

**MINUTES OF THE COMMON COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING
NOVEMBER 9, 2015**

A special meeting of the Common Council of the City of Oneida, NY was held on the 9th 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: Mayor Alden M. Smith, Councilors Brahim Zogby, Michael Bowe, Erwin Smith, Helen Acker, James Chamberlain, and Thomas Simchik (arrived at 6:37 p.m.)

ALSO PRESENT: City Clerk Susan Pulverenti
Comptroller Linda Pease

Discussion 2016 Mayor's Budget

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

The Council had questions about the salary schedules listed in the budget, beginning on page 51, where there appeared to be errors and a lengthy discussion ensued. The Comptroller said some of the salaries were converted to hourly rates. The Comptroller provided the Council with a more detailed schedule, which appeared to have some inaccuracies as well. The Comptroller said she would speak with the Deputy Comptroller and have the schedules cleaned up for the next meeting. The Comptroller said the schedules reflect a 7% to 8% increase from the base rates of 2013, 2014 and 2015 when the union contracts were settled.

Councilor Bowe stated that he would like to discuss the Civil Service position that the Mayor has proposed to move to the County. He said a part-time employee could be hired for up to 30 hours per week to do the job with the money received from the school system, and the proposed raises for the Comptroller's office. He said this way the City would keep control and no benefits would be paid to a part-timer. A brief discussion ensued.

Councilor Zogby asked why the City Chamberlain's salary always goes up, when the Mayor's, Council's and Deputy Mayor's salaries remain the same. The Comptroller said the Chamberlain position has always fallen under Management/Confidential, and a discussion ensued. The Comptroller said as far as she knows it has always been that way; right or wrong. Councilor Smith asked what salary is put out there at election time, and Councilor Zogby said there is no salary. Councilor Smith said the previous year's budget lists the salary. The Comptroller said in Section 1 of the CSEA contract, the Chamberlain's position is included as management/confidential just as the Comptroller, Deputies, City Clerk, etc. The City Clerk said it could be that she is considered a department head, because she has a union employee under her control. Councilor Zogby said he is not comfortable with salary being more than the Mayor's salary, as the Mayor's position is the most responsible in our City government, and it should be reflected in the salary. Discussion included the Chamberlain's hours, part-time vs. full time, the Mayor's salary, the Mayor having a full-time vs. part-time status, benefits, and different Mayors who adjusted the salary for one reason or another. Councilor Zogby suggested this should be fixed. The breakdown of budget lines accounting for the City Engineer's salary, which is split between three lines was explained. Councilor Acker said the City Engineer will be in tomorrow evening.

A dialogue ensued about Codes, and the housing issues that are on-going. Discussion included the status of part-time vs. full-time for the Housing Code Officer, stipends received by the Fire Department personnel for doing inspections, previous employees in codes positions who were not replaced, and how the fees for no-shows got the attention of property owners who didn't call or show up after an appointment had been scheduled.

Councilor Bowe asked about page 10 and the asterisks around "based on Mayor's budget", and the Comptroller said the numbers on the City Constitutional Tax Limit Form will change as the current budget is modified. Councilor Bowe said that on the summary, page 13, the budget is not balanced. Revenues and expenditures are off by \$7,047, and the Comptroller said she will look at the figures. He questioned page 18 where there is a revenue of \$10,150, when the budget proposes to eliminate the Civil Service position.

The Mayor explained the line on page 28 for Office Technology 2016 Command Center and the \$2,175 budgeted. He said that after the flood event, it was determined in the After Action Report that the City should have a designated Command Center, and the area downstairs will be modified, including having WIFI accessibility and computerization. There is nothing budgeted for the Kallet this year.

The Comptroller said a revenue of \$4,800 needs to be added to the budget for the Verizon Agreement.

A question arose about the postage and copier contracts on page 28, and the Comptroller said that the City Engineer budgets for those accounts. The proposed budget increases the line by \$3,000, and the Council inquired as to why there was an increase. It will be looked into to see if any departments have new copiers. The Law lines on page 26 were briefly discussed, including the lines for solar energy and litigation, and the Mayor said you cannot anticipate litigation matters. The health insurance line was discussed, including the change of insurance companies for Medicare retirees and the proposed savings to the City of \$200K. Property acquisition lines were created this year.

Discussion relating to the Civil Service position renewed. Fringe benefits for employees was discussed. Councilor Bowe questioned the Comptroller who said the benefits for the Civil Service Officer's position were 71%, yet the chart on page 12 shows that employee benefits account for 37% of the budget. Councilor Bowe said that position is the lowest paid department head. The Comptroller said it costs \$18,000 for fringe benefits for the Deputy Comptroller and Comptroller, and said everyone's benefit costs are not the same.

Discussion returned to Codes issues. Councilor Zogby asked Councilor Chamberlain to outline the ideas the Codes committee came up with, and he said all Codes personnel would move in to a separate Codes department. Councilor Chamberlain said the Fire Chief was against part-time housing codes officers, as a conflict of information could occur when one is off and the other is working. Councilor Zogby said the Council needs to decide what's important and if Codes and Codes Enforcement is important, they should cut from the budget what is not important and add some beef to Codes Enforcement. He suggested that if there were two part-time housing code officers, one could be in charge of Wards 1, 2, and 3, and the other in charge of Wards 4, 5, and 6. However, it was noted that finding two part-time codes officers is not an easy task, as they require school and training. Councilor Chamberlain mentioned that the previous housing code officer, who was very good, left the City for a full-time position in another municipality. Discussion included revenue from inspection fees and a full-time housing code officer. The Comptroller said the revenue from housing inspections goes into the General Fund; it does not go back to the Fire Department for their use. Councilors Chamberlain and Smith said the Fire Department personnel do the commercial inspections and solid fuel permit inspections.

Deputy Mayor Acker said decisions will have to be made relative to making the housing inspector full-time and the potential changeover of Civil Service.

Mayor Smith said the City could negotiate a Memorandum of Understanding with the County to perform the City's Civil Service functions until all the requirements are met, as required by NYS and Civil Service Law. He said it can take over a year to finalize a changeover from the City to the County. The Mayor said the City should be looking at potential savings, and there is potential savings in the proposal Councilor Bowe has provided, as well. Discussion included privacy issues, the continued use of the "human resource" office in the basement, the possibility of the Deputy Comptroller performing those duties in the lower level office, putting a wall around the current Deputy Comptroller's office, and the amount of employees/retirees that are in and out of the Civil Service office. The Comptroller said that she needed her Deputy Comptroller, and Councilor's Bowe and Chamberlain said that is why we need another person to handle the Civil Service Office duties. Councilor Simchik suggested an Executive Session to discuss this matter. Councilor Acker said that she needs more information. She said the Council has three previous employees of the City who have an understanding of that office, while the Mayor is trying to save the City money. The Civil Service Director will be at the meeting tomorrow evening to answer any questions.

Motion to adjourn by Councilor Chamberlain

The meeting is hereby adjourned at 8:17 p.m.

CITY OF ONEIDA

Susan Pulverenti, City Clerk