



# CITY OF ONEIDA COMMON COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

|                  |                            |                      |  |
|------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|--|
| <b>Date:</b>     | February 17, 2026          | <b>Presiding:</b>    | Rick Rossi, Mayor  |
| <b>Time:</b>     | 6:30pm                     | <b>Clerk:</b>        | Sandy LaPera, City Clerk   |
| <b>Location:</b> | Common Council<br>Chambers | <b>Meeting Type:</b> | Regular <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Special <input type="checkbox"/> |

## CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Rick Rossi, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and roll call.

| <u>Attendees</u>    | <b>Present</b>                      | <b>Absent</b>                       | <b>Arrived Late</b>              |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Mayor Rossi         | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/> : _____ |
| City Manager Lovell | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/> : _____ |
| Councilor McHugh    | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/> : _____ |
| Councilor Cimpi     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/> : _____ |
| Councilor Smith     | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> : _____ |
| Councilor Jones     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/> : _____ |
| Councilor Pagano    | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/> : _____ |
| Councilor Simchik   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/> : _____ |

## Also Present

|                     |                                     |                              |                                     |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| City Attorney Bell  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Supervisor: _____            | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Attorney (Other)    | <input type="checkbox"/>            | City Engineer Rowe           | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Fire Chief Jones    | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Water Superintendent Campany | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Police Chief Lowell | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | HR Manager Kaiser            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

**PROCLAMATION:** Reverend Doctor Jack Fucci Day (Rescheduled from 2/3/26)

**PUBLIC HEARING:** Proposed Local Law to amend the City Charter and Code of the City of Oneida to abolish the position of Commissioner of Public Safety and transfer the responsibilities of the Commissioner of Public Safety to the City Manager

# Proclamation

## City of Oneida - Office of the Mayor

WHEREAS, Dr. Jack Fucci has served with dedication and distinction as City Chaplain for the City of Oneida for ten years, providing spiritual counsel and support to city leadership, employees, and the community; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Dr. Jack Fucci, Jr. has served the Oneida community since 1985, when he relocated to the City with his family and made it his home, where he and his wife raised five children grounded in faith, service, and commitment to others; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Fucci's pastoral ministry in Oneida began at Oneida Christian Assembly and continued through leadership at Abundant Life and Abounding Love Fellowship, and he currently serves as Co-Pastor of Oneida Full Gospel Assembly; and

WHEREAS, as a devoted husband, father, and grandfather, Dr. Fucci exemplifies strong family values, leadership, and community responsibility; and

WHEREAS, through nearly four decades of pastoral and public service, Dr. Fucci has demonstrated unwavering dedication to the people of Oneida, providing guidance, compassion, and leadership, including his role as City Police Chaplain supporting law enforcement and the community they serve; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Jack Fucci has been invited to offer prayer at the September 11 remembrance ceremony at City Hall, providing a meaningful moment of reflection and unity;

BE IT FURTHER PROCLAIMED, that the City of Oneida expresses its sincere appreciation for Dr. Fucci's spiritual leadership, compassion, and steadfast commitment to the well-being of its residents, and extends its best wishes for continued health and fulfillment in his ongoing service to the community.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the City of Oneida to be affixed this 17<sup>th</sup> day of February 2026.

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Mayor Rick Rossi

## OPEN PUBLIC HEARING

PROPOSED LOCAL LAW TO AMEND THE CITY CHARTER AND CODE OF THE CITY OF ONEIDA TO  
ABOLISH THE POSITION OF COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC SAFETY AND TRANSFER THE  
RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC SAFETY TO THE CITY MANAGER

### RESOLUTION 26-32

Moved by Councilor Pagano  
Seconded by Councilor Cimpi

**RESOLVED**, that the Public Hearing on a proposed Local Law to amend the City Charter and Code of the City of Oneida to abolish the position of Commissioner of Public Safety and to transfer the responsibilities of the Commissioner of Public Safety to the City Manager is hereby opened at 6:35 p.m.

Ayes: 6

Nays: 0

Absent: 1-Smith

**MOTION RESULT:**  Passed  Failed

### APPEARANCES

#### POLICE CHIEF STEVE LOWELL

Police Chief Steve Lowell clarified that his comments were directed solely at the proposal under consideration and were not intended as a reflection on the City Manager or his performance. Drawing on nearly 16 years of service under multiple administrations, Chief Lowell expressed concern, from a department-head perspective, about how the amended local law defines the position responsible for overseeing daily operations. He noted the importance of ensuring that the role, as written, accurately reflects appropriate authority, responsibilities, and public safety considerations consistent with the training, knowledge, and experience typically associated with police department leadership. His remarks were offered for Council's consideration regarding the language and structure of the proposed local law.

City Attorney Bell responded to Police Chief Lowell's comments by providing clarification regarding the language referenced in the purpose section of the proposed local law. She noted that the language in question appears in the intent or purpose portion of the local law rather than in the substantive provisions of the City Code or Charter. As a result, she advised that revisions to that section could be made without the need for an additional public hearing, as such changes would not alter the operative language of the law but would instead clarify its stated purpose. She indicated that the language could be addressed through amendment prior to adoption.

**CLOSE PUBLIC HEARING**

PROPOSED LOCAL LAW TO AMEND THE CITY CHARTER AND CODE OF THE CITY OF ONEIDA TO  
ABOLISH THE POSITION OF COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC SAFETY AND TRANSFER THE  
RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC SAFETY TO THE CITY MANAGER

**RESOLUTION 26-33**

Moved by Councilor Jones

Seconded by Councilor McHugh

**RESOLVED**, that the Public Hearing on a proposed Local Law to amend the City Charter and Code of the City of Oneida to abolish the position of Commissioner of Public Safety and to transfer the responsibilities of the Commissioner of Public Safety to the City Manager is hereby closed at 6:37 p.m.

Ayes: 6

Nays: 0

Absent: 1-Smith

**MOTION RESULT:**  Passed  Failed

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** None

**OLD BUSINESS:**

Councilor Janet Jones read from prepared comments which are attached to these minutes noted as Attachment A.

Councilor McHugh requested clarification regarding the cost estimates associated with the DRI project, noting a discrepancy between the higher total reflected in the C&S narrative and the lower, itemized figures distributed more recently. It was explained that the C&S estimate represented the full scope of the project, while certain elements—such as concrete pavers, display components, the pedestal, and foundation work—are not eligible for DRI reimbursement and were therefore excluded from the revised estimate. Once those items were removed, the portion of the project eligible for DRI funding was estimated at approximately \$232,290, which is significantly lower than the earlier overall total.

City Manager Lovell noted that earlier figures were based on preliminary estimates from prior years and that the updated numbers reflect more recent pricing and refined project details. Councilor Jones asked who would be responsible for allocating the \$1,059,000 DRI award among the various project components and whether Council would be voting on those allocations. It was confirmed that proposed designs and related funding allocations would be brought forward to Council for review and approval at a future meeting.

**SUPERVISOR'S REPORT:** None

**CITY MANAGER'S REPORT:**

City Manager Lovell yielded his time and advised that he would prepare remarks for the next meeting based on the discussions held earlier in the session.

**MAYOR'S REMARKS:**

The Mayor offered brief remarks, noting appreciation for the recent rise in temperatures and the gradual melting of snow. The Mayor thanked the Department of Public Works for their continued efforts throughout the winter season, including snow removal, reducing snowbanks, and maintaining plowed sidewalks and access in the downtown area. Appreciation was expressed for the department's work in supporting residents and local businesses during the winter months.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Motion by Councilor McHugh  
Seconded by Councilor Pagano

**RESOLVED**, that the minutes of the meeting held on February 3, 2026, are approved as presented.

Ayes: 6

Nays: 0

Absent: 1-Smith

**MOTION RESULT:** Passed Failed

**APPROVAL OF WARRANT**

Motion by Councilor McHugh  
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

**RESOLVED**, that Warrant No. 4, including checks and ACH payments totaling \$2,710,250.75, as audited by the Voucher Committee, is hereby approved for payment.

Ayes: 6

Nays: 0

Absent: 1-Smith

**MOTION RESULT:** Passed Failed

**A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE ISSUANCE OF AN ADDITIONAL \$1,440,000 BONDS OF THE CITY OF ONEIDA, MADISON COUNTY, NEW YORK, TO PAY COSTS IN CONNECTION WITH CONSTRUCTION OF IMPROVEMENTS AT THE GLENMORE DAM IN AND FOR SAID CITY**

**RESOLUTION 26-34**

Moved by Councilor Simchik  
Seconded by Councilor Jones

**WHEREAS**, the capital project hereinafter described has been determined to be a Type I Action pursuant to the regulations of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation promulgated pursuant to the State Environmental Quality Review Act (“SEQRA”), the implementation of which as proposed, it has been determined will not result in any significant adverse environmental effects and SEQRA compliance materials are available in the office of the City Clerk where they may be inspected during regular business hours; **NOW, THEREFOR, BE IT**

**RESOLVED** by the affirmative vote of not less than two thirds of the total voting strength of the Common Council of the City of Oneida, Madison County, New York, as follows:

Section 1. For the specific object or purpose of paying costs for the construction of improvements at the Glenmore Dam, including incidental costs and expenses, in and for the City of Oneida, Madison County, New York, there are hereby authorized to be issued an additional \$1,440,000 bonds pursuant to the provisions of the Local Finance Law. Said object or purpose is hereby authorized at the new maximum estimated cost not to exceed \$22,000,000.

Section 2. The plan for the financing of such \$22,000,000 maximum estimated cost is as follows:

- a) By the issuance of the \$8,000,000 bonds of said City heretofore authorized to be issued therefor pursuant to a bond resolution dated September 18, 2018;
- b) By the issuance of the \$5,940,000 bonds of said City heretofore authorized to be issued therefor pursuant to a bond resolution dated August 1, 2023;

- c) By the issuance of the \$6,620,000 bonds of said City heretofore authorized to be issued therefor pursuant to a bond resolution dated October 15, 2024; and
  - d) By the issuance of the additional \$1,440,000 bonds of said City herein authorized;
- provided however, that the amount of bonds to be issued shall be reduced to the extent of grants received in connection therewith.

Section 3. It is hereby determined that the period of probable usefulness of the aforesaid specific object or purpose is thirty years, pursuant to subdivision 3 of paragraph a of Section 11.00 of the Local Finance Law.

Section 4. The faith and credit of said City of Oneida, Madison County, New York, are hereby irrevocably pledged for the payment of the principal of and interest on such obligations as the same respectively become due and payable. An annual appropriation shall be made in each year sufficient to pay the principal of and interest on such obligations becoming due and payable in such year. There shall annually be levied on all the taxable real property of said City, a tax sufficient to pay the principal of and interest on such obligations as the same become due and payable.

Section 5. Subject to the provisions of the Local Finance Law, the power to authorize the issuance of and to sell bond anticipation notes in anticipation of the issuance and sale of the bonds herein authorized, including renewals of such notes, is hereby delegated to the City Comptroller, the chief fiscal officer. Such notes shall be of such terms, form and contents, and shall be sold in such manner, as may be prescribed by said City Comptroller, consistent with the provisions of the Local Finance Law.

Section 6. All other matters, except as provided herein relating to such bonds, including the date, denominations, maturities and interest payment dates, place or places of payment, and also including the consolidation with other issues, shall be determined by the City

Comptroller. Such bonds shall contain substantially the recital of validity clause provided for in Section 52.00 of the Local Finance Law and shall otherwise be in such form and contain such recitals in addition to those required by Section 52.00 of the Local Finance Law, as the City Comptroller shall determine.

Section 7. The City Comptroller is hereby further authorized, at her sole discretion, to execute a project finance and/or loan agreement, and any other agreements with the New York State Environmental Facilities Corporation, including amendments thereto, and including any instruments (or amendments thereto) in the effectuation thereof, in order to effect the financing or refinancing of the object or purpose described in Section 1 hereof, or a portion thereof, by a bond or note issue of said City in the event of the sale of same to the New York State Environmental Facilities Corporation.

Section 8. This resolution shall constitute a statement of official intent for purposes of Treasury Regulations Section 1.150-2. Other than as specified in this resolution, no monies are, or are reasonably expected to be, reserved, allocated on a long-term basis, or otherwise set aside with respect to the permanent funding of the object or purpose described herein.

Section 9. The validity of such bonds and bond anticipation notes may be contested only if:

- 1) Such obligations are authorized for an object or purpose for which said City is not authorized to expend money, or
- 2) The provisions of law which should be complied with at the date of publication of this resolution are not substantially complied with,

and an action, suit or proceeding contesting such validity is commenced within twenty days after the date of such publication, or

- 3) Such obligations are authorized in violation of the provisions of the Constitution.

Section 10. The proceeds of the bonds herein authorized and any bond anticipation notes issued in anticipation of said bonds may be applied to reimburse the City for expenditures made after the effective date of this resolution for the purpose for which said bonds are authorized. The foregoing statement of intent with respect to reimbursement is made in conformity with Treasury Regulation Section 1.150-2 of the United States Treasury Department.

Section 11. This resolution is effective immediately based on an Order on Consent with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation This resolution, which takes effect immediately, shall be published in summary form in The Rome Sentinel, the official newspaper of said City hereby designated for such purpose, together with a notice of the City Clerk in substantially the form set forth in paragraph a of Section 81.00 of the Local Finance Law.

The question of the adoption of the foregoing resolution was duly put to a vote on roll call, which resulted as follows:

|                        |        |        |
|------------------------|--------|--------|
| Councilor Lynne McHugh | VOTING | YES    |
| Councilor David Cimpi  | VOTING | YES    |
| Councilor Nathan Smith |        | ABSENT |
| Councilor Janet Jones  | VOTING | YES    |
| Councilor Bill Pagano  | VOTING | YES    |
| Councilor Tom Simchik  | VOTING | YES    |
| Mayor Rick Rossi       | VOTING | YES    |

The Resolution was thereupon declared duly adopted.

DISCUSSION:

Councilor McHugh asked for clarification regarding the age and validity of the bid pricing associated with the Glenmore Dam project, noting that the bid dated back to August 2021 and inquiring how long such bids are typically valid. It was explained that bid validity can vary by vendor and project but is often between six months and one year.

Discussion then reviewed the project's funding history, including earlier appropriations and later increases attributed to inflation and updated cost estimates. Councilor McHugh questioned the difference between the bid amount and the higher project authorization and asked whether a contingency had been built into the total. City Manager Lovell noted that project budgets commonly include a contingency, often around ten percent, to account for unforeseen conditions and ensure the project can be completed without interruption.

The City Manager advised that, while he was not involved in all prior discussions, the higher authorized amount likely reflected both updated costs and contingency planning to avoid the need for additional bonding. The City Engineer and Water Superintendent were present to address technical questions. It was reported that the Glenmore Dam project is approximately 75 percent complete and is anticipated to be finished by October.

**AGREEMENT-JAKE'S GREENHOUSE (HANGING FLOWER BASKETS)**

**RESOLUTION 26-35**

Moved by Councilor McHugh  
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

**RESOLVED**, that the City Manager is hereby authorized to execute an agreement with David Malbouf d/b/a Jake's Greenhouse, 3210 Genesee Street, Canastota, NY 13032, to supply and install seventy-two (72) 14-inch hanging flower baskets on designated poles in the City of Oneida from May through September 2026, and to provide maintenance for the same.

Ayes: 6

Nays: 0

Absent: 1-Smith

**MOTION RESULT:**  Passed  Failed

**DISCUSSION:** Councilor McHugh inquired about the location of the City's flower pots and whether they remained in City possession. City Manager Lovell advised that the pots are currently stored at the DPW. Additional questions were raised about the use of hanging baskets rather than ground-level planters. Mayor Rossi noted that the decision to utilize elevated hanging baskets on light poles was made in part to reduce vandalism and damage.

Concerns were expressed regarding maintenance and watering needs during the summer months, particularly during periods of high heat, and whether adequate resources would be available to sustain the plantings. Mayor Rossi acknowledged that watering requirements could be significant and noted that past discussions have considered whether City crews could assist. It was advised that providing regular watering with City staff and equipment has previously been deemed challenging due to staffing, scheduling, and overtime considerations, though the matter could be revisited. Further discussion included exploring possible solutions for maintenance and watering as the program moves forward.

Members acknowledged the aesthetic value of the flowers downtown and their role in enhancing the appearance of the City.

Cost comparisons were reviewed, with it noted that the current arrangement is less expensive than prior proposals. The current year's cost was estimated at approximately \$11,000, compared

to higher figures in previous years, including a prior estimate of \$18,000 and about \$16,000 last year when costs were shared with an outside organization. It was noted that the outside partner is no longer participating, making the program a City responsibility. Staff indicated that the selected vendor was the most cost-effective option available and has guaranteed the baskets for the season.

Council members expressed general support for continuing the flower program as a positive enhancement to the downtown area while acknowledging that maintenance and watering logistics will need to be addressed moving forward.

### **SOLE SOURCE-NEPTUNE WATER METERS**

#### **RESOLUTION 26-36**

Moved by Councilor Jones

Seconded by Councilor Cimpi

**RESOLVED**, to authorize Neptune Technology Group, 1600 Alabama Highway 229, Tallassee, AL 36078 as the sole source for Water Meters for 2026.

Ayes: 6

Nays: 0

Absent: 1-Smith

**MOTION RESULT:** Passed Failed

**DISCUSSION:** Councilor McHugh stated that the proposed meter replacement program is intended to modernize City infrastructure and reduce costs over time but noted that residents may react negatively to the term “smart meter” due to experiences with other utilities. In response, the Water Superintendent explained that the City has historically used Sensus meters as the low bidder; however, staff have observed increased maintenance issues with newer Sensus meters compared to those installed approximately ten years ago.

He added that the Sensus software used for billing integration will be discontinued at the end of the year and that customer support has been difficult due to reliance on a vendor. Water Superintendent Campany reported that he contacted other utilities and municipalities and found many have transitioned to Neptune, including ultrasonic technology. He explained that ultrasonic meters use non-mechanical measurement (no moving parts), provide more consistent accuracy, and are compatible with a radio-read system that would allow drive-by readings rather than manual touch reads.

He emphasized that the conversion would be phased in over time as meters are replaced, to avoid operating multiple meter platforms and software systems. He also noted that Neptune has provided strong customer support and training at no additional cost. In response to a question about future battery replacement, he advised that the meters and batteries are both rated for

approximately 20 years, with replacement anticipated when the meter itself is due for replacement. Councilor McHugh indicated the proposal is a reasonable use of technology and expressed support.

**MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT-ONEIDA CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**PULLED FROM AGENDA**

Moved by Councilor  
Seconded by Councilor

**RESOLVED**, to authorize the Chief of Police to execute and sign updated agreements, amendments, extensions, or successor agreements with the Oneida City School District for the reimbursement of crossing guard services provided by the Police Department.

Ayes: \_\_\_\_\_

Nays: \_\_\_\_\_

Absent: 1-Smith

**MOTION RESULT:** Passed Failed

**BUDGET TRANSFERS/AMENDMENTS**

**RESOLUTION 26-37**

Moved by Councilor Simchik  
Seconded by Councilor Cimpi

**RESOLVED**, to approve the budget transfers and amendments as outlined by the Comptroller or a third party duly retained by the City of Oneida to perform such services.

|   | <u>To</u>   | <u>From</u>                                |
|---|---|--|
| <b>2026 Budget Adjustments</b>  |   |  |
| \$ 131,650.00   | 002.8300.0324.0000<br>Water Meters & Parts        | 002.0002.0912.0000<br>Water Fund Balance   |
| <b>To allocate funds to cover the meter bid expenses</b>  |   |  |
| \$ 20,000.00  | 001.5110.0102.0000<br>Street Maintenance Overtime | 001.0001.0912.0000<br>General Fund Balance |
| <b>To allocate funds for the overtime expenses due to the impact of unexpected weather conditions</b> |   |  |

Ayes: 6

Nays: 0

Absent: 1-Smith

**MOTION RESULT:**  Passed  Failed

DISCUSSION: Councilor McHugh expressed concern about using general fund balance to cover overtime costs. She asked how DPW overtime is budgeted and whether the department is already over budget for the year.

In response, City Manager Lovell stated that DPW's original overtime request had been higher than the amount ultimately budgeted and noted that overtime levels can fluctuate based on operational demands, and that the current situation underscores the need to account for sufficient overtime funding when budgeting for future contracts or similar events. A follow-up inquiry was made regarding the total overtime amount budgeted. It was acknowledged that additional services often require additional spending, and appreciation was expressed for DPW's continued efforts.

**AUTHORIZING THE DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT TO EXECUTE  
DOCUMENTS RELATED TO PLANNING GRANTS AND ASSOCIATED PROJECTS**

**RESOLUTION 26-38**

Moved by Councilor Jones

Seconded by Councilor Simchik

**WHEREAS**, the City of Oneida regularly applies for and receives planning-related grants and funding from federal, state, county, and other sources to support community development, infrastructure, housing, economic development, and related initiatives; and

**WHEREAS**, the administration of such grants often requires the timely execution of applications, certifications, reimbursement requests, claims vouchers, amendments, and related documents in order to ensure compliance with grant requirements and to maintain project schedules; and

**WHEREAS**, the Director of Planning and Codes serves as the City's lead staff person for the coordination, administration, and oversight of planning-related grants and associated projects, working in collaboration with consultants, contractors, and City staff; and

**WHEREAS**, the Common Council desires to promote efficient grant administration while retaining appropriate Council oversight over the acceptance of grant awards and any associated policy, budgetary, staffing, or organizational impacts;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Common Council of the City of Oneida hereby authorizes the Director of Planning and Codes, or their designee, to:

1. Execute and submit grant applications; and
2. Execute agreements, certifications, reimbursement requests, claims vouchers, amendments, and other related administrative documents necessary to administer planning grants and associated projects on behalf of the City of Oneida;

provided that such authority is limited to actions that are administrative in nature and to grants, projects, contracts, and expenditures that have been previously approved by the Common Council; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that acceptance of any grant award that:

- Creates new positions or staffing obligations; or
- Requires new or increased appropriations or matching funds; or
- Creates ongoing operational or financial obligations; or
- Results in material changes to City facilities, equipment needs, or organizational structure shall require separate approval by the Common Council prior to acceptance and implementation; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that all actions taken pursuant to this authorization shall be subject to the availability of appropriated funds, where required, and shall be carried out in accordance with applicable federal, state, and local laws, policies, and established financial and claims audit procedures; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Director of Planning and Codes shall keep the City Manager and Common Council reasonably informed of grant applications, awards, project status, and actions taken under this authorization.

Ayes: 6

Nays: 0

Absent: 1-Smith

**MOTION RESULT:** Passed Failed

DISCUSSION: Councilor Jones, followed by Councilor McHugh asked whether the proposed change would affect the City's procurement process, bid procedures, or oversight of expenditures. It was clarified that all procurement requirements, bidding processes, budget oversight, and approvals for monetary expenditures would remain unchanged and continue to follow standard procedures.

The City Manager explained that the request is administrative in nature and intended to streamline paperwork related to grant and project documentation. Due to the volume of documents requiring signatures, processing had become backlogged. After consultation with the

State representative, it was confirmed that an authorized signer could execute certain documents on behalf of the City, provided Council authorization is in place. The proposed action would designate an additional authorized signer for those purposes, allowing documents to be executed more efficiently while maintaining all existing approval and oversight requirements.

It was further clarified that any amendments involving funding, purchases, or changes to approved plans would still come before Council for review and approval. The change was described as a housekeeping measure to improve administrative efficiency without altering procurement or financial controls.

**A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING A STIPEND FOR STEVEN VONDERWEIDT, DIRECTOR OF CITY PLANNING, FOR ADMINISTRATIVE AND OPERATIONAL OVERSIGHT OF THE CODES DEPARTMENT**

**RESOLUTION 26-39**

Moved by Councilor Cimpi

Seconded by Councilor Simchik

**WHEREAS**, the City of Oneida operates a Codes Department that requires consistent administrative and operational oversight to ensure effective enforcement, efficient service delivery, coordination with development activity, and compliance with applicable laws and regulations; and

**WHEREAS**, the City has not filled the position of Director of Codes and has instead adopted a management approach that leverages existing professional leadership to promote efficiency, coordination, and fiscal responsibility; and

**WHEREAS**, Steven Vonderweidt, Director of City Planning, has assumed, and will continue to assume, significant additional responsibilities related to the administrative and operational oversight of the Codes Department, including staff coordination, workflow management, policy and procedure alignment, interdepartmental coordination, and support of development and redevelopment initiatives within the City; and

**WHEREAS**, this organizational structure creates strong operational synergy between the Planning and Codes functions, improves coordination and customer service, strengthens development review and code enforcement alignment, and avoids the higher cost associated with staffing a separate department head position, thereby achieving meaningful cost effectiveness for the City and its taxpayers; and

**WHEREAS**, the Common Council recognizes that this expanded scope of responsibility represents a substantial and ongoing undertaking beyond the normal duties of the Director of City Planning, and that this added workload and accountability should be recognized and compensated in a fair, transparent, and professional manner; and

**WHEREAS**, the City Manager has recommended the payment of an annual stipend in the amount of Eighteen Thousand Dollars (\$18,000) to Steven Vonderweidt, Director of City Planning, in recognition of these significant additional duties and responsibilities;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, by the Common Council of the City of Oneida, New York, that:

1. Steven Vonderweidt, Director of City Planning, is hereby authorized to receive an annual stipend in the amount of Eighteen Thousand Dollars (\$18,000) for administrative and operational oversight of the Codes Department.
2. This stipend shall be paid in accordance with the City's regular payroll practices and shall be in addition to his base salary.
3. This stipend recognizes the expanded scope of responsibility, the operational efficiencies achieved through this organizational structure, and the positive impact of integrated Planning and Codes oversight on City operations and service delivery.
4. The City Manager and City Comptroller are hereby authorized and directed to take any and all actions necessary to implement this resolution.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that this resolution shall take effect immediately.

Ayes: 6

Nays: 0

Absent: 1-Smith

**MOTION RESULT:**  Passed  Failed

DISCUSSION: Councilor McHugh commented on the proposed stipend related to the additional responsibilities being assigned, noting that while employees may sometimes assume added duties without a pay increase, the responsibilities in this case constitute a distinct expansion of the role. She indicated that providing compensation for the increased workload and oversight responsibilities is reasonable.

The City Manager provided additional context, explaining that the proposal is intended as a step toward consolidating Codes and Planning functions under a more unified administrative structure. He stated that the long-term goal is to operate as a coordinated department and that assigning administrative oversight of Codes without creating a separate director position is a cost-effective approach. He noted that recent staffing changes and the elimination of certain positions have resulted in cost savings, and that he evaluated comparable municipal stipends for expanded duties—typically ranging from 10 to 20 percent of salary—when determining the recommended amount, estimated at approximately \$1,500 per month.

He added that departments are already meeting regularly to coordinate operations and that the proposal would formalize responsibilities currently being handled in practice. Councilor McHugh expressed that aligning Codes and Planning functions under one administrative structure could be beneficial for residents, businesses, and overall City operations, and the matter was opened for further discussion.

## LEASE AGREEMENTS/EXPENDITURES-POLICE DEPARTMENT VEHICLES

### **RESOLUTION 26-40 TABLED**

Moved by Councilor

Seconded by Councilor

**RESOLVED**, to authorize the City Manager and/or Police Chief to execute lease agreements for the replacement of designated police department vehicles and to approve associated expenditures for required emergency equipment installation (“upfit”), including but not limited to lighting, communications equipment, prisoner transport systems, and related public safety modifications.

City Manager Lovell stated that he would like to table this resolution.

Motion to table this resolution by Councilor Simchik

Seconded by Councilor Cimpi

#### DISCUSSION:

City Manager Lovell noted that the current resolution reflects the Police Chief’s lease request; however, because the vehicle reserve is shared by three departments under a single budget line, he recommended tabling the item. He explained that he would like to meet with the Police, Fire, and DPW departments to review all pending vehicle lease needs together, evaluate the available funding, and establish a prioritized plan by consensus before moving forward with any individual lease agreement. He stated that this approach would ensure transparency, a shared understanding of the funds available, and a coordinated recommendation for future action.

Councilor Cimpi asked why this had not been addressed during the budget process. City Manager Lovell explained that the vehicle reserve is currently structured as a single line item serving multiple departments, a format he does not necessarily support and would prefer to see divided into separate lines for each department. He noted that because the present resolution reflects only one request, he would like the opportunity to review the needs of all departments that draw from that line before moving forward, so priorities can be evaluated collectively within the available funding.

Mayor Rossi further explained that while the reserve was funded during the budget cycle, the specific timing and number of vehicle needs across departments can shift during the year. He stated that the intent is to ensure the funds are used in a coordinated and equitable way, and that taking time now to review all requests collectively will allow the administration to recommend that reflects the most immediate operational needs before moving forward.

Police Chief Lowell explained that the vehicle reserve line serves as an overflow account for the lease program. The annual budget is built around anticipated lease costs, while the reserve is used to cover fluctuations such as increases in lease payments when agreements renew or extend. He noted that funds can also return to the reserve when vehicles are turned in and auctioned, with

proceeds either deposited back into the reserve or applied to reduce future lease costs. In some cases, savings can also be structured within the lease terms themselves, helping to offset overall program expenses.

He added that the department manages its fleet with a focus on long-term cost efficiency, vehicle condition, mileage, and operational reliability. Regular reviews with the fleet provider help determine when vehicles should be replaced based on equity position, maintenance history, and performance needs. From a policing standpoint, reliable vehicles are critical for safety and response, and those factors guide the department's lease requests and replacement schedule.

Police Chief Lowell stated that several vehicles currently in the fleet are experiencing significant mechanical issues, including excessive oil consumption, engine problems, and higher-than-expected maintenance costs. Past attempts to adjust equipment, such as changing tire types, resulted in faster wear and additional expenses that had to be absorbed within already reduced maintenance lines. Some vehicles, including certain Tahoe's and Durango's, have required extensive repairs or lengthy downtime, which has affected operations and increased costs. As a result, the department is seeking to cycle out its most problematic units to maintain reliability and avoid further strain on the maintenance budget.

He emphasized that the lease program is designed to keep the fleet on a consistent replacement cycle and avoid the long-term costs associated with retaining vehicles past their useful life. The department monitors mileage, condition, and equity position when determining when to replace vehicles, typically turning them over within about four years. He noted that delaying replacements can compound maintenance and safety concerns, while timely leasing helps maintain dependable equipment for public safety operations. He also explained that police vehicles are built to order and have long production and upfitting timelines, meaning action must be taken well in advance to ensure replacements arrive when needed.

Police Chief Lowell clarified that the request is not for additional vehicles but to replace existing units as part of the department's ongoing fleet rotation. He noted that the intent is to maintain the established number of vehicles while cycling out older units that are reaching the end of their useful life, so the fleet remains reliable and operational.

He added that the leasing program is structured to support this rolling replacement schedule and thanked the Council for its consideration of the request.

City Manager Lovell agreed with Chief Lowell's remarks and indicated that he has heard comparable input from the remaining department heads. He is aiming to have the item finalized for consideration at the next agenda meeting.

Ayes: 6

Nays: 0

Absent: 1-Smith

**MOTION RESULT:** Passed Failed Tabled

**WAIVE RULE TO ACCEPT AGENDA ITEMS**

**RESOLUTION 26-41**

Moved by Councilor McHugh  
Seconded by Councilor Jones

**RESOLVED**, that per Resolution 08-180 adopted by the Common Council on August 19, 2008, the provisions of the procedure to accept agenda items are hereby waived.

Ayes: 6

Nays: 0

Absent: 1-Smith

**MOTION RESULT:** Passed Failed

**RESOLUTION INCREASING MAXIMUM PROJECT COST-GLENMORE DAM**

**RESOLUTION 26-42**

Moved by Councilor Simchik  
Seconded by Councilor Pagano

**WHEREAS**, the Common Council of the City of Oneida is considering a bond resolution at its February 17, 2026, meeting to authorize financing for a current capital project; and

**WHEREAS**, updated estimates require an increase to the project's maximum not-to-exceed amount in order to support the proposed bonding;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Common Council of the City of Oneida hereby approves an increase to the maximum not-to-exceed cost of said project to an amount not to exceed \$22,000,000; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that this resolution shall take effect immediately and shall serve to establish the revised project maximum in connection with the bond resolution adopted at this meeting.

Ayes: 6

Nays: 0

Absent: 1-Smith

**MOTION RESULT:** Passed Failed

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Police Chief Lowell responded to a question previously raised by Councilor McHugh regarding e-bikes and, in the interest of transparency, provided an update to the Council. Members discussed whether there was general support for continuing to develop a proposal and preparing more detailed budget specifications.

Discussion included how the proposal might intersect with staffing, particularly the potential impact of assigning officers to bike patrol and whether additional staffing would be necessary if those assignments were expanded. Police Chief Lowell advised that staffing considerations would be addressed separately and noted that the current budget cycle is an appropriate time to begin evaluating these needs. The potential project could include e-bikes as part of enforcement and patrol efforts.

The Police Chief advised that the bike patrol program has not been discontinued but has been limited in recent years due to staffing constraints. A request for interest has been circulated within the department to identify officers interested in participating in bike patrol. Scheduling would depend on staffing levels and operational priorities, with targeted patrols in parks and trail areas anticipated. It was also noted that enforcement related to e-bikes and similar devices has increased following recent updates to New York State law, though enforcement can be challenging without appropriate equipment. Officers are issuing tickets where applicable, and data can be provided at a future meeting.

Council members expressed public safety concerns related to e-bikes and similar devices, including potential risks to riders, motorists, and officers. Community feedback and prior Council discussions were cited as reasons for including these items in preliminary planning. The City Manager sought informal directions on whether staff should proceed with developing cost estimates and additional details for a potential capital project. Council members indicated that further discussion would be needed before advancing the proposal

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion to adjourn by Councilor Jones  
Seconded by Councilor McHugh

Ayes: 6

Nays: 0

Absent: 1-Smith

**MOTION RESULT:**  Passed  Failed

The meeting adjourned at 7:37 p.m.

CITY OF ONEIDA

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Sandra LaPera, City Clerk