

**MINUTES OF THE COMMON COUNCIL
NOVEMBER 14, 2019**

A special meeting of the Common Council of the City of Oneida, NY was held on the fourteenth day of November, 2019 at 5:30 o'clock P.M. in Council Chambers, Oneida Municipal Building, 109 N. Main Street, Oneida, NY.

Meeting was called to order by Deputy Mayor James Chamberlain

PRESENT: Councilors Alan Cohen, Michael Bowe, James Coulthart, Helen Acker (arrived at 5:35 pm) James Chamberlain and Thomas Simchik (arrived at 6:08 pm)

ALSO PRESENT: Mayor Leo Matzke
City Clerk Susan Pulverenti
Comptroller Lee Ann Wells
Fire Chief Dennis Fields
Planning Director Cassie Rose

Opening Remarks

Mayor Matzke said that he pulled the \$50K for the Comprehensive Plan from the Planning Department's portion of the Budget. The Mayor also commented that he appreciates the changes made by the Council at last night's meeting, while reminding the Council that there is \$150K in the budget for demolitions.

Planning Director

Planning Director Cassie Rose said that the Comprehensive Plan is still usable, but we could be better. She suggested that development of the plan could be stretched over 2-3 years to minimize the costs. Councilor Bowe said that he liked the idea of two years, at \$25K each year, while reminding the Council that the current plan is 14 years old. The Director said that she will look at other funding options, and it could possibly be revisited for the 2021 Budget. She added that there is a possibility of coming up with some local funding from the Regional Planning Board, and/or other funding sources. Councilor Cohen suggested that there may be different groups at the collegiate level that may help put the pieces together. Councilor Acker inquired as to how long a new plan would last, and the Planning Director said about 10 years with periodical updates. Planning Director Rose said that she will look into this further and come back to the Council with some better ideas, so it won't be so costly. The Director said that CNY Arts has five Arts & Entertainment Districts in the Central New York Regional Economic Development Council, and she has budgeted for a computer for use by a part-time staff person who will work locally on projects relating to Arts and Entertainment, as part the CNY Arts Program.

Councilor Coulthart said that he would like to see a plan for the land in the flats. The Mayor said that he has been working on plans for a community garden, dog park and soccer field, along with having wild flowers planted in the area heading towards Prospect Street. Councilor Acker said that we have to be proactive, but we have to get through the multitude of paperwork first. Councilor Coulthart said that we now have a clean canvas to work with. Councilor Cohen said that he would like to see an ADA compliant park, noting that fundraising in the City would be well received for this type of project. The Mayor said that the City won a \$25K grant from then Assemblyman Bill Magee for Parks & Rec that is open ended.

Planning Director Rose said that her budget is as close to last year, as she could do. She said that there have been positive steps with downtown. She said that there are market-rate apartments being constructed in downtown. The Director said that we have to start small and gave the example of Armory Square, where it started with one or two buildings being revamped at time, and now it is thriving. She said that the City is definitely making progress downtown.

Follow-up from the November 13, 2019 Meeting

Comptroller Lee Ann Wells said that according to Val Peterson, the Police Department is directly affiliated with the County, and if they find anything vulnerable in our computers, they will cut us off. Comptroller Wells said that with respect to using Auction International for used equipment, it cannot be done. She said the secondhand equipment can only be purchased from other government entities, as per the County's Purchasing Agent. The Comptroller said that after confirming with the City Engineer, 18% Water, 6% Sewer, 76% General Fund would be how the percentages are allocated for the fuel tank repair/software. The Comptroller said that the City Engineer also looked into the comparison of purchasing carpets vs. leasing, and it is much less expensive to purchase. The Mayor mentioned that the State has not given municipalities any extra money for infrastructure in years.

Fire Chief

The Mayor said that he budgeted for a new Fire Marshal who would work M-F, 8 hours per day. He said that person would also have firefighter responsibilities, and in his budget, he did not fill the open position for a firefighter. Mayor Matzke said he has been working on Codes issues, and this stems from when he called the Fire Department to speak with the Fire Marshal and none of the eight Fire Marshals on staff were there. The Mayor said that he got his idea after speaking with Cortland, noting that there is an emptiness in Codes that needs to be filled, and he believes this is the way to do it. He said that at some point when the City has extra monies, the firefighter position can be filled at that time. The Mayor said that when it comes to Police and Fire you never know how much overtime will be needed in any given year. The Mayor said that he also pulled the new mattresses from the Fire Budget, noting that the use of memory foam or egg shell foam could be utilized.

Fire Chief Dennis Fields disagreed with the Mayor, and a lengthy debate ensued. He explained his budget proposal was for a daytime Fire Marshal for codes only, along with hiring an additional fire fighter. He said that he has been down one position since April, remarking that this position was approved by the Council, but was not approved by the Public Safety Commissioner. The Chief spoke about the department's burn-out factor and cost of overtime, as well as, the projected revenue that could be generated from having a full-time codes officer. He said that \$58K in overtime has been used so far this year, because that fire fighter position was not filled. Chief Fields explained the difference between Building Safety Inspectors who can only enforce the code, and a Fire Marshal who has the authority to take offenders to court.

Deputy Mayor Chamberlain said he would like each Councilor to provide their views on this matter. Councilor Coulthart said he would like to see the Fire Marshal position work closely with other codes personnel to address the violations in the City. He said that it makes sense to keep a sixteenth fire fighter, due to the current overtime issues. Councilor Simchik said that a new Fire Marshal position should be added, as well as, a new fire fighter. He said that the amount of work that could be accomplished on a weekly basis would be amazing. Councilor Acker and Councilor Cohen also agreed that the positions of fire fighter and full-time Fire Marshal be included in the budget. Councilor Chamberlain said that the cost of safety is an overriding factor. He said that the firefighter position should be maintained. Councilor Bowe said that he is not sure how we can afford this.

A long discussion regarding a proposed Fire Marshal ensued, which included union matters (CSEA), expenses (no additional costs for equipment and uniforms), property registry and penalties for non-compliance and revenue received, part-time employees, as well as, possible lateral transfers and full-time vs. part-time fire fighters (as Cortland has). Councilor Bowe said that the overall cost for both positions would be \$105K. The Council decided to temporarily add in \$105K to the working budget.

The Council asked that the Fire Chief come back on Wednesday evening. Councilor Bowe said that after two days, the tax increase is now proposed at 9.84%.

Motion to adjourn by Councilor Acker

The regular meeting is hereby adjourned at 8:06 p.m.

CITY OF ONEIDA

Susan Pulverenti
City Clerk