

**MINUTES OF THE COMMON COUNCIL
NOVEMBER 25, 2014**

A special meeting of the Common Council of the City of Oneida, NY was held on the twenty-fifth 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 Deputy Mayor Helen Acker

PRESENT: Mayor Alden M. Smith, Councilors Brahim Zogby, Michael Bowe, Helen Acker, James Chamberlain and Thomas Simchik

ABSENT: Councilor Erwin Smith

ALSO PRESENT: City Clerk Susan Pulverenti
Comptroller Linda Pease
Fire Chief Kevin Salerno
First Deputy Darrin Ball
Police Chief David Meeker
Public Safety Commissioner Mike Kaiser

DISCUSSION OF 2015 MAYOR'S BUDGET

Police Department

Councilor Acker asked if the Council received the e-mail from Chief Meeker relative to crossing guards. In his email, the Chief stated that crossing guards are on City property, and the responsibility for the guards is borne by law by the municipality. The school district does not have 100% busing, and he provided a list of where the seven crossing guards are stationed. The Chief said police vehicles are a necessity and should be put into a scheduled replacement rotation. The Comptroller said she has been unsuccessful contacting the bankers relative to financing, and she hopes she will have the information for the Council at the December 1st meeting. The Chief said with regard to financing of vehicles this year, there will be other vehicles asked for next year. The Mayor said financing vehicles this year will not preclude the purchase of vehicles next year. The Chief said that next year he would like to get back on the schedule of purchasing two vehicles each year. The Chief said everything in his budget is basic needs. He provided the Council with a list of the items to be bulked together and possibly bonded for. The Chief said his department is made up of 23 officers, including the Chief, the CSO, a records clerk, telephone operator, department secretary and the crossing guards. The Chief said police officers receive overtime and very rarely, the CSO does as well. The phone operator answers the phone for the whole city, along with taking care of all the parking tickets, doing the mail, greeting the public, etc.

The Police Chief said the salary line includes 23 officers. There is an officer retiring this year, and a replacement will be hired to fill the slot of the retiring officer. Councilor Zogby questioned lowering the overtime costs, and the Chief said it can be lowered and if it needed, additional funds can come out of contingency. The Chief said the flood, train derailment, and staffing has dictated overtime for the past few years, and the Comptroller said the Police Department will be close to their budgeted amount for overtime this year. The Council discussed and decided to remove the firearm mounts for vehicles, flashlight/charges for vehicles, and air cards for the car computers from the proposed bonding amount. The Council agreed to leave \$4K in the equipment line and to add another \$650 to purchase the above three items. The radar units, car computers, light bars, portable shields, patrol rifle and firearm replacements, which are all over 15 years old, will be bulked together and bonded for. The Chief will prepare a Capital Project sheet.

The Chief said each clerical person has their own duties, with the records clerk working 40 hours per week; and the phone operator and department secretary at 35 hours per week. Chief Meeker said the

records clerk is very busy. Her duties include filing all reports that come in, FOIL requests, probations, sealed reports, parole records, employment checks, court records, working with the District Attorney, court, etc. This has to be kept up on a daily basis or it will start backing up. A case can be affected if paperwork is not filed on a timely basis. Councilor Zogby questioned if the job could be done in four days a week. The Chief said these are union positions, and there could be a grievance. Councilor Zogby said lowering the number of hours worked should not be a grievance, and the Comptroller said the job descriptions dictate the hours worked. Councilor Bowe said you cannot lay off someone, and then hire someone part-time to do the same job. Councilor Bowe said the Civil Service Officer should be questioned regarding changing of hours.

Debt Service

The Comptroller said that the debt service this year is \$427K, next year, 2015, it will be \$434K because of paying off the BAN, and in 2016 it drops to \$407,000. In 2017, the debt service will go up to \$421K with all the projects that are currently before the Council, and the payments will be less than what the City is currently paying. The Comptroller said it would be one bond for 15 years and Councilor Zogby inquired if this included the Fish Creek Crossing Project. The Comptroller said the Fish Creek Bond is already in place and goes to a bond automatically in 2015 and Councilor Zogby asked to what term. The Comptroller said she believed it was for 15 years. Councilor Zogby said we approved the bonding, but did not make a determination about what we wanted to borrow, adding that we can take any term we would like. Councilor Zogby said that a modest increase in water rates to be out of debt sooner, so as to free up funds for any other improvements, should be discussed. Councilor Bowe said this has been discussed twice already. Councilor Simchik said that the waterline is something that is good for 100 years.

Fire Department

Councilor Acker asked the Chief if he has any further cuts that can be made, and he said nothing can be cut or he would have suggested a different type of plan. The Mayor said he has already requested the fire budget be cut two different times. Overtime was discussed again, with the Chief using the example of the structure fire the other night, saying OT for that fire will be \$2K. Overtime cannot be gauged; it is an actual cost. The Chief said with all the people retiring over the past couple years, overtime costs have increased. Chief Salerno reiterated his concerns with the short shift that is being covered with overtime, noting the firemen are getting burnt out sooner working so many hours. He said they work a 24 hour shift with 72 hours off. Chief Salerno said nothing really changed in his budget; they are just shifting money to different accounts. Councilor Bowe said \$219K over last year's budgeted amount was requested by the Fire Department and only \$86K was approved in the Mayor's submitted budget.

Councilor Zogby said the Fire Marshall overtime is a third more than the projection, and the Chief said he has to go to Planning Commission meetings and overtime for training, among other things. The Mayor said there should be reductions, as the union is agreeing to go to training at ½ the cost of overtime. The housing codes officer works three days a week and is paid the same as the previous housing codes officer, \$13 per hour. With respect to the account clerk in the Fire Department, 1st Deputy Darrin Ball said she is certified, but there is a contractual issue with the CSEA. Chief Salerno said Ms. Erdo is trained because she does all the reports, and she has to know the applicable codes, etc. Councilor Bowe asked if a full time account clerk or full time housing inspector was needed more. The Chief said that anytime you pull a full time employee away you are completely disrupting the office and messing up the continuity. Ms. Erdo also serves as the Chief's secretary, answers his phone, does reports and typing for the Chief, as well as all the housing code reports. The Chief said she holds things together in the office now that the new housing code inspector has started. He said she knows the contact numbers, she fields a lot of questions and many of calls stop with her because she knows the answers. Chief Salerno said the Housing Codes Officer position should be full time to serve the needs of what the Council wants to accomplish this year. Councilor Bowe suggested the Housing Codes officer be at 30 hours, five days a week, 6 hours a day. Councilor Chamberlain said we need to move forward on Codes, and Deputy Mayor Acker said we need to improve our City and codes are part of that. Councilor Zogby said it might be a good idea, but he would like to see a complete plan to address codes rather than simply adding more hours to someone's

week. Councilor Zogby said he would like to see the fire marshals, in their travels throughout the City, make reports on buildings where bricks are falling, roofing is missing or paint is missing. He said a plan needs to be implemented. Chief Salerno said Housing Codes needs to be with Building Codes Enforcement. Councilor Zogby said he is not for adding any further employees, until we know that we are receiving the \$212K from the County, and we can formulate a plan to be ready if we do get it. Councilor Chamberlain said, in his opinion, the City needs to do this now, and if we get the money from the County it will help fund it, but if we don't get the money, it still needs to be done. Councilor Bowe said there is a problem and agrees there should be a plan, but having better codes enforcement is important to him.

The Mayor said there is deteriorating housing throughout the City, and we have to change that. He said there is significant room for improvement, and we have to make what we are doing more effective. He said he wants to form an ad-hoc committee to brainstorm the codes restructuring, create a mission and develop a time frame to come up with some meaningful alternatives to implement the program. The Mayor said people have to be able to drive around our community and like what they see. The revenue from the housing codes enforcement was discussed and it was noted that the revenue pays for the position. Deputy Mayor Acker said the Housing Codes officer should start working five days a week at the beginning of the year, along with having the committee the Mayor discussed. Chief Salerno said he has training to complete, which will be done in April or May. The Council agreed to add \$2,700 to the salaries line for the Housing Codes Officer to go to working five days at six hours a day in the spring.

Deputy Mayor Acker said several times the ISO rating has been discussed. She said she talked with Veris, the overseers of ISO and the Risk Decisions Services Department, and the good news is that we have a high rating of 4. She said because we have a paid Fire Department, we get a good rating, and we get the least expensive rate for homeowners and commercial insurance. It is not required, but requested by ISO and Veris to have the truck. They said as the truck is 20 years old, it absolutely should be replaced and they inquired if it passed the pump and hose test. The Fire Chief responded, one yes, one no. Deputy Mayor Acker said she wanted to be educated on how the rating affects the homeowners and business owner's insurance costs. Councilor Acker asked if this truck would be the primary truck, and the Chief responded yes. First Deputy Ball explained the advantages of having the new truck and how it equates to the safety of the men and public. Chief Salerno said they would trade-in the current truck on the new truck. Councilor Bowe asked if either vehicle could be put off for a year, and the Chief said they cannot wait for either truck. The Chief said they are now at over 2,000 calls per year with the same staffing and equipment, adding they have always had five vehicles. The air packs have been removed from the budget because a grant application will be submitted. There was a brief discussion relating to time frames for bonding. Councilor Zogby suggested bonding for seven years for the trucks, to which the Chief said the payments would go up. Chief Salerno will prepare a new capital project sheet to include the rescue truck increase.

Deputy Mayor Acker said she would like to remove the \$210K in revenue from the budget. The City Clerk said you cannot change the revenue line without permission from the Mayor. The Mayor said to leave it in, and he is aggressively working to receive the money from the County. Deputy Mayor Acker said that the State has said the City will be receiving the 25% reimbursement from the State (FEMA paid 75% for the flood), and the City Clerk said that she will have the City Engineer bring the breakdown with him on Monday.

Motion to adjourn by Councilor Chamberlain

The special meeting is hereby adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

CITY OF ONEIDA

Susan Pulverenti, City Clerk