

**MINUTES OF THE COMMON COUNCIL  
NOVEMBER 20, 2019**

A special meeting of the Common Council of the City of Oneida, NY was held on the twentieth 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, James Chamberlain and Thomas Simchik (arrived at 6:12 pm)

ALSO PRESENT: Mayor Leo Matzke  
City Clerk Susan Pulverenti  
Comptroller Lee Ann Wells  
Fire Chief Dennis Fields  
Councilor-Elect Carrie Earl (arrived at 5:40 pm)  
Councilor-Elect Brandee DuBois (arrived at 7:11 pm)

**Fire Department**

Discussion with the Fire Chief resumed, and a debate began regarding the hiring of both a full-time Fire Marshal and a Firefighter or hiring a Fire Marshal whose duties would include that of firefighting. The Mayor explained his rationale for the dual position in his budget. The Council discussed union issues, stipends, fire training dates, lateral moves, cost to suit firefighters, overtime at straight time, the difference between Building Safety Inspectors and Fire Marshals, codes meetings over past three years, current codes employees working together, the Vacant Property Registry, fines and revenues, the current Civil Service list of firefighters and testing dates. The Chief said that it would take some time with Civil Service to get everything in place for the Fire Marshal position. Several Councilors agreed that if a full-time, Monday-Friday, Fire Marshal is not hired, then the issues the City currently has with codes are not going to be solved. The Chief said that last year the Council approved two fire fighters, and because the Public Safety Commissioner and Mayor wouldn't give their authorization, only one position was filled.

Councilor Chamberlain said that the Council agreed to keep the department at full staff last year. He said he agrees with hiring a full-time Fire Marshal, who wouldn't have the additional duty of firefighting. Councilor Bowe said that having a 40 hour-a-week Fire Marshall gives continuity, and the City could save money by starting the hiring process a little later in the year. Councilor Coulthart said that in a perfect world, the City would have a Codes Department, adding that he would also like to see continuity and codes personnel working together. The Fire Chief said that he is attempting to answer the City's need for code enforcement. Councilor Bowe said that this firefighter was promised last year, and it didn't happen. He said that addressing safety issues start with an aggressive move from the Fire Department. The Chief said that last week the Department's call volume was up 60%, stating that if this were a dual position, there wouldn't have been any codes work done. Councilor Coulthart said that he applauds the Fire Department for requesting a dedicated Fire Marshal. Councilor Bowe said he understands the importance of having both positions. The Council agreed that a new firefighter be hired, as well as, a full-time Fire Marshal.

**Council Discussion**

Councilor Acker questioned the NYCOM training line, noting that she would like to attend several NYCOM training sessions. The City Clerk said that there will be classes for new Mayors and Councilors coming up in January, and she will forward the info once received. Councilor Acker questioned the bonding for 22 computers and a finger print machine. The Comptroller said that the bonding is for the useful life of the items, as determined by Fiscal Advisors, and both of these would need to be bonded for separately. After discussion, it was decided to put the funds for the computers under IT Equipment and move \$2K from the Comptrollers training line of \$5K, and place it into the Mayor's line for training, so the Mayor and/or Council can attend NYCOM training events. The Mayor said that he is concerned about the Fund Balance and discussed increasing taxes. He said that he applauds the Council's efforts.

The Council moved onto the City Engineer's portion of the budget. They agreed that lines for structural engineering and demolition needed to stay. In the tree contract line, \$5K was added last week and was taken away this evening, bringing the amount back to \$45K. A lengthy discussion ensued regarding the salt and sand line. The Comptroller provided the average cost for the past five years. It was remarked that you never know what the weather will be, and Councilor Bowe said it seems to be wetter and salt works better than plowing. After a brief talk with the City Engineer via the phone, the Council decided to leave this line as is. The overtime line for snow and ice is consistent, and it was remarked that there are six more weeks of winter left this year. The equipment line was cut further, removing the \$12K lift and one chain-fall saving another \$3K. In all, the equipment line requested by the City Engineer was chopped from \$52,750 to \$5K.

The Comptroller explained the Reserve lines and the Council's option to approve any leases. The Comptroller said that the cost for repairs is going down, but the lease payments are up. Retirement payouts from the Reserve were briefly discussed, noting that one police and one sewer employee are scheduled for retirement this year; however, the payouts could vary if the sick line is used. The Comptroller said that the Reserve Lines are very good proactive accounts.

Salaries were briefly discussed for the Mayor, Councilors, City Chamberlain and Department Heads, noting the CSEA contract rates. The Council decided to make it 2.75% across the board for raises. The Council discussed the Contingency line, which is only at \$25K. Councilor Simchik said that there was four times that amount last year, and the Council used most of it in the first three months. The Council ultimately determined that a 6% tax increase was necessary.

Motion to adjourn by Councilor Coulthart

The regular meeting is hereby adjourned at 8:28 p.m.

**CITY OF ONEIDA**

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Susan Pulverenti  
City Clerk