CITY OF ONEIDA
COMMON COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Date:	October 20, 2026	Presiding:	Rick Rossi, Mayor
Time:	6:30pm	Clerk:	Sandy LaPera, City Clerk
Location:	Common Council Chambers	Meeting Type:	Regular ☒ Special ☐

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

Attendees	**Present**	**Absent**	**Arrived Late**
Mayor Rossi	☒	☐	☐:_____
City Manager Lovell	☒	☐	☐:_____
Councilor McHugh	☒	☐	☐:_____
Councilor Cimpi	☒	☐	☐:_____
Councilor Smith	☒	☐	☐:_____
Councilor Jones	☒	☐	☐:_____
Councilor Pagano	☒	☐	☐:_____
Councilor Simchik	☒	☐	☐:_____

Also Present

City Attorney Bell	☒	Supervisor:_____	☐
Attorney (Other)	☐	Supervisor:_____	☐
Fire Chief Jones	☒	Other:_____	☐
Police Chief Lowell	☒	Other:_____	☐

PUBLIC HEARING: Proposed Local Law imposing a six (6) month moratorium on Commercial Free-Standing Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Systems and Battery Energy Storage Systems within the City of Oneida

NAME THE SNOWPLOW CONTEST WINNERS: City Manager Lovell announced the "Name the Snowplows" contest winners, noting that the winning names will be displayed on the City's snowplows throughout the winter season soon.

Winners:	**Applicant**	**Name**	**Place**
	Justin James	The Snow Express	6
	Brandy DuChene	Express Line	5
	Tracy Schmidtka	Winter Express	4
	Kevin Williams	The Best Express	3
	Michelle Henriksen	Blue Express	2
	Eleanora Gillander	Hedwig	1

OPEN PUBLIC HEARING

PROPOSED LOCAL LAW IMPOSING A SIX (6) MONTH MORATORIUM ON COMMERCIAL FREE-STANDING SOLAR PHOTOVOLTAIC (PV) SYSTEMS AND BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEMS WITHIN THE CITY OF ONEIDA

RESOLUTION 26-147

Moved by Councilor Simchik
Seconded by Councilor Smith

RESOLVED, that the Public Hearing on a proposed Local Law imposing a six (6) month moratorium on Commercial Free-Standing Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Systems and Battery Energy Storage Systems within the City of Oneida is hereby opened at 6:32pm.

Ayes: 7
Nays: 0
Absent: 0
MOTION RESULT: ☒Passed ☐Failed

APPEARANCES
None

CLOSE PUBLIC HEARING

PROPOSED LOCAL LAW IMPOSING A SIX (6) MONTH MORATORIUM ON COMMERCIAL FREE-STANDING SOLAR PHOTOVOLTAIC (PV) SYSTEMS AND BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEMS WITHIN THE CITY OF ONEIDA

RESOLUTION 26-148

Moved by Councilor Jones
Seconded by Councilor McHugh

RESOLVED, that the Public Hearing on a proposed Local Law imposing a six (6) month moratorium on Commercial Free-Standing Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Systems and Battery Energy Storage Systems within the City of Oneida is hereby closed at 6:34pm.

Ayes: 7
Nays: 0
Absent: 0
MOTION RESULT: ☒Passed ☐Failed

PUBLIC COMMENT

Common Council Meeting Minutes | City of Oneida

Dee Schaefer — Oneida

Dee Schaefer expressed concerns regarding property taxes, the condition of a neighboring property, and the City's overall economic outlook. She stated that her home had been incorrectly assessed for nearly 30 years due to an unfinished attic being classified as living space and that her request for reimbursement of the resulting overpayment was denied. She voiced frustration over the proposed 23% tax increase and potential reassessment, particularly given the ongoing condition of a fire-damaged property at 238 Allen Park Place, which has remained boarded up since July 2023. She stated that the property's deteriorating condition, including broken windows and vermin, has negatively impacted her home's market value and that efforts to obtain updates from City officials have been unsuccessful. She also questioned the property's foreclosure status and existing stop-work order. Ms. Schaefer further expressed concerns regarding the number of homes for sale, absentee landlords, the lack of family-oriented amenities, and limited economic development opportunities. She urged City officials to focus on attracting businesses, improving neighborhoods, and addressing declining property values rather than placing additional financial burdens on homeowners.

Robin Bienkowski — Oneida

Robin Bienkowski addressed the proposed 23% tax increase and suggested that the City explore restructuring its inner and outer tax districts as a potential alternative to raising taxes or reducing services. She explained that properties within the City's outer tax district are subject to a property tax rate approximately 49.46% lower than properties within the inner tax district, despite receiving many of the same City services, including snow removal and water service. She identified several major commercial businesses located within the outer district, including Walmart, Tractor Supply, Green Empire Farms, and automobile dealerships representing Nissan, Toyota, and Chevrolet, as examples of properties benefiting from the lower tax rate. She further distinguished agricultural properties and residential properties with larger parcels of land from these commercial businesses, suggesting that exemptions or waivers could be established to protect qualifying property owners. Ms. Bienkowski stated that she had researched similar tax district arrangements in other municipalities and suggested that restructuring the districts, adjusting district boundaries, or implementing a waiver system could generate significant additional revenue, potentially addressing the City's budget shortfall without increasing taxes or reducing essential services. She encouraged the Council to further investigate these options as part of the budget review process.

Robert Britton — Oneida

Robert Britton addressed the proposed 23% tax increase, acknowledging that while he does not favor an increase, he understands the need to address the City's ongoing financial challenges. He expressed concern over the City's continued reliance on fund balance to cover budget shortfalls and departmental expenses, stating that this practice is unsustainable and that corrective measures are necessary to restore financial stability. Mr. Britton emphasized the importance of making difficult decisions to place the City on a more responsible financial path. He also expressed concern regarding negative comments and threats directed toward public officials and their families on social media, stating that disagreements should be addressed through appropriate channels, such as Common Council meetings, rather than involving family members. He concluded by expressing support for the City Manager's efforts to address the City's financial challenges and develop a balanced budget.

Randy Jones — Oneida

Randy Jones addressed the Common Council regarding the proposed acquisition and installation of a static military jet display in the City of Oneida and distributed informational handouts to Council members outlining his concerns. As a military veteran, he expressed opposition to the project, citing potential long-term financial obligations, including estimated annual maintenance and repair costs of $2,500 to $5,000 and insurance expenses of $1,300 to $2,000, despite assurances that the project would be privately funded. He also questioned whether a display honoring primarily the Air Force would adequately represent veterans of all military branches. Mr. Jones raised concerns regarding the level of support from military officials, the uncertainty surrounding the availability and acquisition timeline of the aircraft, and the transparency of communications and financial planning associated with the project. Referencing photographs and

examples of military memorials included in his handout, he emphasized the importance of recognizing the service and sacrifices of veterans from all branches of the Armed Forces. He concluded by stating that the decision to proceed with the proposed display should rest with the residents and veterans of Oneida rather than City officials or a select committee and urged that they be given an opportunity to have a voice in the decision.

Karen Barbano — Oneida

Karen Barbano addressed the Common Council seeking clarification regarding the City's emergency response trailer and the proposed expenditure for a vehicle capable of towing it. She questioned the trailer's intended use, whether it had already been acquired, and the necessity and cost of the proposed vehicle. Mayor Rossi clarified that the City currently owns the emergency trailer but requires a suitable towing vehicle due to changes in the City's vehicle fleet. Ms. Barbano also referenced comments made at a previous Council meeting regarding building permit fees, noting that a $750 fee for new construction in Oneida had been compared to substantially lower fees in neighboring municipalities. She questioned Councilor Cimpi's previous statement regarding the lack of available land for development in the City, expressing her belief that opportunities remain for individuals to build new homes and contribute to the City's tax base. Councilor Cimpi clarified that his remarks specifically referred to the limited availability of larger tracts of land suitable for major development projects, rather than individual residential building lots, noting that developing such properties would require significant investment. Ms. Barbano thanked the Council for the clarification.

Fred Dunn — Oneida

Fred Dunn addressed the Common Council regarding the proposed tax increase and the need to review property assessments throughout the City. He expressed concern that numerous properties may still be assessed at values established under previous ownership, despite having been sold many years ago. He suggested that a citywide reassessment could identify properties that are currently undervalued, potentially increasing the City's overall taxable assessed value and allowing for a reduction in the property tax rate. Mr. Dunn questioned why the City was not pursuing this potential source of revenue before considering an increase in taxes. He also expressed concern about the financial burden on senior citizens and residents living on fixed incomes, stating that, at 87 years old, he struggles to meet his monthly expenses and would be unable to afford a substantial tax increase. During the discussion, it was explained that the Council had just received the proposed budget and would be reviewing it during upcoming budget work sessions. Mr. Dunn reiterated his concerns and urged the Council to take action to address outdated property assessments as part of its efforts to resolve the City's financial challenges.

Jill Christian-Lynch — Oneida

Jill Christian-Lynch addressed the Common Council regarding the proposed development at 609 Genesee Street, formerly the golf course and clubhouse property, and expressed concerns about potential infrastructure costs to the City. She referenced questions raised at a previous meeting regarding the challenges of providing adequate water pressure to the elevated property and stated that she had been assured the developer would be responsible for infrastructure expenses associated with the project. However, she noted that the City subsequently issued a Request for Proposals for a high-pressure zone study and infrastructure improvement plan, specifically referencing the proposed development, and that the Council authorized $27,000 for the study on August 18, 2026. She questioned the necessity of the study and the potential additional expense of a booster pump system, which she estimated could exceed six figures. Ms. Christian-Lynch explained that many homes in the Foxwood and Deerfield areas have historically experienced low water pressure and that homeowners have installed their own pressure systems, while residences along Evergreen Valley Drive rely on private wells. She questioned how many complaints the City is currently receiving regarding water pressure and whether the proposed improvements would primarily benefit the developer and a limited number of existing properties. Citing the City's current financial challenges and proposed budget, she urged the Council to carefully evaluate the necessity, costs, and potential benefits of the infrastructure improvements before committing additional taxpayer funds.

Pat Godfrey — Oneida

Pat Godfrey addressed the Common Council regarding the proposed 23% tax increase and expressed concerns about the City's spending practices and the financial burden on residents. She questioned the fact that the City Manager and many City employees reside outside the City and therefore would not be directly impacted by the proposed property tax increase. She also referenced substantial salary increases for non-union employees and an insurance reimbursement provided to the City Manager, questioning how these expenditures align with efforts to control costs. Ms. Godfrey emphasized the need to balance revenues and expenditure rather than continually increasing taxes on property owners. As a retired and long-term homeowner of more than 34 years, she expressed concern that rising taxes and property assessments could eventually make it unaffordable for her and her husband to remain in their home. She also addressed earlier comments regarding the City's inner and outer tax districts, noting that she resides in the outer district and disagreed with the suggestion that residents in both districts receive comparable services. She explained that her property relies on a private septic system, receives City water, and experiences delayed snow removal compared to other areas. She emphasized that these differences in services should be considered when discussing potential changes to the tax district structure and thanked the Council for the opportunity to speak.

OLD BUSINESS: None

SUPERVISOR'S REMARKS: None

MAYOR'S REMARKS: Mayor Rossi reminded residents of the many upcoming Halloween events scheduled throughout the community this month and encouraged residents to attend.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT:

City Manager Lovell kept his remarks brief, due to the number of important items on the agenda. He advised that the September departmental reports had been submitted for Council review and expressed his appreciation to department heads and employees for their continued efforts to maintain essential City services during a challenging financial period. Regarding the proposed 2027 City Budget, he looked forward to working with the Council over the coming weeks to address the City's structural financial challenges, maintain essential services, and develop a responsible and sustainable budget for residents. He concluded by noting that several important matters would be addressed under their respective agenda items.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Councilor McHugh
Seconded by Councilor Pagano

> **RESOLVED**, that the minutes of the meeting held on October 6, 2026, are approved as presented.

Ayes: 7
Nays: 0
Absent: 0
MOTION RESULT: ☒Passed ☐Failed

DISCUSSION: Councilor McHugh commended City Clerk Sandra LaPera for doing a great job in summarizing the minutes of the lengthy October 6, 2026, meeting and encouraged everyone to review the minutes.

APPROVAL OF WARRANT

Motion by Councilor Pagano
Seconded by Councilor Jones

> **RESOLVED**, that Warrant No. 20, including checks and ACH payments totaling $894,203.30, as audited by the Voucher Committee, is hereby approved for payment in the usual manner at the discretion of the Comptroller.

Ayes: 7
Nays: 0

Absent: 0
MOTION RESULT: ☒Passed ☐Failed

RECEIVE/FILE MONTHLY REPORTS

RESOLUTION 26-149

Moved by Councilor Simchik
Seconded by Councilor McHugh

> **RESOLVED,** to receive and place on file the Monthly Reports from the City Department Heads.

Ayes: 7
Nays: 0
Absent: 0
MOTION RESULT: ☒Passed ☐Failed

DISCUSSION: Councilor Cimpi requested clarification regarding the $114,000 fraud-related write-off. City Manager Lovell confirmed that the amount represented the fraud identified during the audit involving the Chamberlain's office.

RE-INTRODUCE A LOCAL LAW AMENDING THE CODE OF THE CITY OF ONEIDA CHAPTER 190 REGARDING THE USE OF STORAGE TRAILERS AND OTHER CONTAINERS AND RESUME THE PUBLIC HEARING

RESOLUTION 26-150

Moved by Councilor Simchik
Seconded by Councilor Smith

> **WHEREAS**, on May 5, 2026, the City of Oneida introduced a Local Law to regulate the use of storage trailers and containers in the City, and a public hearing on the proposed Local Law was held, and kept open, on June 2, 2026; and
>
> **WHEREAS**, after holding the public hearing and upon further review, the City of Oneida Common Council does hereby re-introduce the revised Local Law to amend Chapter 190 of the Code of the City of Oneida to enact regulations for the use of storage trailers and other containers throughout the City and does further resume the public hearing; and

WHEREAS, the proposed Local Law, as revised, has been introduced and will be considered for enactment pursuant to the provisions of the Municipal Home Rule Law; and

WHEREAS, no other agency has the legal authority or jurisdiction to approve or directly undertake the enactment of a local law in the City of Oneida, such that there are no other involved agencies within the meaning of the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) with respect to the proposed enactment of said Local Law, with the result that the Common Council shall act as lead agency in this matter; and

WHEREAS, a Short Environmental Assessment Form has previously been prepared and reviewed by the Common Council, and the Common Council, having considered the adoption of said Local Law and the criteria contained in 6 N.Y.C.R.R. Part 617.7 and compared the impacts which may be reasonably expected to result from the adoption of said Local Law against said criteria, determined that this action shall have no significant adverse impact on the environment and, by Resolution 26-71, issued a negative declaration under SEQRA; and

WHEREAS, the Common Council, by Resolution 26-71, did further duly refer the Local Law to the Madison County Planning Department pursuant to General Municipal Law Section 239.

NOW, THEREFORE, it is

RESOLVED AND DETERMINED, that the Common Council shall resume the public hearing as to the enactment of the proposed revised Local Law at the Oneida City Hall located at 109 North Main Street, Oneida, New York on November 4, 2026, at 6:30 p.m., or as soon thereafter as the matter can be heard, at which time all persons interested in the subject shall be heard.

Ayes: 5
Nays: 2 (Smith/Jones)
Absent: 0
MOTION RESULT: ☒Passed ☐Failed

DISCUSSION: Councilor Jones expressed concern that the proposed local law was being brought forward prematurely, noting that the Zoning Board had previously discussed referring the matter back to the Planning Department to determine whether existing provisions of the City Code could be amended rather than creating additional regulations. She indicated that the Zoning Board had not formally completed its review or made a recommendation. Councilor Cimpi expressed concern over continued delays and emphasized the importance of moving the legislation forward, noting the work already completed by Planning Director Steve Vonderweidt.

Councilor McHugh raised questions regarding the proposed law's definitions and whether the regulations could unnecessarily restrict customary residential activities, temporary storage needs,

or construction-related uses. The City Attorney clarified that the statement of legislative intent explains the purpose of the proposed law but does not itself become part of the City Code, while the specific amendments and definitions outlined in subsequent sections would be incorporated if adopted. It was further clarified that the Council was only considering introducing the proposed local law, with a public hearing to follow, allowing for additional review and public input. Councilor McHugh expressed interest in receiving further input from the Zoning Board before making a final determination.

PROPOSED LOCAL LAW OF 2026
CITY OF ONEIDA, NEW YORK

A LOCAL LAW AMENDING CHAPTER 190 OF THE CODE OF THE CITY OF ONEIDA TO ESTABLISH REGULATIONS FOR ACCESSORY STORAGE STRUCTURES, STORAGE TRAILERS, STORAGE CONTAINERS, PORTABLE FABRIC STORAGE STRUCTURES, RECREATIONAL VEHICLES, AND LONG-TERM STORAGE

Section 1. Legislative Findings and Intent

The Common Council of the City of Oneida finds that the long-term placement, storage, and use of storage trailers, semi-trailers, motor vehicle bodies, shipping containers, storage containers, recreational vehicles, portable fabric storage structures, and similar units may adversely impact neighborhood character, community aesthetics, economic development, redevelopment efforts, property maintenance, public safety, fire safety, and the general welfare of the community.

The Common Council further finds that such units are frequently utilized as de facto accessory buildings, storage facilities, warehouses, or outdoor storage areas without review under applicable zoning, site plan, building, fire safety, or property maintenance requirements.

The purpose of this Local Law is to establish reasonable regulations governing the placement, use, duration, maintenance, screening, and permitting of such structures while preserving customary residential activities, temporary storage needs, construction activities, emergency recovery efforts, and recreational uses.

This Local Law is intended to supplement, and not replace, existing provisions of the City Code regulating junk, debris, refuse, unsafe conditions, nuisance conditions, outdoor storage, accessory structures, property maintenance, fire safety, and zoning compliance.

Section 2. Chapter 190 Definitions

Chapter 190 of the Code of the City of Oneida is hereby amended to add the following definitions:

LONG-TERM STORAGE

The placement, parking, storage, or maintenance of any trailer, storage container, motor vehicle body, recreational vehicle, or similar unit in substantially the same location for more than sixty (60) consecutive days, except where expressly authorized by this Chapter.

For purposes of determining whether the sixty-day period has been exceeded, the City shall not be required to establish continuous observation of the unit for the entire period. Duration may be established through photographs, inspection records, historical records or imagery, statements or admissions of an owner or occupant, physical conditions indicating prolonged placement, or other competent evidence.

PORTABLE FABRIC STORAGE STRUCTURE

A temporary or semi-permanent structure consisting of a metal, wood, plastic, or similar frame covered by fabric, canvas, polyethylene, vinyl, tarp, or similar flexible material, commonly marketed or used as a portable garage, portable shelter, car shelter, garage-in-a-box, storage shelter, or similar structure.

RECREATIONAL VEHICLE

A motorhome, camper, travel trailer, fifth-wheel trailer, camper van, recreational trailer, or similar unit designed and maintained for temporary recreational, camping, or travel use.

SEMI-TRAILER

Any vehicle without motive power designed to be drawn by a motor vehicle and designed for transporting property, including tractor-trailer trailers, box trailers, cargo trailers, freight trailers, and similar units.

STORAGE CONTAINER

Any portable container, including but not limited to shipping containers, cargo containers, portable on-demand storage containers commonly referred to as PODs, portable moving containers, freight containers, motor vehicle bodies, or similar structures commonly used for the storage or transportation of goods, materials, equipment, inventory, or personal property.

STORAGE TRAILER

Any trailer, semi-trailer, box trailer, cargo trailer, truck trailer, freight trailer, or similar wheeled unit parked, placed, or maintained on a property primarily for storage purposes and not actively used for transportation.

MOTOR VEHICLE BODY

A cargo box, passenger body, truck body, bus body, trailer body, shipping body, or similar portion of a motor vehicle or trailer, whether attached to or removed from a chassis, that is used primarily for stationary storage.

UTILITY TRAILER

A trailer designed and maintained for the transportation of personal property, lawn and garden equipment, boats, snowmobiles, recreational equipment, construction materials, or similar items and not used primarily as a stationary storage structure.

Section 3. §190-14.1 Accessory Storage Structures and Long-Term Storage

Chapter 190 of the Code of the City of Oneida is hereby amended by adding a new §190-14.1 as follows:

"**A. General Applicability**

Except as otherwise permitted herein, no storage trailer, storage container, semi-trailer, motor vehicle body, utility trailer used for stationary storage, portable fabric storage structure, recreational vehicle, or similar unit shall be used as a permanent or long-term accessory storage structure within the City of Oneida.

Such units shall not be considered permitted accessory structures unless specifically authorized by this section or approved through site plan approval, Conditional Use Permit, Temporary Storage Permit, or other land use approval authorized by this Chapter.

B. Prohibited Uses

No person shall place, park, store, maintain, or utilize any storage trailer, storage container, semi-trailer, motor vehicle body, utility trailer used for stationary storage, recreational vehicle, portable fabric storage structure, or similar unit in a manner that:

(1) Functions as a permanent or long-term accessory storage structure except as expressly authorized by this Chapter;

(2) Functions as an unapproved warehouse, storage facility, outdoor storage area, or accessory building;

(3) Creates or contributes to a nuisance condition, unsafe condition, fire hazard, property maintenance violation, or other condition prohibited by the City Code or applicable law;

(4) Is abandoned, deteriorated, dismantled, partially dismantled, unsafe, or inoperable;

(5) Is used in a manner inconsistent with applicable provisions of the New York State Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code, approved zoning, site plan approval, Conditional Use Permit, or other applicable approval; or

(6) Is otherwise prohibited by this Chapter or any other applicable provision of the City Code.

C. Residential District Regulations

In residential zoning districts, storage trailers, semi-trailers, motor vehicle bodies, shipping containers, cargo containers, and similar storage containers shall be prohibited as permanent or long-term accessory storage structures.

This subsection shall not prohibit the lawful parking or storage of recreational vehicles, campers, boat trailers, snowmobile trailers, utility trailers, or similar personal-use trailers that are maintained and used for their intended purpose in accordance with Subsection H.

Temporary uses expressly authorized by this section shall remain permitted.

D. Commercial and Industrial District Regulations

Storage trailers, storage containers, semi-trailers, motor vehicle bodies, utility trailers used for stationary storage, and similar structures may be permitted in commercial and industrial districts only when specifically approved through site plan approval, Conditional Use Permit, outdoor storage approval, or other applicable land use approval.

The number, location, screening, duration, and use of such structures shall be determined through the applicable approval process by the City of Oneida Planning Commission/Zoning Board of Appeals (PC/ZBA).

Any expansion, relocation, intensification, or substantial modification of such use occurring after the effective date of this section shall comply with the requirements of this section and shall be subject to further review and approval by the PC/ZBA, as applicable.

E. Temporary Moving and Storage Containers

One temporary storage container may be placed upon a residential property for moving, temporary household storage, renovation projects, or similar temporary purposes for a period not exceeding thirty (30) consecutive days.

The Code Enforcement Officer may approve one extension not exceeding thirty (30) additional days upon written request demonstrating good cause.

If a longer period is required, the property owner or occupant may apply for a Temporary Storage Permit pursuant to Subsection G. The periods authorized under this subsection and Subsection G shall not automatically be cumulative.

F. Construction Site Storage

Storage containers, construction trailers, and similar units may be utilized in connection with an active construction project for which all required building permits and other applicable approvals remain valid.

Where a Temporary Storage Permit is required pursuant to Subsection G, such permit shall also be obtained and remain valid for the duration of the authorized storage.

A unit authorized under this subsection shall be removed within thirty (30) days following completion, abandonment, or termination of the construction project, or upon expiration or termination of the permit or approval authorizing the placement of the unit, whichever occurs first, unless otherwise authorized in writing by the Code Enforcement Officer pursuant to this section.

G. Temporary Storage Permit

The Code Enforcement Officer may issue a Temporary Storage Permit for good cause shown.

Such permits may be issued for:

(1) Active construction or renovation projects;

(2) Moving or relocation activities;

(3) Estate administration;

(4) Fire, flood, storm, or disaster recovery;

(5) Military deployment;

(6) Temporary business relocation; or

(7) Similar temporary circumstances determined by the Code Enforcement Officer to constitute good cause.

An initial Temporary Storage Permit may be issued for a period not exceeding ninety (90) days.

One extension not exceeding ninety (90) additional days may be granted upon written request demonstrating continuing good cause.

Each permit shall identify the authorized unit, its approved location, the purpose for which the permit is issued, and the expiration date.

A Temporary Storage Permit issued pursuant to this subsection shall supersede, rather than automatically extend or add to, a temporary period otherwise authorized under Subsection E for the same unit and circumstances.

An application for a Temporary Storage Permit or extension shall be accompanied by the applicable fee established by resolution of the Common Council.

H. Recreational Vehicles and Personal-Use Trailers

Nothing in this section shall prohibit the lawful parking or storage of recreational vehicles, campers, boat trailers, snowmobile trailers, utility trailers, or similar personal-use trailers that are actively maintained and used for their intended purpose.

Such units shall not:

(1) Be used as permanent or long-term stationary storage structures;

(2) Be used for commercial storage except where otherwise lawfully permitted;

(3) Be used for occupancy except as otherwise permitted by law; or

(4) Be maintained in an abandoned, unsafe, deteriorated, or inoperable condition.

Determination of Long-Term Storage.

Whether a trailer, recreational vehicle, motor vehicle body, storage container, utility trailer, or similar unit is being used for long-term storage shall be determined based upon the totality of the circumstances.

Evidence may include, but shall not be limited to:

(a) Remaining substantially stationary in the same location for more than sixty (60) consecutive days without evidence of active transportation, recreational, construction, moving, or other permitted temporary use;

(b) Significant vegetation growth around, beneath, or against the unit;

(c) Flat tires, missing wheels, missing towing equipment, missing components, or other conditions impairing mobility;

(d) Utility connections, extension cords, plumbing connections, or similar indications of stationary use;

(e) Accumulation of stored materials, equipment, inventory, junk, debris, refuse, pallets, or personal property around or beneath the unit;

(f) Structural deterioration, damage, or other conditions indicating prolonged inactivity;

(g) Historical photographs, inspection records, aerial or street imagery, prior notices, or other records establishing the duration of placement;

(h) Statements or admissions of the owner, occupant, tenant, or other person with knowledge of the property; or

(i) Other documented conditions reasonably indicating that the unit is being utilized as long-term stationary storage rather than for transportation, recreation, construction, moving, or another permitted purpose.

No single factor shall necessarily establish a violation. The determination shall be based upon the available evidence and the overall circumstances.

The existence of a license plate, registration, or inspection sticker may be considered as evidence but shall not, by itself, establish that a vehicle, trailer, camper, recreational vehicle, or similar unit is actively used, roadworthy, lawfully maintained, or exempt from this section.

I. Portable Fabric Storage Structures

Portable fabric storage structures shall be permitted as temporary accessory structures subject to the following requirements:

(1) Shall not be located within a required front yard;

(2) Shall comply with all applicable setback requirements for accessory structures;

(3) Shall be securely anchored;

(4) Shall be maintained in good repair and free from torn, collapsed, unsecured, deteriorated, or missing covering materials;

(5) Shall not be used for commercial warehousing, business inventory, occupancy, or habitation unless otherwise specifically authorized;

(6) Shall not be used for the storage of junk, debris, refuse, or hazardous materials in violation of applicable law;

(7) No residential property shall contain more than one (1) portable fabric storage structure unless otherwise approved by the Code Enforcement Officer; and

(8) Shall obtain any building permit, operating permit, or other approval required by the New York State Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code, the New York State Fire Code, Chapter 33 of the City Code, or other applicable law.

Portable fabric storage structures that become unsafe, abandoned, deteriorated, collapsed, or otherwise violate this section may be ordered repaired or removed in accordance with applicable enforcement procedures.

J. Screening and Placement

Where a storage trailer, storage container, motor vehicle body, portable fabric storage structure, or other unit regulated by this section is visible from a public street, public sidewalk, public trail, public park, or adjacent residential property, the Code Enforcement Officer may require reasonable screening where necessary to minimize impacts upon surrounding properties and neighborhood character.

Screening may include fencing, landscaping, berms, placement behind principal structures, buffering, or other methods approved by the Code Enforcement Officer.

The Code Enforcement Officer may also require reasonable relocation or reorientation of such structures where necessary to minimize visibility or address applicable safety or property maintenance concerns.

K. Fire Safety

No storage trailer, storage container, motor vehicle body, portable fabric storage structure, or similar unit shall be maintained in a manner that:

(1) Creates a fire hazard;

(2) Obstructs emergency access;

(3) Interferes with firefighting operations;

(4) Violates applicable provisions of the New York State Fire Code;

(5) Stores, contains, or houses hazardous materials, petroleum products, used oil, chemicals, regulated substances, or similar materials in violation of applicable local, state, or federal laws or regulations; or

(6) Fails to comply with applicable requirements governing the storage of regulated materials.

The Fire Chief, Fire Marshal, Code Enforcement Officer, or other official having lawful jurisdiction may require corrective action in accordance with their respective authority where necessary to protect public safety.

L. Statement of Intent and Exclusions

Subject to the regulations and restrictions set forth herein, this section is not intended to prohibit:

(1) Temporary moving containers authorized herein;

(2) Temporary construction storage authorized herein;

(3) Temporary disaster recovery storage;

(4) Utility trailers used for customary residential purposes;

(5) Boat trailers;

(6) Snowmobile trailers;

(7) Temporary loading and unloading activities associated with travel, recreation, moving, or seasonal use;

(8) Ordinary residential storage boxes, deck boxes, pool storage containers, and similar customary residential accessories;

(9) Recreational vehicles actively used for travel and recreation; or

(10) Other similar temporary or customary residential activities.

M. Existing Structures and Compliance

Storage trailers, storage containers, semi-trailers, motor vehicle bodies, portable fabric storage structures, or similar accessory storage structures that were lawfully and specifically authorized through site plan approval, Conditional Use Permit, variance, or other applicable land use approval prior to the effective date of this section may continue subject to the conditions of such approval and other applicable provisions of the City Code.

Any storage trailer, storage container, semi-trailer, motor vehicle body, portable fabric storage structure, or similar accessory storage structure that was not lawfully authorized prior to the effective date of this section and does not comply with this section shall be removed or brought into compliance within six (6) months of the effective date of this Local Law.

The Code Enforcement Officer may approve a written compliance schedule where good-faith efforts toward compliance are demonstrated.

Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to eliminate or impair any lawful preexisting nonconforming use or vested right to the extent such use or right is protected under applicable law.

N. Relationship to Other Code Provisions

Nothing in this section shall limit enforcement under Chapter 147 regarding junk, debris, refuse, solid waste, or junk storage.

Nothing in this section shall limit enforcement under any applicable property maintenance, nuisance, fire safety, building code, zoning, or other provisions of the City Code or New York State law.

Nothing herein shall preclude referral of any storage trailer, storage container, motor vehicle body, portable fabric storage structure, or similar accessory storage structure to the Assessor for evaluation under applicable provisions of the New York Real Property Tax Law.

Where more than one provision applies, the City may proceed under any applicable enforcement authority.

O. Enforcement

This section may be enforced by the Code Enforcement Officer, Fire Marshal, Fire Chief, Police Department, Community Service Officer, or other official authorized by the City Code or applicable law, acting within the scope of such official's lawful authority.

Evidence of a violation may include direct observations, photographs, inspection records, historical records or imagery, prior notices, statements or admissions of an owner or occupant, physical conditions at the property, or other competent evidence.

Where authorized by the City Code or applicable law, enforcement may include a notice of violation, order to remedy, appearance ticket, civil proceeding, injunctive relief, or other available remedy.

Any notice or order issued pursuant to this section should identify, to the extent reasonably practicable, the unit or condition alleged to violate this section, the applicable provision, the corrective action required, and the time allowed for compliance.

Nothing in this section shall independently confer upon any City official the power to issue an appearance ticket, conduct an inspection, enter private property, or exercise any other enforcement authority not otherwise granted by the City Code or applicable law."

Section 4. Validity and Severability

If any clause, sentence, paragraph, subdivision, section, or portion of this Local Law is adjudged invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, such judgment shall not affect the remainder thereof.

Section 5. Effective Date

This Local Law shall take effect immediately upon filing with the Secretary of State.

RESOLUTION TO RECEIVE AND PLACE ON FILE THE NEW YORK STATE OFFICE OF THE STATE COMPTROLLER REPORT REGARDING BANK AND RECEIVABLE CONTROL ACCOUNT RECONCILIATIONS

RESOLUTION 26-151

Moved by Councilor Jones
Seconded by Councilor Pagano

WHEREAS, the New York State Office of the State Comptroller conducted an examination of the City of Oneida's bank and receivable control account reconciliation processes; and

WHEREAS, the City of Oneida received the Office of the State Comptroller's report on September 22, 2026; and

WHEREAS, the Common Council recognizes its responsibility to provide oversight of the City's financial operations and internal controls and to review matters identified by the Office of the State Comptroller; and

WHEREAS, the findings and recommendations contained in the report were presented to and discussed by the Common Council, including the corrective actions identified to address the findings and strengthen the City's internal controls and reconciliation procedures; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Common Council of the City of Oneida hereby acknowledges receipt of the New York State Office of the State Comptroller report regarding Bank and Receivable Control Account Reconciliations and directs that said report be received and placed on file with the Office of the City Clerk; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Common Council acknowledges its oversight responsibility with respect to the matters addressed in the report and will receive appropriate updates regarding the implementation of corrective actions taken in response to the Comptroller's findings and recommendations.

Ayes: 7
Nays: 0
Absent: 0
MOTION RESULT: ☒Passed ☐Failed

DISCUSSION: Discussion was held regarding the Office of the State Comptroller's (OSC) Audit Report and the accompanying draft Corrective Action Plan. Clarification was provided that the action before the Council was to receive and place the audit report on file with the City Clerk, as the report had already been publicly released by the OSC. Concerns were raised regarding whether the revised Corrective Action Plan included all previously submitted amendments and whether the correct version had been posted on the City's website. It was agreed that the final version would be verified to ensure the appropriate revisions were incorporated and the correct document was available to the public.

2027 CITY OF ONEIDA CITY MANAGER'S BUDGET-SCHEDULE PUBLIC HEARING

RESOLUTION 26-152

Moved by Councilor Jones
Seconded by Councilor Smith

RESOLVED, that the 2027 City of Oneida City Manager's Budget be hereby received and placed on file and a Public Hearing on the proposed budget be scheduled for Tuesday, November 17, 2026, at 6:30 p.m. at City of Oneida City Hall, Common Council Chambers, 109 N. Main St. Oneida, NY 13421.

Ayes: 7
Nays: 0
Absent: 0
MOTION RESULT: ☒Passed ☐Failed

CNY COMMUNITY FORESTRY INITIATIVE

RESOLUTION 26-153

Moved by Councilor Jones
Seconded by Councilor Pagano

WHEREAS, Chapter 174 of the Oneida City Code regulates the removal, replanting, replacement, pruning, and protection of trees within the City; and

WHEREAS, it is the duty of the City of Oneida Department of Public Works to promulgate the rules and regulations of the Arboricultural Specifications and Standards of Practice governing the planting, maintenance, removal, fertilization, pruning and bracing of trees on the streets or other public sites in the City, and to direct, regulate and control the planting, maintenance and removal of all trees in any public area of the City; and

WHEREAS, the City of Oneida is a registered Climate Smart Community ("CSC") through the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and is working towards CSC Certification; and

WHEREAS, the City of Oneida and CSC program acknowledge that there are many environmental and economic benefits to maintaining healthy tree canopies, including lower energy use, reduced extreme heat impacts, more carbon dioxide removed from the atmosphere, better air quality, less stormwater runoff, and a stronger sense of place; and

WHEREAS, the Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board ("CNY RPDB") was awarded funding through the United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service's Inflation Reduction Act Urban & Community Forestry program through grant award 24-DG-11094200-135 ("Community Forestry grant"); and

WHEREAS, the objective of the CNY RPDB's Community Forestry grant is to provide the Central New York region's disadvantaged community ("DAC") areas with funding and technical resources to effectively plan for, implement, and maintain urban forestry projects and workforce development programs; and

WHEREAS, the City of Oneida meets the definition of a DAC for the purposes of this grant and is therefore an eligible recipient of community forestry technical assistance and tree planting; and

WHEREAS, partnering with the CNY RPDB on their Community Forestry initiative will allow the City of Oneida to receive technical assistance and tree planting services at no cost to the City.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT

RESOLVED, that the City of Oneida will partner with the CNY RPDB on their Community Forestry initiative by working with CNY RPDB staff, the CNY RPDB's selected forestry contractor, and other project partners to advance community forestry planning, planting, and management in the City of Oneida; be it further

RESOLVED, that the City of Oneida does hereby agree to waive permit fees for the selected forestry contractor so as to remove barriers from receiving assistance through this initiative.

Ayes: 6
Nays: 1 (Jones)
Absent: 0
MOTION RESULT: ☒Passed ☐Failed

DISCUSSION: Councilor Jones initiated discussion regarding the proposed agreement with CNY Forestry Services to provide tree planting and maintenance services through a grant-funded program, including authorization to waive applicable permit fees for the selected forestry contractor. She questioned whether the program would result in any costs to the City, including the use of City employees. It was clarified that while some administrative staff time would be necessary to prepare and process the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), the City would not be required to provide matching funds or make a direct financial contribution to the grant program. City Manager Lovell noted that the program would provide tree planting and initial maintenance services, with an estimated grant value of $250,000. Councilor Simchik expressed support for taking advantage of grant-funded opportunities, noting that the program could reduce future tree replacement expenses, enhance the City's appearance, and support continued community improvements and economic development.

Councilor McHugh provided further clarification that the program would benefit locations throughout the City, rather than being limited to the downtown streetscape. Additionally, the program would include an assessment of the City's existing tree canopy and recommendations for appropriate tree species and planting locations, providing valuable planning services at no additional cost to the City.

BOARD APPROINTMENT-TRAFFIC SAFETY BOARD

RESOLUTION 26-154

Moved by Councilor Simchik
Seconded by Councilor Jones

RESOLVED, to approve the Mayor's appointment of Gregg Myers to the Traffic Safety Board to fill a vacancy created due to the passing of Bruce Burke, for a term to expire on December 3, 2026.

Ayes: 7
Nays: 0
Absent: 0
MOTION RESULT: ☒Passed ☐Failed

ADVERTISE FOR BIDS-WATER DEPARTMENT

RESOLUTION 26-155

Moved by Councilor Simchik
Seconded by Councilor Jones

RESOLVED, to authorize the Purchasing Agent to advertise for bids for hydrants for the Water Department.

Ayes: 7
Nays: 0
Absent: 0
MOTION RESULT: ☒Passed ☐Failed

BUDGET TRANSFERS AND AMENDMENTS

RESOLUTION 26-156

Moved by Councilor Simchik
Seconded by Councilor Smith

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.

2026 Budget Adjustments

Budget Adjustment #1

Amount	To	From
$2,800.00	001.5132.0322.0000 Tool Allowance	001.1620.0401.0000 General Utilities

Purpose: To re-allocate funds to pay for the contractual tool allowance

Budget Adjustment #2

Amount	To	From
$8,686.58	002.9730.0700.0000 Water Interest on BAN	002.9785.0600.0001 Water Vehicle Lease

Purpose: To re-allocate funds for the BAN interest that came in higher than expected.

Ayes: 7
Nays: 0
Absent: 0
MOTION RESULT: ☒Passed ☐Failed

NEW BUSINESS:

Councilor McHugh initiated discussion regarding properties with delinquent taxes, particularly those outstanding for more than three years. She advised that she had requested the City Manager prepare a list of these properties for Council review during the upcoming budget deliberations to determine whether additional action may be appropriate to recover outstanding revenues. Councilor Jones referenced the Office of the State Comptroller's (OSC) audit report, noting that the City may initiate proceedings to acquire and return properties to the tax roll after two years of unpaid taxes, and encouraged a more proactive approach.

City Attorney Nadine Bell explained that the City has historically pursued tax foreclosure proceedings and property auctions but that recent staffing changes and turnover in the Comptroller's Office may have affected the process. She emphasized the importance of following the required legal procedures when acquiring properties for unpaid taxes. She further clarified that, unlike other municipalities in Madison County, the City is responsible for making the County and Oneida City School District whole for unpaid taxes. Additional discussion addressed payments to the School District, with clarification that monthly payments reflect delinquent taxes actually collected, while any remaining amounts owed are reconciled at year-end. Council members emphasized the importance of reviewing outstanding tax delinquencies and continuing collection efforts to protect City revenues.

The Council recessed at 7:25 P.M. and reconvened at 7:36 P.M. to begin discussions on the proposed budget.

2027 BUDGET WORK SESSION

General Discussion-Comptroller/Finance Department

The Common Council began its review of the proposed 2027 City Budget with preliminary discussion of financial challenges, potential cost-saving measures, and alternative revenue sources. The following matters were addressed:

Proposed Budget and Fund Balance: Council discussed the proposed 23% tax increase, noting that the budget was prepared without relying on additional fund balance appropriations, as had been done in previous years. Members emphasized the importance of preserving adequate reserves and acknowledged that maintaining current services and operations would require difficult financial decisions.

Alternative Revenue Sources: Council discussed the need to identify additional revenue opportunities and evaluate expenditures to reduce the proposed tax increase.

Inside and Outside Tax Districts: Members discussed the disparity between the City's inside and outside tax rates and the possibility of greater equalization. Comptroller Wells estimated that full equalization could generate approximately $320,000 in additional revenue, subject to further evaluation of the outside fire district tax.

Review of Municipal Services: Council discussed examining services provided within each taxing district, including sidewalk maintenance, snow removal, green waste collection, and seasonal decorations, to better understand service differences and potential cost savings. Additional information may be presented during future budget discussions.

Budget Review Process: Council acknowledged that the proposed budget serves as a starting point for further review and that discussions with department heads will be necessary to identify potential adjustments.

Municipal Services and Infrastructure: Council noted that certain services, including sidewalk snow removal and green waste collection, are provided as a courtesy to residents rather than as required services. Discussion also addressed differences in road ownership and maintenance responsibilities between the inside and outside districts, with a greater percentage of roads in the outside district maintained by the County or State.

Tax District Equalization: Members discussed whether changes in development, infrastructure, and neighborhood boundaries since the establishment of the taxing districts warrant a review of the current structure. Concerns were expressed regarding the financial impact on property owners and the need for an objective, equitable approach.

Property Reassessment: Council discussed the possibility of a citywide reassessment, including whether a phased approach could be implemented for different property classifications. Questions were raised regarding legal requirements, potential impacts on taxpayers, and the need for guidance from New York State. It was noted that preliminary reassessment cost estimates had been explored; however, no formal proposals or bids had been obtained.

Interest Rates: Brief discussion was held regarding current borrowing rates and their potential impact on future City financing.

Sales Tax Revenue: Council discussed exploring an increase in the local sales tax rate and potential changes to the distribution of sales tax revenue between the City and Madison County. Members expressed support for pursuing discussions with New York State regarding available options, recognizing that any changes would require further review and could not be implemented during the current budget cycle.

County Shared Services: Council expressed concerns regarding the amount of tax revenue contributed to Madison County compared to the services received. Members emphasized the need to explore additional shared services and opportunities for greater financial support from the County.

Inside and Outside Tax Districts: Further discussion addressed the need to review tax district disparities, including differences in road ownership, maintenance responsibilities, and municipal services. Members reiterated their interest in pursuing a more equitable tax structure.

General and Water Fund Balances: Council noted that the general fund balance is approximately 15.7%, slightly above the City's 15% minimum target. Concerns were raised regarding the Water Fund's balance, reportedly approximately 120% of its annual budget, and the need for a proposed water rate increase. It was clarified that the originally proposed 15% increase had since been revised by the Water Superintendent. Members discussed whether an increase was necessary given existing reserves, while acknowledging anticipated capital expenses, including future improvements to the Glenmore Dam and associated debt obligations.

City Manager's Salary: Councilor Jones inquired whether the City Manager's salary could be distributed among the Water, Sewer, and General Funds. It was clarified that the proposed budget already reflects this allocation and does not include a salary increase for the City Manager.

Non-Contractual Salary Increases: Councilor Jones suggested considering the elimination of proposed salary increases for non-contractual employees as a potential cost-saving measure.

Interfund Charges: It was clarified that the Water and Sewer Funds reimburse the General Fund for administrative services, including office operations, financial collections, recordkeeping, and other shared municipal functions. These charges are calculated annually.

Use of Fund Balance: Council acknowledged that additional use of the General Fund balance may be necessary to reduce the proposed tax increase. Members emphasized the importance of transparency regarding the long-term financial implications of continued reliance on reserves.

Financial Stability and Deficit Financing: Discussion addressed the financial challenges facing municipalities statewide and the potential consequences of declining fund balances. It was explained that a negative fund balance could require State-authorized deficit financing, increased financial oversight, additional borrowing, and potential reductions in the City's credit rating. Members were cautioned that these circumstances could result in higher borrowing costs and long-term debt obligations, further affecting the City's financial stability.

State Comptroller Assistance: Council discussed the possibility of seeking proactive financial guidance from the Office of the State Comptroller, including assistance with evaluating the City's financial condition and potential operational changes.

Budget Reductions and Structural Changes: It was noted that approximately $1.4 million had already been eliminated from departmental budget requests, reducing the initially projected 65% tax increase to 23% without utilizing fund balance. City Manager Lovell emphasized that the proposed budget reflects the cost of maintaining existing operations, without additional positions, equipment, or nonessential expenditures. Comptroller Wells advised that approximately $60,000 in reductions would equate to a 1% decrease in the proposed tax increase. Council acknowledged that further reductions may require significant structural or operational changes, including potential service reductions.

Parks and Recreation: Council discussed potential restructuring of the Parks and Recreation Department, including shared administrative staffing, reduced programming, increased use of volunteers and sponsorships, and consolidation of mowing responsibilities. It was noted that eliminating the department's approximately $316,000 budget would reduce the proposed tax increase by only about 5%. Questions were raised regarding staffing responsibilities, maintenance requirements, and the feasibility of proposed changes.

Personnel and Operating Costs: Council recognized that personnel expenses, employee benefits, retirement costs, and Police and Fire Department operations represent significant portions of the City's budget. Members acknowledged the difficulty of achieving substantial savings without evaluating these major expenditures and the services provided.

Budget Reductions and Revenue Opportunities: Council discussed the need to review expenditures line by line while considering the long-term impact of service reductions. Mayor Rossi emphasized the importance of public input before making significant cuts, particularly to public safety and youth programs. It was acknowledged that expenditure reductions alone would not resolve the City's financial challenges and that additional revenue sources must be pursued.

Proposed Fee Schedule: Council revisited the proposed revisions to the City's fee schedule. City Manager Lovell noted that many fees have not been updated in decades and that revisions were intended to better reflect the cost of providing services and generate additional revenue. Councilor Jones expressed concerns about imposing additional financial burdens on residents and businesses, particularly through building permit fees. Council discussed reviewing and adopting fee adjustments by department rather than approving the entire schedule at once. Parks and Recreation fees were identified for consideration at the next Council meeting.

Code Enforcement: Council discussed concerns regarding the City's current code enforcement structure and the potential benefits of consolidating services into a centralized department. City Manager Lovell explained that the existing arrangement, utilizing personnel from multiple departments, helps minimize costs and that funding is not available for additional positions. The possibility of future consolidation with Madison County was also mentioned.

Building Permit Fees: Concerns were raised regarding the proposed fee of 1% of a project's total cost, particularly for residential improvements. Members discussed whether permit fees should

be based primarily on the actual cost of inspections rather than serving as an additional revenue source. It was advised that the current rates are less than the actual cost of the inspection and permitting process.

Economic Development: Council emphasized the importance of attracting businesses and exploring revenue opportunities beyond increased taxes and fees. Potential revenue-generating uses of City facilities, including events and entertainment, were discussed.

Parking Enforcement: Councilor Smith discussed parking enforcement activities, including overnight parking violations and the number of citations issued. It was noted that parking enforcement is among the responsibilities of the Police Department's Community Service Officer. Members discussed enforcement levels and the limited potential for parking fines to generate substantial additional revenue.

Police Staffing and Services: Council discussed Police Department staffing levels and the ability to address traffic enforcement and other community concerns throughout the City. Police Chief Lowell explained that officers provide services to both the inside and outside districts, with available personnel primarily responding to calls for service rather than conducting routine traffic enforcement. He referenced a 2022 independent staffing study that identified insufficient personnel to adequately cover the City's approximately 22 square miles and meet its service demands. The Chief emphasized that staffing needs are influenced by geographic coverage, call volume, investigations, and other public safety responsibilities.

Proposed Tax Increase Reduction: Councilor Cimpi outlined a potential approach to reducing the proposed property tax increase to approximately 10% through a combination of budget reductions, additional revenue, and the use of approximately $600,000 from the General Fund balance. It was suggested that identifying an additional 3% in expenditure reductions would be challenging but could help achieve a more manageable increase for taxpayers.

Operational Changes and Personnel: Councilor McHugh requested that City Manager Lovell identify potential operational efficiencies and staffing adjustments across departments, including public safety, that could reduce expenditures.

Retiree Medicare Reimbursements: City Manager Lovell, with input from Deputy Comptroller, Jessica Kaiser, discussed the City's longstanding practice of reimbursing retirees for Medicare-related expenses. He explained that a review of contractual obligations identified approximately $100,000 in reimbursements that may not be legally required, representing a potential reduction of approximately 2% in the proposed tax increase. Members acknowledged the sensitivity of modifying benefits historically provided to retirees, and further consideration was discussed.

Mandated and Contractual Expenditures: Council discussed identifying expenditures required by collective bargaining agreements, federal and state mandates, and City policies to determine which costs could legally be reduced. Information outlining these obligations will be distributed to Council members for further review.

Retiree Health Insurance Contributions: City Manager Lovell identified the possibility of increasing retiree health insurance contribution rates as another potential cost-saving measure. Deputy Comptroller Kaiser referenced the City's existing contribution structure and Policy 92-141.

It was noted that potential savings had not yet been calculated. Members expressed interest in exploring these alternatives before considering personnel reductions.

Historical Use of Fund Balance: Comptroller Wells reviewed the City's prior use of fund balance, noting that approximately $1.7 million was expended through budget amendments during 2025, reducing the General Fund balance from approximately 32% to 19.58%. She explained that this amount was equivalent to approximately a 28% tax increase and emphasized that continued reliance on reserves without additional revenue could jeopardize the City's ability to meet future financial obligations.

Emergency Expenditures and Demolition Funding: Council discussed whether the proposed budget includes funding for the demolition of deteriorating properties on Madison and Sconondoa Streets. It was clarified that the anticipated bond financing was not included and that the bond resolution had not been approved. Comptroller Wells explained that proceeding with expenditures before securing the necessary financing authorization could require alternative funding sources, potentially placing additional pressure on the General Fund.

Demolition Funding: City Manager Lovell explained that the proposed demolition project had been removed from a previous agenda after discrepancies were identified in the procurement process. He advised that the necessary documents are being prepared and the process will begin again.

Public Input and Budget Priorities: Council emphasized the importance of community input in determining service priorities and potential budget reductions. Residents were encouraged to review the proposed budget on the City's website and submit suggestions for consideration.

Retiree Health Insurance Contributions: Council requested additional information regarding potential savings from changes to retiree Medicare Part B reimbursements and health insurance contribution rates, including comparisons of different contribution percentages. The figures will be reviewed and provided for further consideration at a future budget session.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn by Councilor McHugh
Seconded by Councilor Jones

Ayes: 7
Nays: 0
Absent: 0
MOTION RESULT: ☒Passed ☐Failed

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

CITY OF ONEIDA

_____
Sandra LaPera, City Clerk