

**MINUTES OF THE COMMON COUNCIL  
REGULAR MEETING  
NOVEMBER 5, 2025**

A meeting of the Common Council of the City of Oneida, NY was held on the fifth day of November 2025 at 6:30 pm at the City of Oneida Common Council Chambers, 109 N. Main Street, Oneida NY 13421.

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Rick Rossi.

<b><u>Attendees</u></b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Absent</b>	<b>Arrived Late</b>
Mayor Rossi	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Kyle Lovell, CM	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Councilor Szczerba	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Councilor Laureti	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Councilor Hitchings	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Councilor Winchell	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Councilor Pagano	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Councilor Simchik	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____

**Also Present**

Attorney Stacy Marris	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Supervisor Matt Roberts	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
City Clerk Sandy LaPera	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Councilor Elect Dave Cimpi	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Fire Chief Scott Jones	<input type="checkbox"/>	Councilor Elect Lynne McHugh	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Police Chief Steve Lowell	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Councilor Elect Janet Jones	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance/Roll Call

**PROCLAMATION:**      Zonta Says No to Violence Against Women Day (Michelle Coe)

# *Proclamation*

*City of Oneida - Office of the Mayor*

**WHEREAS**, Zonta International is a global organization working in 62 countries to advance gender equality and empower women and girls; **and**

**WHEREAS**, for over 100 years, Zonta has worked to end violence against women, including through its annual “Zonta Says No to Violence” campaign from November 25 to December 10; **and**

**WHEREAS**, one in three women worldwide experiences physical or sexual violence, and countless others face child marriage, trafficking, and other forms of abuse; **and**

**WHEREAS**, ending gender-based violence requires education, advocacy, and the collective action of individuals, communities, and institutions; **and**

**WHEREAS**, Zonta envisions a world where women are treated with dignity, have equal opportunities, and live free from violence;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Rick Rossi, Mayor of the City of Oneida, do hereby proclaim November 5, 2025, as

*“Zonta Says No to Violence Against Women Day”*

in the City of Oneida and encourage all residents to support gender equality and advocate for a world free from violence against women and girls.

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF**, I have hereunto set my hand and affix the official seal of the City of Oneida on this 5<sup>th</sup> day of November 2025.

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Mayor Rick Rossi

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

### **ROBERT BRITTON-ONEIDA**

Robert Britton addressed the Council, expressing his support for the City Manager. He stated that the City Manager works hard for the City, is involved in multiple projects, including Madison Street and Hotel Oneida, and frequently works beyond regular hours. Mr. Britton urged the Council to allow the City Manager to continue performing his duties without interference.

Councilor Szczerba responded, noting that he wished to clarify a rumor he had heard regarding alleged plans to eliminate the City Manager position. He stated that such a claim was unfounded and illogical, emphasizing that he had only a few weeks remaining in his term and would not be introducing such legislation. Councilor Szczerba expressed concern about the spread of misinformation.

Mr. Britton clarified that he had not mentioned any specific names in his comment. The Mayor then reminded those present that discussion or debate is not permitted during the public comment portion of the meeting.

### **VINCENT BAILEY-ONEIDA**

Mr. Bailey referred to rumors circulating within the community and on social media, stating that he believed such speculation could be resolved through transparency. He presented a statement that he wanted City Manager Lovell to sign, asserting that he had not knowingly made any false or misleading statements, nor had he engaged in or encouraged any unlawful, unethical, or dishonest conduct. Mr. Bailey explained that the document, to be made under penalty of perjury, affirmed that Mr. Lovell had acted lawfully, ethically, and in good faith in his role. He stated that signing such a statement would demonstrate honesty and help put rumors to rest.

City Manager Lovell responded directly to Mr. Bailey, asking whether signing the statement would end the falsehoods and accusations being spread about him online. He stated that he had observed ongoing misinformation and personal attacks, including comments directed at his family and former employer, and expressed concern over the harmful and inflammatory tone of such posts. Mr. Lovell remarked that in the current political climate, false narratives can have dangerous consequences, and he would not continue to tolerate being misrepresented publicly.

He further stated that he has conducted himself with integrity, has nothing to hide, and that any suggestions to the contrary were entirely unfounded. Mr. Lovell expressed frustration at being publicly targeted and said that his rights to privacy, safety, and peace should be respected. He emphasized that he was appointed, not elected, and that he would not engage in ongoing public disputes.

The Mayor intervened in restoring order, advising that the discussion had extended beyond the scope of public comment, and concluded the exchange, noting that debate would not proceed further during this portion of the meeting.

**OLD BUSINESS:**           None

## **REPORTS:**

### **MAYOR'S REPORT:**

Mayor Rossi stated that the General Election was held the previous evening and thanked all residents who came out to vote, noting that civic participation is what local government is all about. He reported that four new Council Members will be joining the Common Council in the next term and commented that while change will be interesting, he believes it will be positive for the City.

Mayor Rossi also expressed his appreciation to everyone who ran for office, regardless of the outcome, acknowledging their willingness to serve the community. He concluded by issuing a reminder of a wind advisory in effect for the evening, encouraging residents to secure outdoor items and "batten down the hatches" in preparation for high winds.

### **CITY MANAGER'S REPORT:**

City Manager Lovell provided the following updates on ongoing projects and initiatives:

#### **Hotel Oneida (DRI Project)**

Mr. Lovell reported that water service has been restored to the building and that extensive asbestos mitigation work has begun. Several contractors have been observed on site, and the project manager advised that remediation will continue over the next several months before any major construction begins. The City is working with Mr. Riley to schedule a new groundbreaking ceremony date, with several potential dates under consideration.

#### **Restore and Upgrade Dub Row Building**

A joint meeting was held with the Madison County Industrial Development Agency (IDA), the City's leadership team, and the Department of State to discuss the next steps for the project. Mr. Lovell noted that Jim Monahan and Bonnie Palmer, working with property owner Paul Marco, have arranged to facilitate the sale of the building necessary for the project's advancement. Additional site plan work is underway, with a proposed live-work design concept along Madison Street involving six buildings slated for renovation.

#### **Downtown Infrastructure and Streetscape Improvements**

Design plans have not yet been released; however, communication with the design team remains active. Preliminary design elements for the Veterans Memorial Park Project, including 3D renderings, have been reviewed and look very promising. The project will include a splash pad feature, and final design details are being refined before public release.

#### **AYSO Soccer Field Project**

Following the on-site walkthrough in September and a subsequent preliminary site review, the City is now preparing for the first design sketches. Discussions with AYSO representatives are ongoing to address requests and ensure the project design meets community and program needs.

### **Downtown Business Assistance Fund**

The City continues to administer the Downtown Business Assistance Fund in partnership with the Madison County IDA and MRB Group. The fund supports façade and interior improvements for downtown property owners.

Current project updates include:

- **117 Madison Street:** Contractor selected.
- **130 Broad Street:** Out to bid; contractor selection closing soon.
- **134 Vanderbilt Avenue:** Work underway.
- **169 Main Street:** Awaiting stamped architectural drawings.

### **Form-Based Zoning Overlay**

Mr. Lovell announced that Barton & Loguidice received the highest evaluation score and will be selected as the consultant for the form-based zoning overlay project. A kickoff meeting will be scheduled to initiate the next phase of design and implementation.

Mr. Lovell concluded his report, noting that the City continues to make steady progress on key development and revitalization efforts across the community.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

**RESOLVED**, that the minutes of the regular meeting of October 21, 2025, are hereby approved as presented.

Ayes: 6  
Nays: 0  
Absent: 1(Winchell)

**MOTION CARRIED**

### **APPROVAL OF WARRANT**

Moved by Councilor Simchik  
Seconded by Councilor Pagano

**RESOLVED**, that Warrant No. 21 checks and ACH payments in the amount of \$496,136.77 as audited by the Voucher Committee are hereby approved for payment in the usual manner at the discretion of the Comptroller or a third party duly retained by the City of Oneida to perform such services.

Ayes: 6  
Nays: 0  
Absent: 1(Winchell)

**MOTION CARRIED**

**CONTRACT-UNIFIED COURT SYSTEM**

**RESOLUTION 25-190**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Pagano

**RESOLVED**, to authorize the City Manager to sign the 2025-2026 Annual Court Cleaning and Minor Repairs Contract Renewal and Budget with the New York State Unified Court System.

Ayes: 6  
Nays: 0  
Absent: 1(Winchell)

**MOTION CARRIED**

**AGREEMENT-WANDERER’S REST HUMANE ASSOCIATION**

**RESOLUTION 25-191**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Pagano

**RESOLVED**, to authorize the City Manager to sign an agreement with Wanderer’s Rest Humane Association for participation in the “Borrow a Buddy Fur a Day” Program.

Ayes: 6  
Nays: 0  
Absent: 1(Winchell)

**MOTION CARRIED**

**INTRODUCE A LOCAL LAW AUTHORIZING A PROPERTY TAX LEVY IN EXCESS OF THE LIMIT  
ESTABLISHED IN GENERAL MUNICIPAL LAW §3-C-SCHEDULE PUBLIC HEARING**

**RESOLUTION 25-192**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Pagano

**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 (SEQR) 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**, the adoption to said Local Law is an unlisted action for purposes of environmental review under SEQR; and

**WHEREAS**, the Common Council has determined that a short environmental assessment form (EAF) shall be required in connection with this matter; and

**WHEREAS**, the said EAF has been prepared and has been reviewed by the Common Council; and

**WHEREAS**, the Common Council has considered the adoption of said Local Law, has considered the criteria contained in 6 N.Y.C.R.R. Part 617.7 and has compared the impacts which may be reasonably expected to result from the adoption of said Local Law against said criteria.

**NOW, THEREFORE**, it is

**RESOLVED AND DETERMINED** that the enactment of proposed Local Law is an unlisted action, there are no other involved agencies, and this Council shall act as lead agency in this matter for purposes of SEQR review; and it is further

**RESOLVED AND DETERMINED** the Common Council has determined this action shall have no significant adverse impact on the environment; that, accordingly, an environmental impact statement (EIS) shall not be required; and that this resolution shall constitute a negative declaration under SEQR; and it is further

**RESOLVED**, that a proposed Local Law authorizing a property tax levy in excess of the limit established in General Municipal Law §3-C be hereby received and placed on file as follows:

**CITY OF ONEIDA  
PROPOSED LOCAL LAW**

**A LOCAL LAW OVERRIDING THE TAX LEVY LIMIT ESTABLISHED IN GENERAL MUNICIPAL LAW  
§3-C IN THE CITY OF ONEIDA**

**Section 1. Legislative Intent**

It is the intent of this local law to allow the City of Oneida to adopt a budget for the fiscal year commencing January 1, 2026, that requires a real property tax levy in excess of the "tax levy limit" as defined by General Municipal Law § 3-c.

## **Section 2. Authority**

This local law is adopted pursuant to subdivision 5 of General Municipal Law §3-c, which expressly authorizes a local government's governing body to override the property tax cap for the coming fiscal year by the adoption of a local law approved by a vote of sixty percent (60%) of said governing body.

## **Section 3. Tax Levy Limit Override**

The Common Council of the City of Oneida, County of Madison, is hereby authorized to adopt a budget for the fiscal year commencing January 1, 2026, that requires a real property tax levy in excess of the amount otherwise prescribed in General Municipal Law §3-c.

## **Section 4. Severability**

If a court determines that any clause, sentence, paragraph, subdivision, or part of this local law or the application thereof to any person, firm or corporation, or circumstance is invalid or unconstitutional, the court's order or judgment shall not affect, impair, or invalidate the remainder of this local law, but shall be confined in its operation to the clause, sentence, paragraph, subdivision, or part of this local law or in its application to the person, individual, firm or corporation or circumstance, directly involved in the controversy in which such judgment or order shall be rendered.

## **Section 5. Effective date**

This local law shall take effect immediately upon filing with the Secretary of State.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that a Public Hearing on the proposed Local Law authorizing a property tax levy in excess of the limit established in General Municipal Law §3-C be scheduled for Tuesday, November 18, 2025, at 6:30 pm.

Ayes: 6  
Nays: 0  
Absent: 1(Winchell)  
**MOTION CARRIED**

## **MISCELLANEOUS UTILITY BILLING-SCHEDULE PUBLIC HEARING**

### **RESOLUTION 25-193**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Pagano



**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 2025 assessment roll to be re-levied onto the 2026 tax roll, and to schedule a Public Hearing for Tuesday, November 18, 2025, at 6:30p.m. in the Common Council Chambers, 109 N. Main Street, Oneida, NY 13421.

Ayes: 6  
Nays: 0  
Absent: 1(Winchell)  
**MOTION CARRIED**

**2026 CITY OF ONEIDA CITY MANAGER’S BUDGET-SCHEDULE PUBLIC HEARING**

**RESOLUTION 25-194**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Pagano

**RESOLVED**, that the 2026 City of Oneida City Manager’s Budget be hereby received and placed on file and schedule a Public Hearing on the proposed budget for Tuesday, November 18, 2025, at 6:30 p.m. at City of Oneida City Hall, Common Council Chambers, 109 N. Main St. Oneida, NY 13421.

Ayes: 6  
Nays: 0  
Absent: 1(Winchell)  
**MOTION CARRIED**

**A RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING ANNUAL LICENSE FEE  
PURSUANT TO LOCAL LAW NO. 6 OF 2024**

**RESOLUTION 25-195**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Pagano

**WHEREAS**, Local Law No. 6 of 2024, adopted on November 19, 2024, by Resolution 24-267, authorizes the Common Council to establish and amend license fees from time to time by resolution; and

**WHEREAS**, the Common Council finds it in the public interest to standardize and simplify the existing fee structure for mobile food vendors by adopting a single annual fee;

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

1. **Annual Fee Established.** The license fee for all licenses governed by Local Law No. 6 of 2024 is hereby established at One Hundred Fifty Dollars (\$150.00) per calendar year, covering the period January 1 through December 31.
2. **Effective Period.** This annual fee shall apply to all new and renewed licenses issued for any calendar year following the adoption of this resolution and shall remain in effect until amended by subsequent resolution of the Common Council.
3. **Supersession.** Any prior resolutions, schedules, or provisions establishing a daily or differing fee structure inconsistent with this resolution are hereby repealed to the extent of such inconsistency.
4. **Administrative Implementation.** The City Clerk is directed to update the City's official fee schedule, application materials, and website accordingly, and to provide notice of the new fee to all affected departments and the public.

Ayes: 6

Nays: 0

Absent: 1(Winchell)

**MOTION CARRIED**

DISCUSSION:

City Manager Lovell reported that the City will eliminate the previous daily food truck permit fee of \$25. He explained that no vendors utilized the daily option in the past year and that the annual permit fee of \$150 allows food truck operators to conduct business within the City throughout the year without additional charges. Mr. Lovell stated that this change was made in response to feedback from food truck business owners and is intended to simplify the process and make it more convenient and cost-effective for vendors. He noted that the adjustment should serve as a more practical and appealing solution for both operators and the City.

**A LOCAL LAW AMENDING SECTION 12.2 OF THE CITY CHARTER TO REQUIRE A  
SUPERMAJORITY VOTE OF THE COMMON COUNCIL TO REMOVE THE CITY MANAGER**

**RESOLUTION 25-196**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings

Seconded by Councilor Pagano

**WHEREAS**, Section 12.2 of the Oneida City Charter currently provides that the City Manager may be removed by a majority vote of the Common Council; and

**WHEREAS**, the Common Council recognizes that the office of the City Manager is vital to the effective and stable operation of City government, and that the City Manager should be protected from undue political influence or abrupt transitions; and

**WHEREAS**, the Common Council believes that requiring a two-thirds supermajority vote for removal will promote fairness, professionalism, and continuity in the executive management of

the City; and

**WHEREAS**, no other agency has the legal authority or jurisdiction to approve or directly undertake the enactment of local laws 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 (SEQR) with respect to the proposed enactment of said Local Law.

**NOW, THEREFORE**, be it

**RESOLVED**, that there are no other involved agencies, that the Common Council shall act as lead agency and that the enactment of this proposed Local Law is an Unlisted action under SEQR, thus requiring the preparation of a Short Environmental Assessment Form; be it further

**RESOLVED**, that Local Law of 2025, titled "A Local Law Amending Section 12.2 of the City Charter to Require a Supermajority Vote of the Common Council to Remove the City Manager," is hereby introduced; be it further

**RESOLVED**, that a public hearing on said Local Law shall be held on the 18<sup>th</sup> day of November, 2025, at 6:30 p.m., in the Common Council Chambers, City Hall, 109 North Main Street, Oneida, New York, or as soon thereafter as the matter can be heard, at which time all persons interested in the subject shall be heard and that the City Clerk is hereby directed to cause notice of said hearing to be published in the official newspaper of the City in accordance with the provisions of the Municipal Home Rule Law.

Ayes: 6

Nays: 0

Absent: 1(Winchell)

**MOTION CARRIED**

#### DISCUSSION:

Mayor Rossi advised that he introduced a proposed Local Law that would require a supermajority vote of the Common Council to remove the City Manager from office. The Mayor explained that the purpose of the proposal was to establish additional checks and balances within City government and to ensure stability in the City's highest administrative position. He noted that the City had experienced issues in the past and that this measure would prevent abrupt or politically motivated changes in leadership.

Councilor Szczerba questioned why the proposal was being brought forward at this time and who the Mayor had discussed this with prior, to which Mayor Rossi responded that he had not discussed it with anyone other than the City Attorney and that it was something he wanted to present at this time.

Councilor Simchik added that the intent was to create a safeguard so that the removal of the City Manager could not occur based on a simple majority, thereby protecting the integrity of the position and maintaining consistent administrative oversight. He advised that this is something he brought up previously, and this was not new.

Councilor Pagano emphasized that because a supermajority is already required to pass the City budget, it makes sense that the same threshold should apply to the position responsible for preparing and managing that budget. He also added that it should not be a situation where if a member of councilor is sick or on

vacation, a decision as important as this can be made based on a majority vote as opposed to the requirement of a supermajority vote.

Councilor Hitchings expressed support, noting that the City Manager's position should not be subject to frequent or reactionary turnover.

Mayor Rossi concluded that this adjustment represents a responsible refinement of the City's form of government, which continues to evolve as needed.

## **CITY OF ONEIDA**

### **A Local Law Amending Section 12.2 of the Oneida City Charter to Require a Supermajority Vote of the Oneida City Common Council to Remove the City Manager**

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

#### **Section 1. Legislative Intent**

The Common Council of the City of Oneida does hereby find that the position of City Manager serves as the Chief Executive Officer of the City, charged with overseeing daily operations, implementing Council policy, and ensuring continuity in the administration of public services. To safeguard the stability and professional integrity of the office of City Manager, and to insulate it from undue political influence, it is the intent of this Local Law to require a two-thirds (2/3) supermajority vote of the Common Council to remove the City Manager.

#### **Section 2. Amendment to Section 12.2 of the City Charter**

Section 12.2 of the City Charter of the City of Oneida is hereby amended to read, in its entirety, as follows:

“§12.2 Removal.

The City Manager may be suspended or removed by a resolution approved by the City Council which shall set forth the reasons for the proposed suspension or proposed removal. A copy of such resolution shall be served immediately upon the City Manager. The City Manager shall have 15 days in which to reply thereto in writing, and upon request, shall be afforded a public hearing, which shall occur no less than 10 days nor more than 15 days after such hearing is requested. After the public hearing, if one be requested, and after full consideration, the City Council by a vote of no less than two-thirds (2/3) of the whole number of the City Council may adopt a final resolution of suspension or removal.”

#### **Section 3. Severability**

If any clause, sentence, paragraph, subdivision, or part of this Local Law shall be adjudged by a court of competent jurisdiction to be invalid, such judgment shall not affect, impair, or invalidate the remainder

thereof, but shall be confined in its operation to the clause, sentence, paragraph, subdivision, or part thereof directly involved in the controversy.

#### **Section 4. Effective Date**

This Local Law shall take effect immediately upon filing with the Secretary of State in accordance with the provisions of the New York State Municipal Home Rule Law.

### **BUDGET TRANSFER AND AMENDMENTS**

#### **RESOLUTION 25-197**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

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

	<b><u>To</u></b>	<b><u>From</u></b>
<b><i>2025 Budget Adjustments</i></b>		
\$4,501.00	001.3310.0300.0000 Traffic Materials & Supplies	001.0022.2680.0000 Insurance recovery
<b><i>To re-allocate funds received from insurance claim to make repairs to the damaged streetlights</i></b>		
\$2,750.00	001.7521.0403.0000 Kallet Contracts	001.0001.0912.0000 General Fund Balance
<b><i>To allocate funds to cover the expense of an appraisal at the Kallet Theater</i></b>		

Ayes: 6  
Nays: 0  
Absent: 1(Winchell)  
**MOTION CARRIED**

**NEW BUSINESS:** None

Motion to adjourn by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

Ayes: 6

Nays: 0

Absent: 1(Winchell)

**MOTION CARRIED**

The regular meeting is hereby adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

**CITY OF ONEIDA**

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Sandra LaPera, City Clerk