain made this year is leasing/financing, and Deputy Mayor Acker said the Council needs to look at health insurance also.

Motion to adjourn by Councilor Chamberlain

The regular meeting is hereby adjourned at 10:28 p.m.

**CITY OF ONEIDA**

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Susan Pulverenti, City Clerk