CITY OF ONEIDA
COMMON COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Date:	November 4, 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 Wendy Lougnot	☒	Supervisor:_____	☐
Fire Chief Jones	☐	Comptroller Lee Ann Wells	☒
Police Chief Lowell	☒	Deputy Comptroller J. Kaiser	☒

PROCLAMATION: Extra Mile Day-David Stirpe, Recipient

PUBLIC HEARING: Local Law amending Chapter 190 of the Code of the City of Oneida regarding the use of storage trailers and other containers in the City of Oneida

Proclamation

City of Oneida - Office of the Mayor

EXTRA MILE DAY

WHEREAS, the City of Oneida recognizes the value of individuals who go above and beyond through volunteerism, kindness, and service to others; and

WHEREAS, the City encourages all citizens to contribute to their community, support one another, and make a positive difference in the lives of others; and

WHEREAS, Extra Mile Day celebrates those whose dedication, generosity, and actions strengthen our community and inspire others to do the same;

WHEREAS, the City of Oneida wishes to recognize Dave Stirpe for their outstanding dedication, generosity, and commitment to serving others, and for going above and beyond to make a positive difference in the community; and

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Rick Rossi, Mayor of the City of Oneida, New York, do hereby proclaim **November 4, 2026,** as **"Extra Mile Day"** and encourage all citizens to recognize those who go above and beyond and to find ways to do the same in their own lives.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City of Oneida proudly honors Helen Acker for embodying the spirit of going the extra mile.

WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affix the official seal of the City of Oneida on this 4th Day of November 2026.

_____

Mayor Rick Rossi

OPEN PUBLIC HEARING

LOCAL LAW AMENDING CHAPTER 190 OF THE CODE OF THE CITY OF ONEIDA REGARDING THE USE OF STORAGE TRAILERS AND OTHER CONTAINERS IN THE CITY OF ONEIDA

RESOLUTION 26-157

Moved by Councilor Jones
Seconded by Councilor Cimpi

> **RESOLVED**, that the Public Hearing on Local Law amending Chapter 190 of the Code of the City of Oneida regarding the use of storage trailers and other containers in the City of Oneida is hereby opened at 6:33pm.

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

APPEARANCES

GREGG MYERS

Gregg Myers addressed the Council as a member of the Planning Commission/Zoning Board of Appeals. He explained that several questions concerning the proposed legislation had been raised during the board's recent meeting but remained unanswered because the Planning Director was not present.

Myers indicated that the board intended to submit recommendations addressing zoning districts, enforcement responsibilities, and other provisions requiring clarification. While acknowledging that the proposed legislation represented an improvement over the original version, he requested that the Council delay adoption until the board's recommendations could be reviewed.

CLOSE PUBLIC HEARING

LOCAL LAW AMENDING CHAPTER 190 OF THE CODE OF THE CITY OF ONEIDA REGARDING THE USE OF STORAGE TRAILERS AND OTHER CONTAINERS IN THE CITY OF ONEIDA

RESOLUTION 26-158

Moved by Councilor McHugh
Seconded by Councilor Cimpi

> **RESOLVED**, that the Public Hearing on Local Law amending Chapter 190 of the Code of the City of Oneida regarding the use of storage trailers and other containers in the City of Oneida is hereby closed at 6:35pm.

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

GREGG MYERS – RETIREE HEALTH INSURANCE BENEFITS

Gregg Myers expressed concerns regarding proposed changes to retiree health insurance benefits, emphasizing the importance of honoring commitments made to employees at retirement. He specifically referenced the word "integrity," stating that the City has a responsibility to uphold the commitments made to employees when they retire.

Myers stated that when he retired after 38 years of City service, he met with City officials who outlined the retirement benefits he could expect to receive for the remainder of his life, including a 15% health insurance contribution and Medicare Part B reimbursement arrangements. He emphasized that these benefits were presented to him as part of his retirement package and were not individually negotiated or requested.

He expressed concern that changing these benefits years after retirement would undermine the City's integrity and create financial hardships for retirees who had relied upon those commitments. He also questioned disparities in health insurance buyout amounts among City employees and advocated for a consistent policy ensuring equitable treatment.

Myers further emphasized the potential impact on longtime retirees living on limited retirement and Social Security incomes, stating that the City should honor its commitments to those who dedicated many years of service to the community.

RANDY JONES – PROPOSED MILITARY AIRCRAFT DISPLAY

Randy Jones expressed dissatisfaction with the City's handling of his concerns regarding a proposed military aircraft display. He referenced information obtained through a FOIL request and materials previously distributed to Council members.

Jones questioned whether the proposed aircraft appropriately represented the military service of local veterans and expressed concerns regarding potential taxpayer expenses and long-term maintenance obligations. He also expressed disappointment that Council members had not contacted him regarding the information he provided.

A discussion followed between Jones and Mayor Rossi. The Mayor clarified that he was not personally involved in selecting or arranging the aircraft and explained that committees were exploring potential options, with no final decision having been made.

OLD BUSINESS: None

MAYOR'S REMARKS:

Mayor Rossi thanked residents, volunteers, City departments, and event organizers for their contributions to the City's Halloween activities, including the haunted house and Trick or Treat Street.

He specifically recognized Councilor Cimpi for providing decorations and assisting with the haunted house and acknowledged the efforts of the Department of Public Works and others who contributed to the success of the events.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT: None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Councilor Pagano
Seconded by Councilor Cimpi

> **RESOLVED**, that the minutes of the meeting held on October 20, 2026, are approved as presented.

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES (BUDGET MEETING)

Motion by Councilor Jones
Seconded by Councilor Cimpi

> **RESOLVED**, that the minutes of the Budget meeting held on October 27, 2026, are approved as presented.

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

APPROVAL OF WARRANT

Motion by Councilor Cimpi
Seconded by Councilor Jones

RESOLVED, that Warrant No. 21, including checks and ACH payments totaling $83,174.47 as audited by the Voucher Committee, is hereby approved for payment in the usual manner at the discretion of the Comptroller.

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

ADOPT A 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 26-159

Moved by Councilor Jones
Seconded by Councilor McHugh

WHEREAS, pursuant to the provisions of the Municipal Home Rule Law, a proposed local law titled "A 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," was presented and introduced at a regular meeting of the Common Council of the City of Oneida held on October 6, 2026; and

WHEREAS, a public hearing was held on such proposed local law on October 20, 2026, and by the Common Council of the City of Oneida and proof of publication of notice of such public hearing, as required by law, having been submitted and filed, and all persons desiring to be heard in connection with said proposed local law having been heard, and said proposed local law having been in the possession of the members of the Common

Council of the City of Oneida in its final form in the manner required by Section 20 of the Municipal Home Rule of the State of New York; and

WHEREAS, the enactment of the Proposed Local Law has previously been determined to be a Type II action thus concluding the SEQRA review process; and

WHEREAS, this Local Law was duly referred to the Madison County Planning Department for review pursuant to General Municipal Law Section 239-m and -n, and pursuant to GML Log # 111-26, dated October 14, 2026, the Madison County Planning Department returned the matter for local determination; and

WHEREAS, it is in the public interest to enact said Proposed Local Law.

NOW, THEREFORE, it is

RESOLVED, that the Common Council of the City of Oneida, Madison County, New York, does hereby enact Local Law of 2026 as follows:

CITY OF ONEIDA

PROPOSED LOCAL LAW

A 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

Be it enacted by the City of Oneida Common Council, as follows:

SECTION 1. INTENT.

It is the intent of the Common Council of the City of Oneida to impose a six (6) month moratorium on the siting, establishment, placement, installation, construction, erection, modification and enlargement of commercial free-standing solar photovoltaic (PV) systems and battery energy storage systems within the City of Oneida. This Local Law is enacted pursuant to the New York State Constitution and New York Municipal Home Rule Law §10.

SECTION 2. LEGISLATIVE PURPOSE.

The purpose of this Local Law is to temporarily halt the development of commercial free-standing solar power energy systems and battery energy storage systems, for a period of up to six (6) months, while the City considers zoning changes and the enactment of additional zoning measures to specifically address matters of community concern.

The City has become aware of increasing interest by developers of larger scale solar energy system applications in the City and surrounding areas, such that solar energy uses are becoming increasingly prevalent in the City of Oneida at a commercial scale. Based upon this, the

Common Council is of the opinion that a period of time is necessary to determine whether the existing regulation of commercial freestanding solar power energy systems needs to be revised in order to preserve and protect the health, safety and welfare of its residents. Commercial free-standing solar power energy are generally larger, more obtrusive and can pose a hazard and danger to residents by distraction, obstruction, and the power supply systems involved with such installations may pose a risk. This moratorium will enable city officials to review existing regulations in place and determine whether revisions are necessary to comprehensively address the various issues involved with these commercial level systems.

The Common Council also recognizes and acknowledges that the City needs to study and analyze many considerations that affect the preparation of local legislation to regulate battery energy storage systems. In the coming months, the City will be diligently working towards the development of regulations that will address, in a careful manner, the establishment, placement, construction, enlargement and erection of battery energy storage systems on a City-wide basis and to adopt land use regulations for provisions to specifically regulate same. The Common Council therefore deems this moratorium urgent and immediately necessary for the City.

SECTION 3. DEFINITIONS.

BATTERY(IES): A single cell or a group of cells connected together electrically in series, in parallel, or a combination of both, which can charge, discharge, and store energy electrochemically. For the purposes of this law, batteries utilized in consumer products are excluded from these requirements.

BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM: An electronic system that protects energy storage systems from operating outside their safe operating parameters and disconnects temperatures or other conditions are detected.

BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEM: A rechargeable energy storage system consisting of electrochemical storage batteries, battery chargers, controls, power conditioning systems and associated electrical equipment designed to store energy to supply electrical energy at a future time, not to include a stand-alone 12-volt car battery or an electric motor vehicle. A battery energy storage system is classified as a Tier I or Tier 2 Battery Energy Storage System as follows:

A. Tier I Battery Energy Storage Systems have an aggregate energy capacity less than or equal to 600kWh and, if in a room or enclosed area, consist of only a single energy storage system technology.

B. Tier 2 Battery Energy Storage Systems have an aggregate energy capacity greater than 600kWh or are comprised of more than one storage battery technology in a room or enclosed area.

CELL: The basic electrochemical unit, characterized by an anode and a cathode, used to receive, store, and deliver electrical energy.

COMMERCIAL FREE STANDING SOLAR PHOTOVOLTAIC (PV) SYSTEMS: A free standing solar photovoltaic (PV) system and area of land principally used to convert solar energy to electricity with the primary purpose of supplying electricity to a utility grid for wholesale or retail sales of electricity to the general public or utility provider.

PERSON: The term person shall include any individual, partnership, association, corporation, landowner, lessee or licensee.

SECTION 4. MORATORIUM.

A. The Common Council hereby enacts a moratorium which shall prohibit the siting, establishment, placement, installation, construction, erection, modification, and enlargement of commercial free-standing solar photovoltaic (PV) system within the City of Oneida and/or the processing or further processing of such applications.

B. This moratorium shall be in effect for a period of six (6) months from the effective date of this Local Law and shall expire on the earlier of: (i) the date six (6) months from said effective date of this local law, unless renewed; or (ii) the enactment by the Common Council of a resolution indicating the Common Council is satisfied that the need for the moratorium no longer exists.

C. This moratorium shall apply to all zoning districts and all real property within the City.

D. Commercial free-standing solar photovoltaic (PV) systems and battery energy storage systems which have previously been approved are hereby expressly excluded from this moratorium and may be sited, placed, installed, constructed, erected and operated in accordance with approved plans. Further modification, alteration or enlargement of previously approved commercial free-standing solar photovoltaic (PV) systems and battery energy storage systems is prohibited while the moratorium is in effect.

SECTION 5. RELIEF FROM PROVISIONS OF THIS LOCAL LAW.

A. The Common Council reserves to itself the power to vary or adapt the strict application of the requirements of this Local Law in the case of unusual hardship which would deprive the owner of all reasonable use of the lands involved.

B. Application for relief shall be filed in triplicate with the Planning Department together with a filing fee of $250.00. The application shall specifically identify the property involved, recite the circumstances pursuant to which the relief is sought and the reasons for which the relief is claimed. Any costs, including expert consulting fees or attorneys' fees, incurred by the City, shall be reimbursed to the City by the Applicant. The Common Council shall apply Use Variance criteria as set forth in the New York State General City Law, Section 81-b, in reviewing any application for relief.

C. The Common Council may refer any applications for relief herein to the Planning Commission/Zoning Board of Appeals for its advice and recommendations, but all decisions on granting or denying such relief shall be made solely by the Common Council after determining whether or not the requested relief is compatible with any contemplated amendments to the City

Zoning Law. Unless completely satisfied that the proposed relief is compatible, the Common Council shall deny the application.

D. The Common Council shall conduct a public hearing on any request for relief within forty-five (45) days of receipt of an application by the Planning Department and shall issue its final decision on requests for relief within thirty (30) days from the date of the public hearing.

SECTION 6. PENALTIES.

Any person who shall construct, reconstruct, relocate, enlarge or modify any site to be used for a commercial free-standing solar photovoltaic system in violation of the provisions of this Local Law, shall be subject to:

A. A fine is not to exceed One Thousand and 00/100 Dollars ($1,000.00) or imprisonment for a term not to exceed fifteen (15) days, or both. Each day a violation continues shall be considered a new violation.

B. A civil action inclusive of injunctive relief in favor of the City to cease any and all such actions which conflict with this local law and, if necessary, to remove any constructions, improvements, or related items or byproducts which may have taken place in violation of this Local Law.

SECTION 7. ENFORCEMENT.

This local law shall be enforced by the Code Enforcement Office of the City of Oneida or such other zoning enforcement individual(s) as designated by the Common Council. It shall be the duty of the enforcement individual(s) to advise the Common Council of all matters pertaining to the enforcement of this Local Law.

SECTION 8. VALIDITY & SEVERABILITY.

If any section or part of this Local Law is declared invalid or unconstitutional, it shall not be held to invalidate or impair the validity, force or affect any other section of this Local Law.

SECTION 9. EFFECTIVE DATE.

This Local Law shall take effect immediately upon passage and thereafter shall be filed with the New York State Department of State and shall remain in force and effect for a period of six (6) months from the date of passage."

Mayor Rossi:	YES
Councilor McHugh:	YES
Councilor Cimpi:	YES
Councilor Smith:	ABSENT
Councilor Jones:	NO
Councilor Pagano:	YES

Councilor Simchik: ABSENT
MOTION CARRIED

MISCELLANEOUS UTILITY BILLING-SCHEDULE PUBLIC HEARING

RESOLUTION 26-160

Moved by Councilor Jones
Seconded by Councilor Lynne

RESOLVED, to receive and place on file the City of Oneida Miscellaneous Utility Billing for unpaid service charges, water rents and sewer taxes; authorize the charges in the 2026 assessment roll to be re-levied onto the 2027 tax roll, and to schedule a Public Hearing for Tuesday, November 17, 2026, at 6:30p.m. in the Common Council Chambers, 109 N. Main Street, Oneida, NY 13421.

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

DISCUSSION: During discussion of the miscellaneous utility billing report, Council members questioned whether a significant outstanding payment of approximately $110,000 had been received. The discussion focused on the status of the payment and its potential effect on the amount to be re-levied onto the 2027 tax roll.

MASTER FEE SCHEDULE-PARKS AND RECREATION

RESOLUTION 26-161

Moved by Councilor McHugh
Seconded by Councilor Jones

RESOLVED, to adopt the Master Fee Schedule for 2027 for the Parks and Recreation Department.

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

ORGANICS WASTE MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT-GOTTA DO CONTRACTING LLC

RESOLUTION 26-162

TABLED

Moved by Councilor Cimpi
Seconded by Councilor Pagano

> **RESOLVED** that the Common Council of the City of Oneida hereby authorizes the City Manager to execute an Organics Waste Management Agreement between the City of Oneida and Gotta Do Contracting, LLC, for the delivery, treatment, and disposal of dairy food processing waste at the City's Organics and Water Resource Recovery Center (OWRRC), for a term of five (5) years, with an anticipated volume of 40,000 to 80,000 gallons per day, at a rate of $0.06 per gallon, subject to annual rate adjustments as outlined in the Agreement, and under the terms and conditions set forth therein.

Motion to Table by Councilor Cimpi
Seconded by Councilor McHugh

Ayes: 4
Nays: 1 (Pagano)
Absent: 2 (Smith/Simchik)
MOTION RESULT: ☐Passed ☐Failed ☒Tabled

DISCUSSION: Councilor Jones raised concerns regarding potential environmental liability, contamination risks, testing oversight, and compliance with emerging PFAS regulations associated with the proposed organics waste management agreement.

Councilor Jones noted that the agreement had previously appeared on the August agenda but was withdrawn following concerns expressed by the Chairman of the Madison County Board of Supervisors, an environmental engineer.

She questioned whether the original concerns had been adequately addressed, particularly in light of the City's current lack of a City Engineer. Jones requested additional clarification regarding environmental safeguards and the City's potential liability before proceeding with the agreement.

The matter was tabled pending further clarification from the City Manager.

NEW BUSINESS:

City Manager's Employment Agreement – Health Insurance Buyout

Councilor McHugh raised concerns regarding an amendment to the City Manager's employment agreement providing a health insurance buyout substantially higher than the amount generally available to City employees.

It was explained that the City Manager's salary had previously been established at $150,000 and that he had reportedly agreed not to accept the additional insurance buyout.

Councilor McHugh questioned whether the existing amendment should be repealed or further amended to establish a buyout consistent with other employees. Concern was expressed that a payment could be issued on December 3 unless formal action was taken.

Due to uncertainty regarding the appropriate procedure and the need for legal clarification, the matter was deferred for further review and possible consideration at the next meeting.

Councilor Jones shared questions from a Ward 4 resident regarding the City Manager's Economic Development responsibilities. The resident questioned what additional revenue, economic development initiatives, or new businesses had resulted from the City Manager's efforts and what future development plans were being pursued.

The resident also raised concerns regarding proposed salary increases for non-contractual City employees and questioned whether such increases should be considered given the City's current financial challenges and proposed property tax increase.

It was acknowledged that the correspondence had previously been forwarded for review.

Recess – 2027 Budget Discussion

The Common Council agreed to take a five-minute recess before continuing with discussions concerning the proposed 2027 City Budget.

The regular meeting remained open during the recess. The budget discussion is documented separately.

CITY OF ONEIDA COMMON COUNCIL

2027 BUDGET WORK SESSION

The Common Council continued its review of the proposed 2027 City Budget, focusing on departmental expenditures, staffing, employee compensation, operational efficiencies, and potential revenue sources. Council conducted a line-by-line review of the budget to identify additional reductions to the proposed property tax increase.

BUDGET UPDATE AND RETIREE HEALTH INSURANCE

Comptroller Wells advised Council that the proposed increase in retiree health insurance dependent contributions from 20% to 30% would be placed on hold pending further legal review due to potential contractual restrictions. With this adjustment removed, the projected property tax increase stood at 14.8%, requiring an additional $926,307 in reductions or revenue to achieve a zero-percent increase.

COMMON COUNCIL AND MAYORAL COMPENSATION

Councilor Dave Cimpi proposed reducing each Council member's annual compensation by $500, eliminating the Deputy Mayor's additional stipend, and reducing the Mayor's compensation by approximately $4,000 to $7,000 annually. He estimated combined savings of approximately $7,500 and emphasized the importance of Council leading by example.

Members expressed differing opinions, with some supporting the reductions and others raising concerns about the responsibilities of the elected office and the potential impact on attracting future candidates. The possibility of voluntarily reducing a Council member's salary to offset NYCOM membership or conference expenses was also discussed. Further consideration was deferred until absentee Council members could participate.

CITY MANAGER'S COMPENSATION AND AGREEMENT

Councilor Lynne McHugh raised concerns regarding the City Manager's compensation agreement, including his $150,000 annual salary and the health insurance buyout provision. McHugh discussed revising the existing agreement, specifically proposing elimination of the health insurance buyout as part of the City's efforts to reduce expenditures. She expressed a desire for Council to take formal action and discussed introducing a motion to address the agreement. Attorney Wendy Lougnot advised that the matter should be discussed with City Attorney Nadine Bell before Council took any action, as she was not familiar with the terms of the existing agreement.

FINANCE AND CHAMBERLAIN'S OFFICE

Council reviewed Finance Department contractual services, including auditing and accounting expenses. The Chamberlain's Office budget reflected contractual salary adjustments and approximately six hours of weekly part-time assistance. A nominal $100 allocation for the elected Chamberlain position was also discussed. No additional reductions were identified.

ASSESSOR'S OFFICE

Council discussed the need for a full-time assessor versus continuing with part-time staffing, particularly with a citywide reassessment under consideration. Concerns included salary and benefit costs, assessment practices, and the difficulty of finding qualified part-time assessors.

Current salary expenditures were approximately $42,973 against a 2026 allocation of $61,500. Council tentatively reduced the proposed salary allocation to $60,000, removing full-time benefit

costs. Additional information was requested regarding the current assessor and her availability, support staff, and anticipated staffing expenses.

CITY CLERK'S OFFICE

City Clerk Sandy LaPera requested additional funding for materials and supplies, citing the cost of the Common Council meeting record book and State-required paper for vital records. Although the original request was $1,500, LaPera agreed to $1,000 and indicated that the proposed equipment allocation could remain unchanged.

Council agreed to increase the materials and supplies appropriation from $500 to $1,000.

LEGAL SERVICES AND CIVIL SERVICE

Council reviewed legal services expenditures, including contractual services, litigation, and labor-related expenses. Current activity was reported at approximately $96,276, and the proposed 2027 allocation reflected a reduction from the prior year.

The Civil Service budget was also reviewed, with most expenditures considered necessary for existing operations. No additional reductions were proposed.

BUILDINGS, CENTRAL SERVICES AND CELL PHONES

Staff clarified that departmental salary appropriations may include longevity and cell phone reimbursements not separately reflected in base salary schedules.

Council reviewed the City's cell phone policy, which requires a documented business need and City Manager approval. Monthly employee reimbursements totaled approximately $1,770. It was also explained that many cellular lines are assigned to data-enabled equipment in police and fire vehicles rather than employee phones.

The $15,000 Central Stores allocation was clarified as covering general office supplies for multiple departments.

FUEL AND INSURANCE

Council revisited the gasoline appropriation, which had previously been increased from $110,000 to $150,000. Following discussion of conservation efforts and anticipated operational efficiencies, Council agreed to remove the additional $40,000, restoring the allocation to $110,000. Fuel usage will continue to be monitored.

Insurance expenditures were reviewed, including potential savings associated with coverage and deductibles. No additional reductions were finalized.

LEGAL NOTICES

Council discussed publication requirements for public meetings and legal notices. The City Clerk clarified that meeting agendas are distributed electronically without charge, while paid legal notices include public hearings, bid advertisements, and other legally required publications.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

Council reviewed clothing allowances, ballistic vest replacements, crime prevention, evidence management, and anticipated retirement payouts.

- Clothing and Equipment: A reduction was suggested based on the contractual $750 annual uniform allowance. Chief Steve Lowell explained that the allocation also covers initial equipment for new officers and ballistic vests, which require periodic replacement. Staff were asked to identify available state and federal reimbursement revenue not included in the proposed budget.
- Crime Prevention: A reduction from approximately $6,000 to $3,000 was discussed. Council requested clarification regarding reimbursable expenses through the Governor's Traffic Safety Committee before adjusting the allocation.
- Evidence Custodian: Chief Lowell explained that a part-time civilian employee now handles evidence management, discovery requirements, property disposal, and the development of electronic records procedures. The change allows sworn officers to focus on law enforcement duties.
- Crossing Guards: It was confirmed that the school district reimburses the City for crossing guard expenses.
- Retirement Payouts: Council reviewed the approximately $83,270 allocation and discussed how anticipated retirements and their effective dates could affect the 2027 budget.

No additional Police Department reductions were finalized pending further information.

NONCONTRACTUAL SALARY INCREASES

Councilor Janet Jones reported receiving emails from residents indicating that they would be agreeable to no salary increases unless contractually mandated, referring to management employees.

PARKS AND RECREATION

Council reviewed staffing, facility operations, and departmental revenues.

- Staffing: The proposed Recreation Maintenance Crew Leader position was clarified as a reclassification rather than an additional employee, with an estimated salary difference of approximately $2,000. Potential efficiencies from consolidating mowing and seasonal maintenance responsibilities were discussed.
- Pool Operations: Council questioned the need for both a Pool Director and Assistant Pool Director. Staff explained their supervisory responsibilities and the proposed total pool staffing allocation of approximately $39,000.
- Armory Operations: Suggestions included limiting facility hours and relocating administrative staff to City Hall. Members discussed heating costs, liability concerns, and the facility's existing recreational activities. No operational changes were approved.

- Departmental Revenue: Proposed 2027 revenue was approximately $86,680, compared with total expenditures of approximately $509,421. Council requested additional program participation information and clarification regarding anticipated fee increases.

FALL FESTIVAL VENDOR FEES

City Clerk Sandy LaPera discussed increasing Fall Festival vendor registration fees to $40, with a $50 fee for registrations received after May 1. She noted the event's growth from approximately 20 vendors to approximately 100, with waiting lists for available spaces.

Council expressed support for the increases, recognizing the event's continued growth and the benefit of maintaining free public admission.

CHAPMAN FOUNDATION FUNDING

Councilor Janet Jones reported that the Chapman Foundation could not provide funding for routine operating expenses but may consider eligible projects. She contacted Parks and Recreation Director Luke Griff to identify potential projects not already funded through the Downtown Revitalization Initiative. Additional opportunities will be explored.

SALE OF CITY-OWNED PROPERTIES

Councilor Janet Jones suggested considering traditional real estate listings for selected City-owned residential properties to provide opportunities for first-time homebuyers who may be unable to purchase through auctions.

Council discussed transparency, appraisal requirements, outstanding liens, and establishing consistent criteria for determining which properties could be listed rather than auctioned.

Council acknowledged that properties would require individual evaluation, with auctions remaining appropriate in many cases.

UPDATED PROPERTY TAX PROJECTION

Following the budget adjustments discussed during the session, the projected property tax increase decreased from 14.8% to approximately 13.48%.

An additional preliminary insurance-related adjustment was then discussed, reducing the estimated increase to 12.84%. Staff indicated that the final amount would be verified and that additional revenue opportunities and departmental adjustments remained under review.

CONTINUED BUDGET REVIEW

Council agreed to continue reviewing outstanding departmental expenditures and potential revenue sources at the next budget work session, scheduled for Thursday, November 5, 2026, at 5:30 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn by Councilor Jones
Seconded by Councilor McHugh

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:19 p.m.

CITY OF ONEIDA

_____
Sandra LaPera, City Clerk