

**MINUTES OF THE COMMON COUNCIL  
SPECIAL MEETING  
NOVEMBER 18, 2015**

A special meeting of the Common Council of the City of Oneida, NY was held on the 18<sup>th</sup> day of November, 2015 at 6:30 P.M. in Council Chambers, Oneida Municipal Building, 109 N. Main Street, Oneida, NY.

Meeting was called to order by Deputy Mayor Helen Acker

PRESENT: Councilors Brahim Zogby, Michael Bowe, Erwin Smith, Helen Acker, and James Chamberlain

ABSENT: Mayor Alden Smith and Councilor Thomas Simchik

ALSO PRESENT: City Clerk Susan Pulverenti  
Fire Chief Kevin Salerno  
City Engineer Jon Rauscher  
Water Superintendent Arthur Smolinski  
Councilor-elect Al Cohen  
Supervisor John Reinhardt

*Discussion 2016 Mayor's Budget*

Deputy Mayor Acker said this is a work session for the Council to discuss the budget.

Deputy Mayor Acker said the Fire Department's portion of the budget is on pages 31-32. On page 32, line (001.3410.0405), the Fire Chief said he has included \$8,700 for new bay doors, which will be identical to the doors on the addition. He said the overhead bay doors were added in 1968 and have gotten damaged during their 40-year lifespan. He said the other part of that line is the building's exhaust system for the new rescue truck, which will need modifications, and he is unsure of the costs at this time. Councilor Smith asked about the alarms, and the Chief said he has talked with all those who currently have alarms. He said he will be sending a reminder letter out on January 2, 2016. The Chief said they have to remove all the existing wiring, so he has budgeted \$4,000 in that line (001.3410.0110). The Chief said salaries are all contractual. The Council discussed the overtime line and decided to remove \$15K from overtime (001.3410.0102), cutting that line to \$110K. The EMT training overtime line (001.3410.107) covers the training, as well as covering the shifts while they are in school. In the turnout gear line (001.3410.0318), the Chief said the increase is due to seven helmets and nine pairs of boots coming out of compliance this year. This line also covers repairs to existing gear, and the Chief noted that after 10 years, the gear has to be taken out of service. Chief Salerno said the EMS line (001.3410.0201) is up, because secondary rescue is not up to the paramedic level. The City received a grant for the SCBA air packs, but the packs have not arrived, so we have yet to submit for the grant funds. The Chief said once they arrive, he will submit for the payment of the grant funding. The Chief said he still has to buy parts for the air packs and maintain oxygen fill stations. He said he is submitting for a grant for EMS equipment, and the same company will be writing the grant. Councilor Smith said the fire budget is down from last year. After discussion, the Council opted to remove \$5K from the equipment repair and maintenance line (001.3410.0409), which covers all vehicle maintenance, such as oil changes, tires, brakes, etc. The Fire Chief explained the training line. The Comptroller said \$20,000 was removed from the Fire Chief's portion of the budget.

The Water Department's budget is on pages 45-47 for revenues and 48-51 for expenses. The Water Superintendent said his budget is \$200K more than last year. He said the original budget he submitted had \$80K coming out of the Water Fund Balance. His budget has the minimum charge going from \$14.50 to \$15.00, and the water rates \$4.33 to \$4.47 per 1000 gallons (100 cu. ft.). The Superintendent said this is about a \$3.23 increase for someone using 20,000 gallons per quarter. He said 50% of the water customers in Oneida pay about \$60 per quarter, and they will be looking at a bill of \$62.00 per quarter, adding this is less than what was paid in 2014. The Comptroller said the increase on debt should be between \$30K and \$40K. The Water Superintendent said this budget includes a 3.2% rate increase. The minimum charge is set to cover the costs of billing, meter reading, phone service, etc., and it is \$326K for customer service. The minimum charge generates \$253K.

Councilor Acker questioned if there was a line to cover the City Chamberlain for the collection of water bills. The Superintendent said there is an item line on page 51 called Transfer to General (002.9901.0902), which is a charge back from the Water Fund to the General Fund, and there are problems with it. The Superintendent referred to a 1993 spread sheet, which was developed for discussion at that time, and was redone by the Comptroller's office for the 2016 budget. Mr. Smolinski said the spreadsheet depicts departments within the City that provide service to the Water Fund; it is a way to break down costs of the service provided. The Superintendent said the chart is inaccurate, and he began to outline the reasons why. The first inaccuracy is with the Chamberlain who collects the bills, but the

problem with the chargeback is that the water/sewer bills are one collection, not two. Also the breakdown should include inside City tax, outside district tax, hydrant tax, fire district tax, fire alarm, fire inspection fees, recreation fees, etc. He said this is a snapshot of the total of what the Chamberlain is collecting. The Comptroller is charging the Water Fund double for one collection. He said you would take the one collection of a bill, which is done 16,752 times a year, and break it down between the sewer and water funds. He said the Comptroller is saying 72% of what the Chamberlain does is for the water and sewer departments. The Water Superintendent said the Chamberlain's tasks are not 100% collecting bills. He said the water and sewer departments' interaction with the Chamberlain's office is collecting bills, and he explained how to figure out the cost of doing a collection. Councilor Zogby asked about the advertising for unpaid taxes, which would include relieved unpaid water bills. The Superintendent said the City receives a revenue off of that service, so the water and sewer funds can't be charged for something the City is making money on. He said the total cost minus the total revenue should be divided up amongst other funds.

The next department on the spreadsheet is the Assessor, and it is missing the Stockbridge and VVS school districts and Lighting Districts 1-4. Next on the spreadsheet is Civil Service, which is broken down by the number of employees; however, it is missing the Library and Housing Authority employees. He questioned the chargeable cost for school and asked why the City is charging less than the formula allows. Mr. Smolinski said that if the Civil Service Director is working with retirees, then they should be broken out also. You take the expense and subtract any revenues from outside sources. The Comptroller said if there is a better way to compute it, it can be changed. The next item listed is negotiations, which should be broken down by the three separate units for distribution to each department who has those employees. Building, on the spread sheet is next, and it should be in square feet not percentages. The Superintendent said there are many ways to break these down and distribute costs, but it has to be realistic. He said the way this is broken down, it costs the Water Department \$1,000 every time a resolution is placed on the agenda. He said for 40 resolutions, it costs \$40K and asked if that is realistic. He said the City Clerk is listed on the spreadsheet; however, the Clerk has many other duties besides just resolutions and preparing minutes/packets, and the attributable revenue would have to be subtracted, as well.

The Water Superintendent said the Water Fund pays a portion of the City Engineer's and Office Technology salaries and a portion of the City Attorney's. He said on page 4 of the budget, the Water Fund Balance graph should be labeled Assigned, Non-Spendable and Restrictive. He said the three Fund Balance graphs are all depicting three different portions of the Fund Balance. The Superintendent said that on page 59, the Hydrant Tax should be \$35,540, which changes the tax rate, and that should be 0.0837. The Superintendent asked to go into Executive Session.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

#### **RESOLUTION 15-267**

Moved by Councilor Bowe  
Seconded by Councilor Chamberlain

**RESOLVED** that the meeting is hereby adjourned to Executive Session at 7:27 p.m. for the purpose of discussing the financial or employment history of a particular person.

Ayes: 5  
Nays: 0  
Absent: 1 (Simchik)  
**MOTION CARRIED**

PRESENT: Mayor, Councilors, City Clerk, City Engineer, Water Superintendent

1. Discussion relating to the financial or employment history of a particular person.

Moved by Councilor Chamberlain  
Seconded by Councilor Smith

**RESOLVED**, that Executive Session is hereby adjourned to the regular meeting at 7:45 p.m.

Ayes: 5  
Nays: 0  
Absent: 1 (Simchik)  
**MOTION CARRIED**

City Engineer Jon Rauscher provided a brief overview of Summary Page 13 noting that his accounts are intermixed. He said the bulk are in Transportation, but he also has accounts in Home & Community Services (storm sewer & yard waste), Health account (mosquito control), and in the Public Safety line, if you are comparing other budgets. The Comptroller said she has made some changes to Public Safety in

the final document. Referring to a prepared spreadsheet, the City Engineer said his budget in 2014 was \$1.6M, \$1.35M in 2015, and it is projected at \$1.56M for 2016 for costs. He said the net budget has dropped about \$20K for public works. He added that a lot of debt was paid off this year.

He said there are two capital projects for the budget. The first is the NYS Rising Funding for the new DPW garage; however, there is no schedule from the State yet. The second is at the WWTP for the needed aeration equipment, and he said he is looking at doing this through a NYSERDA Energy Performance Project, where there will also be incentives from NYSERDA. This is projected at being a net positive project, because of the operation and energy savings. He said the only other addition (roughly \$9K) to his budget would be sick-time buyout and vacation buyout lines, as two employees have now indicated they may retire next year. On page 31, the salaries line has changed since 2013/2104, as summer staff is now used for traffic control (floater) and two summer staff are used for yard waste pickup. The part-time summer staff pay per hour was discussed, and \$9.00 an hour was decided upon. (13 weeks, 40 hr., 7 am to 3:30 pm)

Councilor Acker inquired about the Trestle Town Home Subdivision LOMR request. The City Engineer explained the background, noting it is \$8K to do the study and is not included in the budget. He said the Florence Avenue Trestle Town Homes are built in a flood plain and when built, fill was brought in. There is a section of the flood plain that doesn't have an elevation assigned to it. The engineer who designed it did a study, determined an elevation and built the structures above that elevation. The developer did not submit this to FEMA to update the mapping. He said that his understanding is that most people who bought homes there did not require a mortgage, so it didn't trigger the flood insurance requirement. However, now that the homeowners are selling their properties; this has become an issue, as FEMA doesn't know what happened with this development. Engineer Rauscher said that Mr. Kinsella (Homeowner's Association representative) has asked the City if they would take on the cost to perform a LOMR. The City Engineer said a few years ago, a resident filed a LOMA with FEMA, but it was rejected and FEMA said the LOMR is required, which costs about \$8K. He said there are approximately 6 structures involved. A lengthy discussion ensued as to if the City should be liable for this cost. The discussion included the responsibilities of the City and developer, building permits, flood plain permits, hydrological study, flood insurance, FEMA's involvement in the process, the Homeowner's Association responsibility, and updating of the City's map.

The City Engineer said he has spoken with both local and regional DEC flood plain managers to get some opinions and none have run into this type of situation before. When asked for his opinion, the City Engineer said it is not typical for the City to do this, but that is not saying the City can't do it. Councilor Bowe suggested an assessment roll could be created to pay the costs if all properties involved signed on to have this done, and Councilor-elect Cohen concurred. When the discussion ended, Deputy Mayor Acker said it would behoove the homeowners to act upon this, and the City Engineer said he would relay the Council's conclusion.

City Engineer Rauscher said \$50K is in the budget for sidewalks, which is coming from grant funding. Tree work was briefly discussed. The City Engineer said some grants include administration of those grants where salaries can be applied. The City Engineer said there is a Capital Project for the chiller at the Kallet, which is on its last leg. Councilor Smith asked about available grants for the chiller and boiler at the Recreation Department, and the City Engineer suggested the Council contact the legislators, noting the previous Kallet grant was through Assemblyman Magee's office. The demolition line was briefly discussed. The Comptroller said the Council is at \$531,276 coming from the Fund Balance, which is down from the originally projected amount of \$641,330. Deputy Mayor Acker said the next meeting is Tuesday, November 24.

Motion to adjourn by Councilor Chamberlain

The meeting is hereby adjourned at 8:57 p.m.

CITY OF ONEIDA

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Susan Pulverenti, City Clerk