

**MINUTES OF THE COMMON COUNCIL
MAY 9, 2017**

A special meeting of the Common Council of the City of Oneida, NY was held on the ninth day of May, 2017 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: Councilor Al Cohen, Michael Bowe, Erwin Smith, Helen Acker, James Chamberlain and Thomas Simchik (left at 6:50 p.m. and returned at 7:59 p.m.)

ABSENT: Mayor Leo Matzke

ALSO PRESENT: City Clerk Susan Pulverenti
Recreation Director Luke Griff
Supervisor Joe Magliocca
Scott Ingmire, Director Mad. Co. Planning
Sara Kirsch, Madison County Planning

EXECUTIVE SESSION

RESOLUTION 17-129

Moved by Councilor Cohen
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

RESOLVED, that the meeting is hereby adjourned to Executive Session in the Mayor's Conference Room at 5:30 p.m. for the purpose of discussing a personnel issue.

Ayes: 6

Nays: 0

MOTION CARRIED

PRESENT: Deputy Mayor, Councilors, Public Safety Commissioner

1. Discussion was held regarding a personnel issue.

Moved by Councilor Bowe
Seconded by Councilor Smith

RESOLVED, that Executive Session is hereby adjourned to the regular meeting at 6:20 p.m.

Ayes: 6

Nays: 0

MOTION CARRIED

ONEIDA RAIL TRAIL PROJECT – CHANGES TO ONEIDA STREET AREA

Recreation Director Luke Griff provided an overview for those who were not at the last meeting, and he stated that the Rail Trail is funded by two NYS DOT TEP/TAP grants, \$545K and \$716K respectively.

Director Griff said that the power point display he will be showing doesn't reflect the handouts passed out this evening. His display began with showing the existing conditions and included several different drawings of proposed plans for the west side of Oneida Street, each included the amount of parking spaces that could be potentially lost, the handicap spaces and street widths. The designs displayed shared use paths and separate paths for both the sidewalk and bike lanes, along with drawings of how it would look. Joe Magliocca said a proposed lighting project has been removed as a cost savings feature. The Director went over the original designs for the east side of Oneida Street explaining how the pedestrian plaza could be moved back and cut by 30 feet from the original proposal of 60 feet to allow for access by the fire trucks. He noted that there are multiple options for parallel parking. Councilor Acker inquired if there were any financial estimates, and the Deputy Mayor said that the City Engineer had a rough estimate. Mr. Magliocca said they are trying to create an entry point in the City, so there is a visual that is welcoming and inviting. He said that angled parking is contrary to what the Rail Trail Committee is trying to do. Director Griff said the sketches provided by the City Engineer and passed out tonight, each have options A & B for the east side of Oneida Street and options A & B for west side of Oneida Street.

In response to a question from Marty Winchell, Director Griff said the purpose of the pedestrian plaza is to provide an eye-catching centerpiece to downtown where folks can sit and have lunch and where concerts, a farmer's market and other activities could be held. Mr. Winchell said that he is not sure if that is a productive use of the space. He said it would be a place for the group that currently uses that area to congregate. Mr. Winchell said that the City's Oneida Street East Option A is good, noting that it provides the opportunity for more parking down the road. He said it is a more suitable use for the east side of Oneida Street. He suggested the use of Higinbotham Park for concerts, which is only a block away from Oneida Street. Deputy Mayor Chamberlain said he would like to try to make downtown better instead of just sticking with the status quo.

Greg Myers, Oneida, said that he applauds the Council for listening to the business owners and commended the substantial efforts. He inquired about the use of granite curbs, rather than concrete and asked about the cost differential between the two. A brief discussion ensued, including where in the City granite curbs can be found, their life expectancy and saving funds to use elsewhere in the project.

Max Smith, Oneida, said to bring about change in our community, we cannot only rely solely on City Hall. He said that he has gotten involved with the Kallet Theater and Oneida City Center Committee (OC3) to try and bring about change. He said that the committee is responsible for the beautiful flower pots downtown, and they will be expanding those areas this year. Mr. Smith said they have applied for historic status downtown, which will allow for a 40% return on investments in the City Center. He said the goal is to recreate the success that they have in Armory Square here in Oneida. He said we can't let our failed past or problems steer our vision. He said we need to begin targeting buildings, assessing walkability, and aesthetics to draw people downtown, adding that developers need to see what will make their investments worthwhile in Oneida. He said that change is always difficult, but there is a bright future out there if we take the opportunities that exist and work together to develop them.

Gary Taylor, Oneida, commended all the committees involved and stated the new designs are much improved from a parking standpoint. He said that he spoke with most of the Council about making James Street a pedestrian path, which would be ideal for the downtown community and the Rail Trail, by allowing a dedicated line into downtown. He said that he really likes Oneida Street East Option A and sees that the pedestrian plaza is removed from that option. He said he understands that is painful for the Rail Trail, as it was a big part of their design. Mr. Taylor said that OC3 had the students from SUNY ESF design a train depot seating area, which could be put on the corner of Main and Oneida Street to provide a historical presence that the pedestrian mall doesn't give you. He said the City could create little train depots all the way down Clinch Park. Mr. Taylor said that Option A is very enticing, as it allows the same amount of parking, it allows a pathway to downtown through James Street and still allows for

creation of something on the corner of Main and Oneida Streets that could be a landmark, reminiscent of an old railroad. He thanked the Council for their consideration.

Kevin Bailey, Oneida, said that he agrees with Gary Taylor. He said when the Clark's owned the bistro in that building, many people used to gather for open mic nights. He said he also agrees with the use of Higinbotham Park and inviting those people into that space. He said that we can have two areas that draw people in.

Sandy Cordell stated that they own the building adjacent to James Street. She said that the SUNY ESF students did a great job with the James Street transformation project. She said that Oneida Street East Option A is much better than Option B. She said that they would paint a mural on the side of their building depicting an old railroad depot. She said by putting seating and bike racks on James Street, we are inviting people to stop by, sit a while and go have lunch at Napoleons. She said that would be more beneficial than building a pedestrian plaza. She said she also agrees that folks should be given the option of using Higinbotham Park, as they come in by Wilber Duck Chevrolet off from the Liberty Street portion of the trail. She restated that Option A is a good option.

Danielle Krol, Oneida, asked how many parking spaces were added or lost with option A and B. She said that the City doesn't need additional parking downtown; we need something to draw people in. Ms. Krol said that she hasn't had time to decide which option she prefers. She said we have been doing the status quo for years and asked that everyone consider that.

Dale Cordell, Oneida, said he owns the building next to James Street and inquired about removing the sidewalk behind his building to allow for more parking. Mr. Winchell said he did not feel it would be an issue to incorporate parking spots where the sidewalk is. Fire Chief Kevin Salerno said the City Engineer has the computer program to be sure there is the correct radius for fire truck access. A brief discussion ensued, noting that there is a National Grid pole with transformers on it that cannot be moved.

Joe Pomerleau said the City has done a fantastic job addressing the business owners concerns in a short period of time. He said that no one should leave here tonight feeling discouraged.

Greg Myers asked what the time table for this portion of the project is. Deputy Mayor Chamberlain said he is hopeful there will be a decision by the next Council meeting; however, the Council may have to schedule another special meeting. Joe Stabb, Oneida, inquired if they would be able to see the final plans so they would know exactly what changes will be made. He commended the City on doing a good job.

Kevin Bailey asked if there were plans for any permanent structures on the plaza area. Joe Magliocca said the plaza was stripped for budgetary reasons. He said the Rail Trail Committee has been looking for cost savings in other portions of the trail to reinvest back into the pedestrian plaza. He said the ornamental pavers and curbing would cost about \$125K. Chief Salerno commented about the space needed to park the ladder truck in that area should it be needed and another brief discussion ensued.

Mark Spooner said he lives in Oneida near Allen Park and commented that the Governor is funding the Empire Path from New York City to Buffalo. He said that the Empire Path, when completed, will be the largest continual path in the United States. Mr. Spooner said that we have to look at the positive aspects of the Rail Trail and also look at big picture in terms the revitalization of downtown.

Danielle Krol, Oneida, said as a Transportation Planner in the City of Syracuse, she is working on connecting the Empire State trail along Erie Blvd, noting that they have \$16M to make that section work. She said that a loss of a few parking spaces will not make a big difference in downtown Oneida. She said that if the City can connect into the Empire Path, it would be a positive change. A question was asked as to where the trail goes when it gets into Oneida, and Sara Kirsch from the Madison County Planning

Department explained the route of the trail on the old rail beds. Joe Magliocca continued on explaining that there are three old rail beds that circulate the City, which are a mix of public, utility and privately owned property. He said they are seeking easements and/or alternate routes to tie the trail all together. He said the section of the trail that passes through the flats is affected by the buyout, but the City owns property that could be utilized. He mentioned the property near the old cement factory, which was an old rail bed, and the trail going toward Maxwell Field. Councilor Cohen said this is a phase, which can lead into future phases.

Scott Ingmire, Madison Co. Planning Director, said that he is glad to see progress is being made. He said there is an overabundance of parking spaces on Oneida Street east and Freighthouse Alley, and as they determined with the parking study that area was the least utilized. Mr. Bailey responded that we are trying to create an environment where people will come downtown, so we don't want to be without enough parking. He said that we will fill up those spaces; we can do both.

A discussion ensued with Rail Trail Committee member Joe Magliocca advocating for the pedestrian plaza and downtown business owners Gary Taylor, Marty Winchell and Sandra Cordell speaking in favor of keeping the parking spaces, while using James Street and Higinbotham Park. Dialog included parking for events downtown, utilizing all of the Clinch Park, placing an easily visible "railroad themed" landmark on the corner of Main and Oneida Streets, extending the walking/bicycle trail over to Higinbotham Park, the use of James Street as a seating/resting area, higher end apartments, installing public bathrooms, and everyone being open to change and other ideas, with the goal being to draw people into the downtown area. Deputy Mayor Chamberlain said he can appreciate the opinions of both sides. Sara Kirsch said that James Street could be utilized, but feels that hinges on having the pedestrian plaza. She said the grant funding cannot be used for any upgrades to Higinbotham Park. She said the City has a unique funding opportunity and hopes there can be a better compromise.

Councilor Bowe said that we are 98% in agreeance with the west side of Oneida Street and will continue to tweak the east side of Oneida Street. Councilor Bowe said we should meet again to determine what will be done to the east side of Oneida Street and also stated that the Council needs some cost estimates, citing granite vs. concrete curbs and the huge cost per NYSDOT for fixing a bridge on the trail. The time frames for the project and another special meeting were briefly discussed. Deputy Mayor Chamberlain said a little more tweaking is necessary, adding that the City Engineer has a lot on his plate and this needs to be finalized.

Motion to adjourn by Councilor Smith

The regular meeting is hereby adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

CITY OF ONEIDA, NEW YORK

Susan Pulverenti, City Clerk