

**MINUTES OF THE COMMON COUNCIL  
NOVEMBER 10, 2014**

A special meeting of the Common Council of the City of Oneida, NY was held on the tenth day of November, 2014 at 6:30 o'clock P.M. in Council Chambers, Oneida Municipal Building, 109 N. Main Street, Oneida, NY.

The 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 Chamberlain Nancy Andrews  
City Clerk Susan Pulverenti  
Civil Service Officer Peg Margo  
Comptroller Linda Pease  
Director of Planning and Development Cassie Rose  
Police Chief David Meeker  
Public Safety Commissioner Michael Kaiser

DISCUSSION OF 2015 MAYOR'S BUDGET

*Opening Remarks*

Mayor Smith turned the meeting over to Deputy Mayor Helen Acker who will preside over the special meetings to discuss the budget. Deputy Mayor Acker welcomed those in the audience stating that tonight is for listening, as this is a work session for the Common Council, and said if anyone has any questions to please write them down and save them for the Public Hearing on November 18<sup>th</sup>.

CITY CHAMBERLAIN

City Chamberlain Nancy Andrews said that her salary line has been decreased. The account clerk's time is split between the two offices, but as she spends more time in the Comptroller's Office, the split will now be 60% Comptroller and 40% Chamberlain, rather than the previous split of 55% Chamberlain and 45% Comptroller. She will continue to work a half-day every Monday in the Chamberlain's office and fill in as needed during the busier tax times.

CIVIL SERVICE

Civil Service Officer Peg Margo said that the amount budgeted for contracts, i.e. drug testing through IMA, EAP through Bridges, etc. are the same as last year, as there were no increases by the companies doing the testing. Ms. Margo said the City receives over \$10K in revenue from from the High School to cover the work she does for them throughout the year.

ASSESSOR

Assessor Lonnie Stedman said his budget is down 4.8%. He said he will be returning about \$3K in contracts because there were no certioraris this year. The part-time position also caused a drop in the salaries line. In the travel line, NYS reimburses for one-half of his mandatory training. He said the line for other expense includes grievance boards, mailings, and small claims. The contracts line can be

reduced from \$3,500 to \$2,500, because he is not anticipating a lot of certioraris in 2015. The computer was updated this year, so none is needed for next year.

### PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Planning Director Cassie Rose said \$1,860 can come out of her budget, because two computers were purchased this year, which were originally planned for next year. The Planning Director explained that the salaries line is different each year because funding sources are different each year. The decreases/increases in the budget line come from the different amounts of administrative money each grant has to offset the salaries. The Comptroller said the salaries remain the same, the amount budgeted depends on the grant amounts that come from another fund on any given year. Councilor Bowe explained that less grant money is available this year, so more of the salaries have to be paid from the General Fund and he referred to the 2013 budget amount. The Planning Director said that last year they were working on two grants and each one had administrative money attached to them. In 2015, the only administrative funds are from the 2015 Home Grant and that is what is reflected. The Comptroller said she could make a fixed line for the salaries and then create a revenue line for the grant funding, which offsets the salary. Under the contracts line, the increase is because of the Oneida Flats Project. Other expense includes public hearing notices, travel, etc. Materials and supplies are down \$250. Vacation buyback is a new line in the budget for all department budgets, as the former Comptroller budgeted this for all departments under one line.

### CITY CLERK

City Clerk Sue Pulverenti said she has budgeted for part-time help to do a dog enumeration (dog census) in the City. According to market research 37.2% of households own a dog, which would be 1.7 dogs per household. In 2013, 888 dogs were licensed, and the City had approximately 3,500 households. If the research is correct that would mean approximately 414 dogs remain unlicensed in the City. This would be a door-to-door operation, with a fee charged for all dogs unlicensed once the enumeration begins. That fee would be in addition to the license fees of \$28 for unspayed/unneutered and \$12 for spayed/neutered. It would possibly cost the City about \$1,500, but that would be made up by revenue next year because of the additional dogs that would be licensed. The City Clerk gave the life span of the various size dogs. The materials and supplies lines and additional expense lines are increased from last year due to the dog census. She said she has spoken with Chief Meeker and the Community Service Officer about the enumeration and what help would be required. The equipment line has \$800 for another computer. The City Clerk said she will see if she has enough left in her budget to purchase a computer this year. The Council said they will revisit the plan for a dog census.

### COMPTROLLER

The Comptroller said her salary line is up \$15K because of the change to a 60/40 account clerk split with the Chamberlains office and she included funds for a part-time employee. She stated the part-time person was eliminated in 2013, and added that the Deputy Comptroller has logged in 100 hrs of overtime this year because they are down ½ person in the office. The Comptroller said her office is struggling to get the work done. The Comptroller said she has an extra \$10K in this budget for a part-time person to be hired for 15 hrs a week at \$13 per hour to input data, payroll and work on fixed assets. The Comptroller said in the Fiscal Advisor/D'Arcangelo line there is \$12,900 budgeted for Fiscal Advisors (bonding attorneys) and \$16,000 budgeted for the audit from the Comptrollers lines. She said the 2013 audit cost an additional \$5K because of the flood. The Comptroller said water and sewer pay for a part of the audit. The City Clerk said the Planning Department pays a portion as well. Deputy Mayor Acker asked if there could be separate lines for the auditors and fiscal advisors. A discussion of how the audit is paid for ensued. The Comptroller said \$16,000 was in the Buildings line for the budget, but she was unsure why.

The Council asked that it be broken down making it easier to read. Councilor Acker asked for a separate sheet of how much and whose accounts paid for the audit and fiscal advisors. In the training line, \$4,500 is budgeted. She said Tracy was going to go to purchasing classes, but it was cancelled. Another discussion of the proposed part-time employee ensued. Councilor Bowe said that with a part-time employee the Deputy Comptroller wouldn't need overtime. The Comptroller said that the Deputy needs to put in more overtime, because they are behind schedule. There was a brief discussion of the current account clerk taking on further duties, such as payroll input, however being part of the union plays in to that equation. The Comptroller said the account clerk doesn't have the skill level to do payroll. The Comptroller said she inquired about an outside payroll office, but it was not cost effective. Councilor Zogby asked if the County or school district could do our City payroll. The Council said they would revisit this issue.

### POLICE

Mayor Smith said the PBA addressed a number of issues of concern in their letter to the Council last week. He said he appreciated the interest and the addressing of their concerns was done in a meaningful and respectful way. He explained that it was never his intent not to purchase at least one police vehicle. The goal was to purchase a vehicle that could be paid for from this year's budget, but then the money wasn't available this year. He said he is supportive of purchasing a vehicle due to the high miles of the current vehicles. The Chief said the salary line is lower because of the retirement and hiring of officers at a lower pay scale, which provides additional saving. He said there is also the possibility of two more retirees this year. He said that the City has to look at hiring additional officers. He said there are officers going alone to two-man calls and that shouldn't be happening. He outlined several very serious situations that occurred at the same time, adding that the City was fortunate that it was during a shift when the Chief, Lieutenant, and investigators were all able to respond with the officers. Safety issues are a big factor and new hires should be looked at. The Chief said most of the Police grants, like the JAG grants, are no longer available. The Chief said OT is increased by \$3K because of negotiations and overtime for training. He would like to put officers back out walking the downtown area and riding bikes, as well. STEP overtime is from Governor's Traffic Safety Committee to fund traffic violations. The Chief said they have received it for the past several years and used it, although the budget does not reflect it. It is broken down by the reports the Chief provides the Comptroller's office, and the Comptroller said she would look into why it is not reflected in the budget and why the amounts do not match. The Chief said the STEP program is a wash; the Police Department uses only what they receive. The Comptroller will modify the line amounts.

The Chief said for the last five or six years the police have only gotten one vehicle, where before that two were always purchased. Chief Meeker explained the ordering process from the State Bid and the time frames involved with receiving the vehicle. He said the average car puts on 45K miles per year. He said several current cars would be at almost 200K miles if no cars were purchased next year. Currently there are five police vehicles and the CSO's vehicle. A lengthy discussion ensued relative to police cars including discussing the establishment of a dedicated fund for vehicles, financing the police cars with bank payments, leasing vehicles, the CSO's vehicle, purchasing off the State Bid, or purchasing from a different vendor. The Public Safety Commissioner said police cars are a capital expenditure, but not funded like a capital expense; it is funded like an operational expense. The Chief said everyone purchases off the State contract, which probably won't be out until January. Councilor Chamberlain said if the Police Chief says he needs three vehicles than the Council should look at funding. Councilor Bowe said that Water and sewer have their own funds, which do not affect taxes and that is why these budgets are fully scrutinized. The Comptroller will look at different type of financing.

The Mayor said his budget proposes an 8% tax increase with an additional \$1.2M coming out of Fund Balance. Mayor Smith said we can fund anything, but can we afford it. He said we have some real

challenges to face. The Mayor said Oneida has one of the lowest tax rates in the State and gave the City of Fulton, a city the same size as Oneida, whose rate is \$16.72 per thousand and the City of Oneida's is \$6.47 per thousand.

Chief Meeker said they have a lot of equipment, i.e. radar, computers, videos, that have been put off and need upgrading. The Mayor suggested bundling various items that have a life span of longer than ten years and bonding for them. The Chief will put a list together. Councilor Acker inquired about the use of part-time officers and the Chief said that has been looked at before. The cost of a new hire would be \$80K including benefits. The Chief said he will look into the variables of part-time employees, including what the impact is relative to the union contract. The Chief said anything that requires a contract is covered under the contract lines. Training line has been upped because a lot of training for specialized forces is needed. The Mayor said, currently, the majority of training he approves is at no cost. The Chief said there may be additional money left in the account this year because of a cancelled class and money budgeted to send an officer to the academy. The clothing line, travel and meals, and miscellaneous (comp time buyout) line are all contractual. The Comptroller said she will create a line for comp time buyout rather than have it in a miscellaneous line. The Chief said he had Office Technology determine which computers need updating. The Deputy Mayor asked if vehicle body work could be done by the DPW, but Councilor Bowe said it cannot due to OSHA regulations. Deputy Mayor Acker inquired about the department being accredited as mentioned in the PBA letter. The Chief said being accredited could affect insurance rates down the road and allow the department to meet more requirements for grant funding. Currently the city has 23 Police Officers, which includes the Chief; an open position was not filled a few years ago.

The next meeting will be on Thursday, November 13, 2014 at 7:30 p.m. with the Recreation and Fire Departments.

Motion to adjourn by Councilor Zogby

The special meeting on the 2015 budget is hereby adjourned at 8:43 p.m.

**CITY OF ONEIDA**

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Susan Pulverenti, City Clerk