

**MINUTES OF THE COMMON COUNCIL  
MARCH 23, 2015**

A special meeting of the Common Council of the City of Oneida, NY was held on the twenty-third day of March, 2015 at 6:30 o'clock P.M. in Council Chambers, Oneida Municipal Building, 109 N. Main Street, Oneida, NY.

Meeting was called to order by Mayor Alden M. Smith

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

ALSO PRESENT: Assessor Lonnie Stedman  
City Clerk Susan Pulverenti  
Fire Chief Kevin Salerno

**PUBLIC HEARING ON FLUORIDATION**

Mayor Smith explained the guidelines for the public hearing, noting that Dr. Connett would be doing a short presentation first, and then the floor will be opened to everyone else who would like to share their views. The Mayor opened the public hearing on fluoridation at 6:35 p.m.

**APPEARANCES**

Dr. Paul Connett, retired Chemistry Professor St. Lawrence University, gave a power point presentation on the case against fluoride, which is also the title of his book. He explained his background, adding he has spent 19 years studying fluoride. He said that in the five years since the publication of his book, there has been no scientific rebuttal to its contents. He itemized the common sense and ethical arguments against fluoride, as well as the scientific arguments. He said the vast majority of countries do not fluoridate their water and said it is an Anglo American practice. He said fluoride is a poor medical practice, as you cannot control the dose. He asked where the studies are on communities that have had fluoridated water for many years and said the only studies being done are on teeth. Dr. Connett said fluoride has not been shown to be an essential nutrient. He displayed a chart of how fluoride affects the human cells. He said fluoride occurs naturally in the water, but so does arsenic and that doesn't mean it is safe. He spoke of the levels of fluoride in a mother's milk vs. bottled milk and said water fluoridation removes nature's protection. Dr. Connett said fluoride works primarily on the outside of the tooth, not from inside the body, so he questioned why swallow it. He asked the Council if they had the right to force people to drink fluoridated water when they don't want it and asked for a show of hands from the audience as to who was against fluoridation. He said there are better ways of fighting tooth decay in low income families and explained a program instituted in Scotland called the "ChildSmile" program, which involves teaching tooth brushing, promoting healthy snacks, fluoride applications, and teachers working with parents. He said that our kids need more brushing, more fruits and vegetables and less sugar. He explained about the history of the sugar industry, sugar lobby and noted various quotes from the 60's and 70's. He said he had some informational handouts available regarding this. Dr. Connett said that the scientific data is overwhelming that fluoride is neuro toxic and interferes with the brain. He said there are over 100 animal experiments, where learning and memory were affected. He said that studies done in Mexico, China, India, and Iran show that fluoride lowers IQ in children. Dr. Connett said the Madison County Health Department is promoting fluoridation, assuring that it is safe, and he asked that they provide evidence to dispute facts that fluoride is neuro toxic. He said the Madison Health Department is just following the orders from the NYS Department of Health, which is pro fluoridation, and the NYS health department is just following orders from the Centers of Disease Control. He said they are protecting a policy that has gone on for seventy years, rather than question that policy. He said the same things apply to the chain of command for the American Dental Society, State Association and local societies. He said that dentists only received bits of one-sided information in dental school, and since they graduated and opened their practices, they don't have time to study the literature like he does being retired. He stated that they are just regurgitating what their professors told them and what these organizations tell them. He said the government has no right to force medication on you; the science shows it causes harm, and there are no adequate margins of safety. He said that the evidence that fluoridation lowers tooth decay is very weak, and he spoke of the largest study done in 1990 where 39K children were looked at and cited the results. He asked again that evidence be produced to demonstrate fluoride's effectiveness. He said the FDA has never regulated fluoride for ingestion and asked why. He suggested that political and economic influences continue to push this practice. Dr. Connett said fluoridation is a massive betrayal of public trust when a doctor or dentist gets on a platform and says that this practice is safe and effective when they haven't read the literature.

Dr. Samuel Barr, Dentist, 231 Broad Street, Oneida said he previously addressed the Council at the first hearing and said he believes that fluoride is safe and effective, even though Dr. Connett believes that he is betraying the public's trust. Dr. Barr said he read Dr. Connett's book, and he didn't think that much of it.

He said that there was only one thing that he agreed with was the statement that the effect of fluoride is topical. Fluoride is most effective when the teeth are continually exposed to low levels of fluoride. He said the way that happens is the fluoride is in your saliva and having fluoride in the water is actually the safest way. He said that Dr. Connett said that fluoride is neuro toxic, and it is at high doses, but so is oxygen. Dr. Barr said if a scuba driver is given a 100% oxygen tank to use, he will die, and if a premature baby is exposed to 100% oxygen, they very often go blind. He said that it's not being honest to say something is neuro toxic without taking dosage into consideration. He said the research that Dr. Connett quoted is all based on high levels of fluoride and is not related to what is proposed for water. Dr. Barr said that Dr. Connett's book is statically altered to promote his point of view; it cherry picks the data and research. Dr. Barr said that it is clear after listening to Dr. Connett today, that Dr. Connett believes there is a conspiracy in the CDC, and it has been passed on from generation to generation for 70 years. Dr. Barr said he doesn't believe that. The people in the CDC are involved with health care and those people feel they have a duty to place their patients and populations above their own. He said he doesn't believe a conspiracy could continue for so many years.

Edward DeCastro, Dentist, 109 Ryan's Way, Oneida said there have been 53 studies nationally related to fluoride causing cancer or bone structure from not only the US, but other countries as well, and each one concluded that it doesn't cause cancer or other issues looked at. He said that as a dental professional for years, it doesn't make sense that we would logically promote something that would essentially put us out of business. He said his observation has been that there is a definite difference in tooth structure in fluoridated regions. Dr. DeCastro said the comment about 80% not participating in Medicaid doesn't mean that underprivileged people are not getting dental care, much is done free gratis. He said that dentists are always educating their patients. He said he went to the lecture this afternoon at the library, and it was made to sound like sugar being the cause of tooth decay was a new revelation and somehow we have all missed that point. Dentists routinely tell patients to minimize the level of sugar in their diets. Dr. DeCastro said that he resents the implication that because we have busy dental practices, we don't keep up with science, literature and articles. He said we keep abreast to what is going on. He said he takes exception to studies on IQ where it goes down 5, because there is a deviation of plus or minus 12, so that is not even good science. Dr. DeCastro said the evidence is there, and the anecdotal evidence from 30+ years of his practice shows fluoride is effective.

Geoff Snyder, Madison County Health Department, 502 Broad Street, Oneida said his main message is that he has been a resident of Oneida for 50 years, and he has the dental cavities to prove it. He said he wishes he could reduce all our residents' intake of sugar, as that would help with obesity issues and other public health issues that we have, but that is an individual choice and not a choice this board can have an impact on. He said the Council can have an impact on children of our community and the future of their dental care. If you look at the true proven health benefits of fluoridation in community water systems, then you can make a decision that would benefit the people in our community. He said that the City has the opportunity to become interconnected with the neighboring water suppliers, as a potential emergency backup situation and noted that Mohawk Valley Water Authority and Onondaga County Water Authority are both fluoridated systems. He said for the City not to have the same fluoridated water system could put that opportunity in jeopardy. Mr. Snyder asked the Council to please look at the proven health benefits and move forward with fluoride treatment for the benefit of the whole community.

Pat Barr, 4765 Burleson Road, Oneida said she wanted to reiterate what Dr. DeCastro said. She said that she takes offense to the statement that dentists do not have the time to keep up with the research. Mrs. Barr said, as the wife of a dentist who is continually traveling for continuing education and research programs that he is involved with both nationally and internationally, she was offended by that comment. With respect to Dr. Connett's statement that no one has refuted the findings in his book, Mrs. Barr said that lots of people write books about all kinds of things, and sometimes there is just no response to those books because it doesn't merit one.

Elizabeth Carnevale, 532 Florence Avenue, Oneida said she has been a health care provider to the schools for 30 years and taught dental health in the classroom. She commended our speaker tonight and said the dentists are meaning well and she doesn't wish them to be offended. She said she understood what the doctor had to say and hopes others understood it. She said she intends to read his book. She said we need some good, critical thinkers and doesn't know why there is a rush to having fluoride put in our water. She said she worked with Dr. Waldo Zeun and Don Behr in 2002 on this research and has also studied Skaneateles, where the community decided against fluoridation. She said that fluoride is a carcinogen and persons on chemotherapy do not need another chemical introduced to their bodies. She said that before budget cuts, there were dental hygienists in the schools applying fluoride topically to the students and she said we should be educating the public to reduce sugar intake. Ms. Carnevale said she wants it on record that she is opposed to fluoridation.

Amy Rozzi, PO Box 101, Cazenovia, thanked the Mayor, but said she would decline her opportunity to speak this evening.

Leslie Zimmerman, 1118 Upper Lenox Avenue, Oneida said if you look online you will find facts about why fluoride is good and why it is bad, but it really comes down to logic; does it make sense to put fluoride in the water when it is a drug. She repeated it always comes back to logic, and if this is going to make us healthier or add more toxins to our system. She said our bodies will not grow and we will not create a healthier community with more toxins.

Scott Bynes, 1309 Upper Lenox Avenue, Oneida he agrees with what the doctor says. He said he researched on the internet and found more bad things than good about fluoride. He said when he was a kid, the dentist put fluoride in his mouth, had him swish it around, and then spit it out. It was applied topically. He said it states on toothpaste don't eat it, and if we put it in our water supply, will it be a level that everyone agrees with. He said fluoride can interact with other medications that people are taking and there is no scientific proof on how it affects everyone.

Laura Diddle, Sherrill, said Sherrill gets Oneida water, as does Vernon. She said that she is sure the dentists have great intentions, but she said she has been taking vitamin C for 50 years and believes in it. Vitamin D is said to be one of the vitamins people are not getting enough of in the winter; we need vitamin D, and the lack of both those vitamins have serious health implications. She asked why we don't put those vitamins in the water and responded, because it goes against common sense. We cannot control the dose, and we do not know how much water people or pets are drinking. Ms. Diddle said that most of the water used goes down the drains or through the washing machine. She said the most sensible thing is to get this to children topically. Ms. Diddle said she is against fluoridation. She said that the City of Ithaca said no to fluoride, and the City of Oneida should look at the places that said they don't want fluoride.

Marcia K. Newsom, 426 Broad Street, Oneida, said as a child who had fluoride when she was younger and as a physician who came to Oneida 35 years ago, she was and still is astounded that we do not have fluoridated water in the City. Dr. Newsom said you can look at the science behind both sides, and the statistical analysis is on the side for fluoride. She said when you can prevent 21½% of cavities in children by putting a smidgen of fluoride in the water, it just makes sense to her when it is not causing harm. We also have to promote the general welfare in this country. Children, adolescents and young adults die unnecessarily from complications of cavities and that should be considered. Dr. Newsom said she would like to see a "ChildSmile" program, so the kids did get education with a socialized approach, but until you can find a program that will prevent cavities in children, you need to do something that is affordable.

Samantha Haynes, 578 Main Street, Oneida said she has four kids and is concerned about having fluoride in the water. She said you can google information on the web and find out all kinds of information on fluoride. She said she was a foster parent and every child that came into her home had horrible cavities. She said they stopped being foster parents because these kids needed so much dental care and none of the dentists around here would take Medicaid, so they couldn't get them the care they needed. She said people have to drive or take a taxi to Utica or Syracuse to get them taken care of. She said she is grateful for the dental insurance her family has and for the great care her children receive from dentists in this area. She said the solution is not to fluoridate the water. If she wants her children to have fluoride, she will request a prescription from her children's pediatrician, and it is free at Price Chopper. She said she doesn't know what it costs to add fluoride to the water, but she is sure it will raise the cost of her bill, if only by \$2, and taxes have already gone up. The real problem is kids need better access to dental care in this community. Ms. Haynes said please don't poison her family because other people need access to dental resources, let them get their own prescriptions.

Barb Buehner, 300 Verona Street #B, Oneida said she saw Dr. DeCastro today and he is an excellent dentist, but she is not in favor of fluoride. She said that she is having brain surgery for uncontrolled epilepsy and uncontrolled migraines. She said she has done the research on fluoride, and it is a bad thing to add. She said she would rather have control over her intake because of her concerns neurologically rather than having it automatically put in. She said she would like the right to decide herself.

Teye Kahliyos Edwards, 16 Territory Road, Oneida said she was born on Territory Road. She said she was going to show the research she did on fluoride, but that is not necessary now. She said it comes down to consent to take the medication, toxin or drug, whatever you are calling it. She said she spoke with family and friends and found out this meeting was tonight, and she was able to make it. It makes her wonder how many people knew that this meeting is going on. She asked if it was legal to put chemicals/drugs in someone's water and spoke of a date rape drug. Ms. Edwards said if someone wants fluoride, it is available for them to obtain; this is all about consent and choice.

Sheri Beglen, 16 Territory Road, Oneida said she has lived in Oneida for over 40 years and she is grateful that the water is not fluoridated. She said she has read many things over the years about the results of fluoride and its toxic effects. She said she is a registered nurse and that has pushed her in the direction of examining what she puts in her body. She said there are many things in this world today that they say are safe, but are not. She cited the example of deet found in insect repellent, which caused a seizure in her daughter when she was little. She said we do not know the effects this will have on our bodies until years

later. She said there are about four chemicals that end in “ine” (bromine, fluorine, etc.) and those chemicals compete with receptor sites for the thyroxin in your thyroid, and they bind there making it unable for your thyroid to take up the thyroxin it needs. She said the thyroid is an important regulator of many different hormones in your body. Ms. Beglen said she would like the choice for her body and doesn’t want it in the water. She said she has refused fluoride treatments and has had very few cavities even though she drinks soda and eats sweets, and she did the same for her grandson whom she raised. She said she doesn’t think fluoride is the magic answer to prevent cavities. She said it is nice to make a choice if she wants fluoridated toothpaste or not. Ms. Beglen said she hopes the City continues to make fluoride a choice for the residents.

Paul Newsom, 426 Broad Street, Oneida said he was thinking about things in water that you drink. He said the City of Oneida puts chlorine in the water and that is far more toxic. Why, because it is the duty of the government to promote the general welfare of the public. He said science is a self-correcting discipline, when one group contends, there are others who will challenge that. There is a constant competition for one group to prove the other wrong. Throughout this country for the last 70 years, there have been battles over fluoride, but now, all of the major scientific analysis is that fluoride is beneficial therapeutically in a one-to-two parts per million of content. He said it is not the case that those who have continuing medical education just accept what their professional organizations are saying. He said to diminish dentists and physicians who are committed to improving health is a slap that should not be taken lightly. Mr. Newsom said fluoride has been shown to improve dental health development and is very beneficial to individual health. He said this debate started back in the fifties during the communist scare when they were trying to poison us, and over the years it has taken on a different complexion of fears. Mr. Newsom said he is in favor of fluoridation.

Rita Behr, 223 North Street, Oneida said she is glad she is living in America and not Russia, so we can say what we want. She said no, no, no to fluoride. She said that her husband, Don, did a lot of research on fluoride and found out it is bad. She said recently she has done some research. Mrs. Behr said the Council members are not medical people and should not be telling us what to do. Ms. Behr said fluoride is a poison; they put it in nuclear bombs.

Jennifer McKenzie, 233 West Street, Oneida said she feels passionate about this. She has three children that are extremely important to her, and she does a lot of research. She said she sees benefits, but also the dangers. She said there is so much stuff coming at us in the air, water and food we eat that she doesn’t want to see one more thing added when we don’t know whether it will help us or if it will hurt us. She said the fluoride drops are available for free from Medicaid until your children are 21 years old. Ms. McKenzie said the Council shouldn’t force this choice on people, and she is proud that the City doesn’t have fluoridated water.

Kevin Goggins, 446 Cleveland Avenue, Oneida said he has been a resident of Oneida for 45 years. He said he is sorry if the dentists and doctors took offense to Dr. Connett’s comment about them not being able to read the literature. Dr. Connett is retired and has the time, and Mr. Goggins said it is nearly impossible for someone running a practice to have the time to read as much on the issue as Dr. Connett does. Mr. Goggins asked for the research to refute the graphs and charts that Dr. Connett presented.

The Mayor said he appreciated everyone who came and spoke passionately about this issue. He assured the audience that the Common Council listened attentively to both the pros and cons, and they will not make a decision lightly without taking into consideration what everyone has said. The Mayor urged everyone to be involved in this community, as it deserves their participation and support. He said he is committed to building a vibrant community that everyone can be proud of. Mayor Smith asked everyone to love Oneida and help in the efforts to build a better Oneida. Mayor Smith thanked everyone for attending and closed the public hearing at 7:54 p.m. He called for a five minute recess, so that those in attendance for the fluoride portion of the meeting could exit.

#### *Discussion of FEMA BUYOUT Program for Parcels in the Flood Zone*

Mayor Smith said he would like to bring the Council up-to-date on the FEMA buyout program, so that he can be authorized to sign the documents, which will allow us to participate in this program. The Mayor said there have been concerns expressed that participating in the buyout program is something that we shouldn’t do because of the potential ramifications to the tax base and the City. Mayor Smith said if there is a positive thing that could come out of this unfortunate event that would allow some of you to change your circumstances to improve your lives, he didn’t feel it was his role to step in and prevent this from happening, as he is a strong advocate of this program. He said the Council ultimately has the decision to empower the Mayor to do this.

Mayor Smith said there are 155 properties in the final accounting to be sent to NYS for admission in the program. This means that those 155 property owners have the opportunity to accept or decline what is offered to them by FEMA for their properties. Mayor Smith said the City is not locked into this program; it is voluntary on the part of the City. The City has the opportunity to opt out at any time if it becomes

untenable. The Mayor explained that per the program, once ownership is taken by the City, the City would have 90 days to demolish and restore the grounds. The parcel can never be sold and no permanent structures can be built on it. Mayor Smith said the impact to the tax base is estimated at a loss of \$88,831 in City taxes, \$95,491 in County taxes, and after STAR, \$171,600 lost in school taxes. The Mayor said that the funding from FEMA to the City for this program is still being researched. He said the City doesn't have the money to fund demolishing all 155 properties at one time, nor does any of the other communities involved, and he anticipates 10-12 houses being done at a time.

Councilor Acker said, per FEMA, residents are not allowed to fill out the applications; it has to go through the municipality. Councilor Acker asked the Council to allow the Mayor to sign the applications for FEMA on behalf of the residents. She said to move forward, the City would have to get the money upfront to participate in this program, and stressed that we can back out if we cannot afford it. She said there are over 2,000 homes involved in the program, and none of the communities involved have the money to fund this upfront, so FEMA is very aware of this. Councilor Acker said she is aware of the potential lost tax base, but they are looking at other avenues once we know how many people will be out of the flats area. She said that NYS has to send the applications to FEMA by March 31, 2015, and the City has to get the applications to NYS. Councilor Acker said this is a slow process, and said FEMA stated that after receipt of the applications, they will respond in approximately 90 to 120 days. She said the amount offered will be at 100% of the assessed value the day before the flood.

Mayor Smith asked the residents for their continued patience, remarking that NYS created this program from scratch four years ago and they did so without any experience. The Mayor said that FEMA is reimbursing 75%, and NYS jumped on board to cover the missing 25% to make the City whole. The State is supporting this program in a significant way. Councilor Acker addressed rumors of eminent domain, and said the City has no intention of doing that. Mayor Smith said that he is astounded by the number of rumors out there and advised residents to verify any information with City Hall or call your Council person. If FEMA offers a certain amount of money for the property, and the resident declines, then it is over for that resident. Councilor Acker said the City deals with the State and the State will deal with FEMA; the City cannot directly deal with FEMA. In response to a question from Councilor Smith, Councilor Acker said that if the funds are not fronted by FEMA, the City will not be able to participate in the program because we do not have the funds available to do so. She said we have to send in the applications in on behalf of the residents to continue to move the program along, noting the City can voluntarily step away at any time.

Councilor Bowe said just as residents are able to accept or decline FEMA's offer, the City doesn't have \$10M to tear down houses and can opt out of this program. Our intent is to do this program for you, but without prompt reimbursement from FEMA, this will effectively end the City's participation in this program. We cannot borrow money and pay interest on that money to fund this program. In response to residents' questions, Councilor Acker said the paperwork filled out for FEMA is accurate, the paperwork filled out a couple years ago at the Armory was for the State. Mayor Smith said there is a multitude of paperwork involved, including developing a budget based on houses involved, projected demolition costs, site restorations, asbestos abatement, etc.

Councilor Zogby asked if the application simply states we are applying on behalf of these residents for the FEMA buyout program, and Councilor Acker said yes. He suggested a committee be appointed to meet once a month to reach out to the Federal level, Senators, FEMA and HUD and at the first Council meeting of each month have a report for these residents. He said he has reached out to Congressman Hanna who said perhaps there is money that can be loaned to communities at no interest and we need to look at that. Councilor Acker said with respect to talking to those on the Federal level, they will only talk to the State, and the State will talk to us. The Mayor is looking at other options for the area, but she said we cannot move forward until we know where the buyout program is going and who will be participating.

**AUTHORIZE PARTICIPATION IN FEMA/STATE OEM BUYOUT PROGRAM  
FOR PARCELS IN THE FLOOD ZONE**

**RESOLUTION 15-67**

Moved by Councilor Smith  
Seconded by Councilor Chamberlain

**RESOLVED**, to proceed with the FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) and NYS Office of Emergency Management (State OEM) BUYOUT program, and further authorize the Mayor to execute the applications to participate in said BUYOUT program.

Ayes: 6  
Nays: 0

**MOTION CARRIED**

Councilor Acker thanked the Assessor, City Engineer and Planning Director for all their help behind the scenes in getting this work done and told the residents that she would stay after the meeting to address any specific questions they may have. Joanne Grower said, on behalf of the residents here, thank you to Helen Acker for all the work she has done for this City; she is a wonderful lady who has been her guardian angel. Councilor Acker received a round of applause.

Motion to adjourn by Councilor Bowe

The meeting is hereby adjourned at 8:38 p.m.

CITY OF ONEIDA

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Susan Pulverenti, City Clerk