

**MINUTES OF THE COMMON COUNCIL
NOVEMBER 18, 2019**

A special meeting of the Common Council of the City of Oneida, NY was held on the eighteenth 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 (arrived at 5:40), Michael Bowe, James Coulthart, James Chamberlain and Thomas Simchik (arrived at 5:50)

ABSENT: Councilor Helen Acker

ALSO PRESENT: Mayor Leo Matzke (arrived at 5:40; left at 6:50)
Deputy City Clerk Sandy LaPera
Comptroller Lee Ann Wells
Police Chief Paul Thompson
Councilor-Elect Brandee Dubois

Opening Remarks

The Mayor complimented the Comptroller on the excellent job that she and her department has done. He and the Council agreed that the City is very fortunate to have her and that the Budget itself, as well as the process, has been significantly easier under her direction and efforts.

Police Department

Chief Paul Thompson discussed his budget with the Council.

- **Salaries:** Currently 25 positions. The total requested includes retirees (1 definite; 1 possible; 1 potential transfer). Because a new hire would start at a lower salary, it will balance out.
- **Overtime:** Reduced to \$55,000 (\$25,000 reduction). Overtime costs have shown to be lower in the last 3-4 years. This is due, in part, to crimes being down; however, noncriminal related calls are up.
- **Traffic Trailers:** Removed from the 2020 Budget and suggested to purchase 1 unit using funds remaining in the Materials/Supplies line of the 2019 Budget. Originally 2 were requested. It was also discussed that a traffic counter could be used
- **Materials & Supplies:** Reduced to \$16,000 (\$6,000 reduction).
- **Clothing:** Discussed that each officer is allocated \$750 clothing allowance. Of this amount, \$250 is allowed to carry over into the next year. This amount also includes funding for new officers that will replace retirees/transfers. It costs approximately \$3,000 to clothe an officer, including bullet proof vest etc.; however, a Department of Justice grant matches 50%.
- **Contracts:** Reduced to \$10,000 (\$5,000 reduction).
- **Chief's Expense:** This category includes Public Safety Day, Halloween bags etc. and was left in the Budget. This helps show the community that we are "being tough on drugs, but community minded" per Mayor Matzke.
- **Vehicle Maintenance:** Moved to Central Garage Vehicle Repair
- **COP Program:** \$1,000 was added in to the Budget to allow for Coffee Day and other programs.
- **Drug Buy Money:** Previously funded through the DA's office, but no longer being done that way and all municipalities must now budget locally. The process has been to seize, then distribute through the county.
- **Capital Projects:** Purchase 16 computers to update and bring current; also, for a Live Scan fingerprint machine. A state grant originally paid for this, but the machine is now old and out of date. The Chief is searching for a grant, and the City might be eligible for part of one, but would like to budget for the full amount and hope to not need it.
- **Vehicle Leases:** 3 unmarked vehicles were requested, 2 Dodge Chargers for the investigators and 1 Dodge Durango for the Chief. Current vehicles have excessive mileage and in need of repair. The current Chief's vehicle has 46-47,000 miles on it and is in very poor condition. The 2 current investigator's vehicles have over 100,000 miles on each and are not reliable for trips, have bad frames etc. It was discussed if we could get "gently used" vehicles through Enterprise.

Council Discussion

The Chief provided an update on the 2 full-time positions that were filled in 2019, one being a full-time police officer and the second being a full-time officer that will mainly work in the evidence room. Evidence has accumulated, and with the additional duties that will arrive due to the new discovery rules that will take place on January 1, it will be necessary to have someone full time in that area. Discovery becomes automatic within 15 days of arraignment, and evidence must be turned over. The law presupposed that we have people to handle this task; however, we do not. Filling this position will help to comply with the Discovery Law, and this person will also be able to perform regular police duties if necessary.

The Chief is also requesting that 2 of his staff members (Record's Clerk/Phone Operator) receive a pay increase. These positions currently make less than new hire account clerks in other departments, and will be assuming more responsibility when the Discovery Laws go into effect. The current Record's Clerk makes \$3/hr. less than someone in another department who just started. He does not want to lose valuable employees. An attempt to resolve this issue was made with the Union, but was not successful. It was mentioned that this should have been resolved when other positions were looked at and needs to be resolved now. The Council agreed that a \$2 an hour increase per person would be sufficient for now.

Comptroller

The Comptroller started out by stating that she is very concerned about the valuation of 2019, where we are and where we will be. She feels that there is a definite shortfall in revenue and that the Council needs to look closely at where we can pull money from, and that the City should be careful to not deplete the Reserve Fund.

Salaries: The Comptroller stated that the role of her payroll clerk has changed, and she would like that position to still remain part time, but to increase to 28 hours per week from 21. This would include a .50 cent per hour salary increase, taking the current position from \$15/hour to \$15.50/hour. She noted that with the computer conversion, additional clerical work/data entry, taxes etc., she will be needed more. This will involve cross training so that this position can back up payroll and purchasing. This will not show in the salary line; however, it will be identified in a Water and Sewer chargeback at the end of the year.

The Comptroller also complimented her Deputy Comptroller on the excellent job she has been doing with taking on HR related work, such as new hires, retirement, changes, reconciliation, benefits, union contracts, EAP Programs and much more. The Council agreed that she is a valuable employee and that the City is very fortunate to have her. It was suggested that she take over HR, and also noted that there can be a distinct line between HR and Civil Service.

Purchasing is the key to our expense problems, and after the conversion is complete with time clocks and KVS, the Comptroller would like to focus on this area.

All other Budget lines are standard or quoted and were not changed.

Vehicle Leases: The Comptroller likes the Enterprise program, and noted that the City has been doing upgrades as needed. There is currently \$38,000 in the Reserve Balance for requests, and she presents these to Council as they come up. This amount should cover our current needs. The City Engineer advised that we would be getting \$20,000 from an auction of scrap that would go to that account. It was noted that some could be pushed out to a later time or put off for another year with just repairs being made.

GroSolar: An audit was done of the solar savings, and it appears that our figures are in line with GroSolar. Councilor Cohen felt that the figures were incorrect and that we should be getting more credits than shown. He stated that we should investigate this, and the Comptroller asked who he would like to handle this, for example the DPW. It was suggested by Councilor Bowe that a 2-person team be established to research this.

Council Discussion

- Skunks and feral cats
- Flower pots and the \$9,500 cost associated with them
- Retirees-known positions that will become vacant in 2020
Per the Police and Fire contracts, sick time can be banked in full or half and half-this is just a liability on the books only
- Uncollected taxes-the Council agreed that those who owe taxes should have to pay them and that mechanisms need to be put into place to address this issue, as well as policies and procedures that are currently in the Charter, but not always followed. If these funds were collected, the City would not need to bond for items, or at least not as much. It was noted that at the time of a sale, the taxes may be unpaid and not made whole and that the new owner should not be responsible if they were unaware of any unpaid taxes at the time. The City has to pay the school, library and county, regardless, so this is a loss that needs to be corrected. The Comptroller explained the difference between Cash and Revenue to the Council, and stated that an updated list is being worked on, and she will provide it to the Council upon completion. It was also noted that the Chamberlain is the one who is responsible for collecting the taxes and taking back property that is delinquent. There is a 3-year period where the owner has to pay the taxes and also has right up until closing to do it.
- Box Plow
- Fire personnel-the Fire Chief requested 2 positions (firefighter/Fire Marshal). This would be filling one vacancy and adding one additional. It was discussed at length to put the hiring off ¼ of the year and fund for only 8 months.
- Codes-currently the Fire Marshal does commercial; the Code Enforcement Officer (Pat Baron) does new construction; the Housing Inspector (Bob Burnett) does rentals and the role of the Community

Service Officer was discussed at length. It was noted that the Community Service Officer not only deals with codes related to garbage and junk vehicles, but also fills in for crossing guards, directs traffic and helps residents locked out of their vehicles and more. It was also noted that each has their own authority and reports differently, although they do intermingle at times.

Motion to adjourn by Councilor Coulthart

The regular meeting is hereby adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

CITY OF ONEIDA

Sandra LaPera
Deputy City Clerk