

**MINUTES OF THE COMMON COUNCIL  
NOVEMBER 29, 2017**

A special meeting of the Common Council of the City of Oneida, NY was held on the twenty-ninth day of November, 2017 at 6:30 o'clock P.M. in the Council Chambers, Oneida Municipal Building, 109 N. Main Street, Oneida, NY.

Meeting was called to order by Deputy Mayor Jim Chamberlain

**PRESENT:** Mayor, Leo Matzke, Councilors Al Cohen, Michael Bowe, Erwin Smith, and Thomas Simchik

**ALSO PRESENT:** City Clerk Susan Pulverenti  
Comptroller Lee Ann Wells  
Councilor-Elect Jim Coulthart

**DISCUSSION - 2017 MAYORS BUDGET**

The Deputy Mayor said that the Council will be reviewing various lines of the budget. The Comptroller explained what she found with respect to setting up a Reserve Fund for employee retirements (General Fund only), noting that Water and Sewer currently have expense lines. The Comptroller said that this would require a Resolution from the Council to transfer the funds into it. The Comptroller said that interest is currently collected on the City's savings accounts, but she can look into accounts with higher interest rates. Councilor Bowe said that the 2018 Budget now calls for a 5.59% tax increase. Deputy Mayor Chamberlain said that he spoke with the Fire Chief, and the Chief came back with several additional cuts; \$500 from training, \$500 from training overtime, \$500 from fire equipment, \$500 from medical supplies, \$1K from SCBA, \$1K from contracts and \$1K from equipment and repair. He said this makes a total of \$5K in additional cutbacks. Councilor Smith said the Fire Chief will be getting the bids for the new generator to be shared by City Hall and the Fire Department. Councilor Bowe said that the Police Chief said the Council could remove \$6K from his other/gas/oil line. It was suggested that the printing line amount be reduced; however, that line was recently increased by a \$4,500 transfer from Contingency, and the bills for November and December have not yet been received. Councilor Cohen suggested that the unemployment line on page 45 be reduced. The Council talked it over and agreed to go from \$10K down to \$7K. The City Clerk said the 1410-0200 could be lowered by \$1K, and the Council agreed.

The contract line for Operation Wild Cats was questioned, and Councilor Smith said there is a problem with feral cats in the City. The City Clerk said that in years past, detailed itemized bills were submitted for payment, as she prepared the vouchers. However, that was not done this past year, as the Mayor submitted a voucher for one payment of \$1K in December 2016. At the Council's request, the City Clerk said she would be accountable for following through to be sure that the terms of the agreement are met, including preparing the vouchers for payment. The salary line for the Housing Codes Inspector was decreased to the original \$40,800, as the Council said this needs to go through Civil Service and be negotiated through the union. The Comptroller said that the Safety Inspection salaries line would be lowered by \$9,640, noting it also includes the salary of the assessment clerk.

The Council went on to discuss a couple of requests from the Mayor. Councilor Smith said it doesn't seem logical to include funding for a City Administrator, and a discussion resulted. The Deputy Mayor said that the Council has to do their homework to see what fits our needs, and the Council agreed. Councilor Smith said many people confuse a City Administrator with a City Manager. Councilor Acker said that there is not an Administrator job description listed through Civil Service. The Comptroller said that per Civil Service, there cannot be two Mayor's secretary's lines. Councilor Acker said that there are no job descriptions through Civil Service for event planners. The Council agreed that both of those line items were removed from the budget and would not be added back in.

Councilor Bowe said that the tax increase is now 5.07% after all the deductions that have been made. The Council was reminded that a Resolution was passed stating that the minimum level of Fund Balance to be kept at all times is 20% of the General Fund's Budget. The Comptroller provided the Council with figures on the different options for tax rates, and the discussion continued.

The Council conversed about the Rec Department's archery line, noting that there is a revenue side of that line, which is almost the same as the expense line. The Council said that this was the first year for that program, and the department is hoping for more participation next year. The Council briefly discussed the Planning and Community Development lines for other expense and contracts, deciding to leave those lines as is. The Comptroller said that those lines included payments for downtown designs, legal notices, downtown flowers and a planning conference. Councilor Acker said that we are trying to improve the City through beautification. Councilor Acker said that the Comptroller will be cleaning up all the miscellaneous lines throughout the entire budget to get a better handle on what is coming from those accounts. As the 2018 budget calls for a part-time Assessor, several lines in that department were debated and cuts were made. Councilor Bowe said that so far \$25,040 has been cut from the budget leaving a 4.89% tax increase. The Council moved onto the demolition line, discussing asbestos removal, the

bidding process, and City employees doing the demolition work, ultimately deciding to leave the \$30K in that line.

Councilor Bowe outlined what the tax increases would be by taking more monies from the Fund Balance. Councilor Cohen said he did not want to take any more money out of the Fund Balance, and the talks continued. The revenue lines were briefly discussed. Councilor Bowe said that with a 5% tax increase, the Council would take about \$15K less out of Fund Balance (\$215,932) from the original Mayor's budget submission. Councilor Smith said that the City taxes are still less expensive than cities around us.

Councilor Bowe said the Council started with a 2% tax increase, went up close to 8%, and we are now at 5% with taking less money out of Fund Balance. The Council agreed that this budget includes adding improvements that residents will be able to see, such as sidewalks and street maintenance. They said that the salaries have been evened out, vehicle deficiencies have been addressed, and the budget is upfront and transparent with all the retirements. The Council took a straw vote on whether to finalize the budget that would include a 5% tax increase. The Council each agreed to approve the proposed budget, as composed during all the special meetings. The Comptroller said she will file the paperwork to set the Constitutional Tax Limit, which needs to be in place ten days before approval of the budget.

A Special Meeting will be scheduled for Tuesday, December 12, 2017 to formally adopt the budget.

Motion to adjourn by Councilor Bowe

The special meeting is hereby adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

CITY OF ONEIDA, NEW YORK

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Susan Pulverenti, City Clerk