

**MINUTES OF THE COMMON COUNCIL**  
**REGULAR MEETING**  
**DECEMBER 16, 2025**

A meeting of the Common Council of the City of Oneida, NY was held on the sixteenth day of December 2025 at 6:30 p.m. at the Common Council Chambers, 109 N. Main, Oneida, NY 13421.

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Rick Rossi.

<u><b>Attendees</b></u>	<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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Councilor Pagano	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Councilor Simchik	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____

**Supervisors**

Matt Roberts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mary Cavanagh	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Brandee Henderson	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Michelle Kinville	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**Also Present**

Attorney Paul Smythe	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Public Safety Comm. Dave Jones	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
City Clerk Sandy LaPera	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Councilor Elect McHugh	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Fire Chief Scott Jones	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Councilor Elect Cimpi	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Police Chief Steve Lowell	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Councilor Elect Smith	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		Councilor Elect Jones	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance/Roll Call

**PROCLAMATION:**      Extra Mile Day (Helen Acker)

Mayor Rossi stated that the next item on today's agenda is a proclamation for Extra Mile Day. This year's recognition is being presented to former Mayor Helen Acker. Before reading the proclamation, he shared a few remarks.

Mrs. Acker has made a tremendous and lasting impact on our community through her dedication and volunteer service to the City. From her time serving on the Common Council during the flood years to her current leadership of the Afterburner Committee and continued involvement with the Legion's 250th anniversary efforts, her commitment has never wavered. She remains actively engaged and supportive of the City to this day, whether speaking at the podium or contributing quietly from her seat.

Her willingness to consistently go the extra mile is deeply appreciated, and we are truly grateful for all she has done—and continues to do—for our community.

## *Proclamation*

*City of Oneida - Office of the Mayor*

### **EXTRA MILE DAY**

**WHEREAS**, the City of Oneida recognizes the value of individuals who "go the extra mile" through personal effort, volunteerism, and service; and

**WHEREAS**, Oneida encourages all citizens to give wholeheartedly to their goals, families, and community; and

**WHEREAS**, the city celebrates those who make a positive impact and uplift others through their actions; and

**WHEREAS**, Oneida supports the mission of Extra Mile America and proudly joins in recognizing November 1, 2025, as Extra Mile Day; and

**WHEREAS**, the City wishes to honor **Helen Acker** for her exceptional dedication and service, including her work with the Oneida Memorial Association, as Chairwoman of the Oneida Afterburner Committee, and for personally securing the donations that made possible the City's spectacular fireworks display;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Rick Rossi, Mayor of the City of Oneida, New York, do hereby proclaim **December 16, 2025, 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 16<sup>th</sup> Day of December 2025.

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Mayor Rick Rossi

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** None  
**OLD BUSINESS:** None

**REPORTS:**

- Mayor's Report:  
During the Mayor's Report, Mayor Rossi stated that the Tree Lighting Ceremony and Parade of Lights were very successful, despite the extremely cold weather. He noted that his family attended, bundled in snow pants and winter gear, and that everyone still had a great time. He thanked those who came out and continued the tradition, expressing appreciation for their willingness to brave the cold conditions. Mayor Rossi added that he hopes the event will be even bigger and better next year and shared that he is considering incorporating additional elements in the future. He concluded by thanking everyone for attending and supporting the event.
- Supervisor's Report: None
- City Manager's Report:  
City Manager Lovell stated that he would like to recognize several individuals and highlight Agenda Item 15. He noted that while the item may appear to be routine bookkeeping or administrative in nature, it represents a significant achievement for the City.

City Manager Lovell emphasized that some of the most meaningful successes in government occur when management and unions work collaboratively. He expressed his appreciation to all three City unions—the PDA, OPFA, and CSEA—and noted that he met with union leadership to present information regarding health insurance costs and the financial impact on the City. He described the discussions as candid and productive.

He reported that the resulting agreement not only saves taxpayer dollars but also benefits employees by investing in a health and wellness initiative. City Manager Lovell stated that, while he does not claim expertise in all aspects of health insurance and medical systems, he believes the agreement will lead to healthier employees, continued cost savings for taxpayers, and potentially greater savings in the future through proactive investment in employee health.

He concluded by describing the agreement as a significant win for the City and expressed his sincere appreciation to the presidents of all three unions and the department heads who worked together to bring the effort to completion. City Manager Lovell then concluded his report.

Mayor Rossi returned to the Mayor's Report to address an additional item. He noted that the City has had a Public Safety Commissioner for many years, dating back to the City's early history, and that the City is now moving away from that structure. Mayor Rossi expressed his sincere appreciation to Mr. Jones for stepping into the role and assisting him during his first two years as Mayor, which he described as a challenging period. He thanked Mr. Jones for his dedication, support, and the significant contributions he made to the City, particularly in helping with negotiations and advancing the City's progress and stated that his efforts were deeply appreciated.

#### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

**RESOLVED**, that the minutes of the regular meeting of December 4, 2025, are hereby approved as presented.

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

**MOTION CARRIED**

#### **APPROVAL OF WARRANT**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Winchell

**RESOLVED**, that Warrant No. 24, checks and ACH payments in the amount of \$191,334.91 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 (Pagano)

**MOTION CARRIED**

## **MONTHLY REPORTS**

### **RESOLUTION 25-229**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

**RESOLVED**, that Monthly Reports from the City Clerk, City Engineer, Codes Department, Fire Department, Parks and Recreation Department, Planning Department, and Police Department are hereby received and placed on file.

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

## **CITY HISTORIAN AGREEMENT**

### **RESOLUTION 25-230**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

**RESOLVED**, to authorize the City Manager to sign an agreement with Ariel Bero as the City Historian as per the 2026 City of Oneida Budget.

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

## **BUDGET TRANSFERS/AMENDMENTS**

### **RESOLUTION 25-231**

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 by the City of Oneida to perform such services.

	<u>To</u>	<u>From</u>
<b>2025 Budget Adjustments</b>		
\$ 12,000.00	001.1680.0403.0000 IT Contracts	001.0001.0912.0000 General Fund Balance

***To allocate funds for IT Contracts throughout the remainder of 2025***

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

**MOTION CARRIED**

### **ADVERTISE FOR BIDS-LAB TESTING (WATER DEPARTMENT)**

#### **RESOLUTION 25-232**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

**RESOLVED**, to authorize the Purchasing Agent to advertise for bids for Lab Testing for the Water Department for 2026.

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

**MOTION CARRIED**

### **WATER RATES & SERVICE CHARGES AND SEWER RATES**

#### **RESOLUTION 25-233**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

**RESOLVED**, to approve the 2026 Water Rates; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that these rates will be effective for the February 2026 Monthly and Wholesale billings; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that these rates will be effective for the first quarterly billing for 2026; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that the 2026 City of Oneida Sewer Rates be hereby approved.

2026 Sanitary Sewer Rates:      \$10.69 per calendar quarter  
\$7.56 per 100 cu. Ft. of metered water consumption

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

**AGREEMENT-REVIZE WCAG SCAN AND REMEDIATION (ADA COMPLIANCE)**

**RESOLUTION 25-234**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

**RESOLVED**, to authorize the City Manager to sign an agreement with Revize, for WCAG Compliance and Remediation Services for 2026 (ADA Compliance).

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

**2026 WATER MAINTENANCE AGREEMENTS**

**RESOLUTION 25-235**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Winchell

**RESOLVED**, to authorize the City Manager to sign the Water Maintenance Agreements with the Town of Stockbridge (Stockbridge Water District), the Oneida Indian Nation (Marble Hill Water District), and the Town of Vernon (Prospect Street Water District) for the year of 2026.

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

**DISCUSSION:** Councilor Szczerba questioned why the Oneida Indian Nation was included in the resolution, noting his understanding that the Nation would no longer be purchasing water from the City of Oneida and would instead be receiving water from Rome. City Manager Lovell advised that the City has not received any notification to that effect and is therefore proceeding with the agreement unless and until

notified otherwise.

**HYDRANT AGREEMENTS-WATER DEPARTMENT 2026-2029**

**RESOLUTION 25-236**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

**RESOLVED**, to authorize the City Manager to sign the Hydrant Agreements with the following for 2026-2029:

- NYE GMC
- New Beginnings Community Church
- Leibl Enterprises Inc.
- Oneida Housing Development Fund Co. Inc.
  - Work Force Housing
  - City Centre Apartments

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

**MOTION CARRIED**

**AUTHORIZE MEDICARE PART B REIMBURSEMENT PAYMENTS TO RETIREES**

**RESOLUTION 25-237**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

**RESOLVED**, that the City Comptroller or a third party duly retained to perform such services be, and hereby is authorized and directed, throughout the period from January 1, 2026, to December 31, 2026, to reimburse the cost of Medicare Part B coverage to all eligible retired City Employees and eligible dependents, regardless of union or non-union affiliation, in accordance with the provisions regarding such reimbursement as set forth in the current contracts of CSEA, Inc., Local 1000 AFSCME and Oneida Paid Firefighters Association Local 2692, **and be it further**

**RESOLVED**, that the City Comptroller or a third party duly retained to perform such services be, and hereby is authorized and directed, throughout the period from January 1, 2026, to December 31, 2026, to reimburse the cost of Medicare Part B coverage to all eligible retired City employees



and eligible dependents, who retired prior to July 1, 2015, regardless of whether said retiree and any eligible dependent is enrolled in the City's Medicare Advantage & Prescription Program.

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

**MOTION CARRIED**

DISCUSSION: City Manager Lovell explained that this item is included primarily as a bookkeeping matter and as a discussion point, rather than as immediate action. The City Manager noted that as the Council looks ahead to next year and evaluates ongoing and sustained City costs, health insurance remains one of the City's primary cost drivers. He outlined that the City is actively exploring multiple strategies to mitigate these costs, including working with unions on memoranda of agreement related to insurance plan design and evaluating the City's overall health insurance structure.

The City Manager further explained that the Medicare Part B reimbursement is a longstanding provision, established by resolution in 1992. Under certain contracts, retirees contribute approximately 20 percent toward Medicare Part B costs, a rate set by Council resolution and therefore subject to amendment by future Council action. While he emphasized that he is not proposing any immediate changes, he suggested that it may be prudent for the Council to consider whether an adjustment to the contribution percentage should be evaluated in the future. He noted that many municipalities currently reimburse Medicare Part B at rates ranging from 30 to 50 percent, compared to the City's 20 percent rate that has remained unchanged since 1992.

He advised that, once additional data and firm cost figures are available from insurance carriers next year, the City will be in a better position to assess potential impacts on the City and taxpayers. He stressed that this is strictly a discussion item at this time, intended to inform both the Council and the public that the matter is under review, with no changes being implemented at present.

**APPROVE BID-LIQUID IRON SALTS**

**RESOLUTION 25-238**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Winchell

**RESOLVED**, to approve the lowest bid meeting specifications for Liquid Iron Salts to Kemira Water Solutions, 4321 W. 6<sup>th</sup> Street, Lawrence, KS 66049.

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

**AGREEMENT-BRIDGES**

**RESOLUTION 25-239**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Winchell

**RESOLVED**, to authorize the City Manager to sign an agreement with BRiDGES (Madison County Council on Alcoholism and Substance Abuse, Inc.) for EAP (Employee Assistance Program) services for the period of January 1, 2026, to December 31, 2026.

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

**CONTRACT FOR SERVICES-CITY ASSESSOR**

**RESOLUTION 25-240**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

**RESOLVED**, that the City of Oneida Common Council does hereby authorize the City Manager to sign an agreement, in a form approved by the City Attorney, with Lonnie Stedman, Patricia Thorpe and Donna Osier for part-time consulting services to be rendered in connection and to assist with those duties performed by and assigned to the City of Oneida Assessor, according to the terms outlined in the contract, through December 31, 2025.

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

**DISCUSSION:** City Manager Lovell explained that after the previous assessor left, former City Assessor, Lonnie Stedman, agreed to return to assist the Assessor's Office through December 31, 2025. He was asked to evaluate the office and submit a proposal addressing costs, hours, timeline, and recommendations for continued operation.

Mr. Stedman proposed a three-day per week schedule, working alongside two experienced staff members-former Assessor's Aide, Pat Thorpe, and former Account Clerk, Donna Osier. Together, they have nearly 50 years of experience and have already identified several important issues, demonstrating immediate value to the City.

The proposed cost for this arrangement for all of 2026 is \$47,000, representing an estimated savings of \$35,000 to \$40,000 compared to hiring a full-time assessor. That figure could be even higher given the need to offer a more competitive salary. This approach provides both fiscal savings and continuity through experienced leadership.

Helen Acker questioned why the resolution date is listed as December 31, 2025, rather than 2026. The City Clerk explained that the resolution is intended only to cover the end of the current year, and that a new resolution will be presented at a subsequent meeting to name Lonnie Stedman as the Sole Assessor for the city for the year 2026.

#### **ADVERTISE FOR BIDS-TIMBER SALE**

##### **RESOLUTION 25-241**

Moved by Councilor Winchell  
Seconded by Councilor Hitchings

**RESOLVED**, to authorize the Purchasing Agent to advertise for bids for the second sale of 2025 of forest products on land owned by the City of Oneida as part of the Forestry Management Program.

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

#### **BOARD APPOINTMENT-WATER BOARD**

##### **RESOLUTION 25-242**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

**RESOLVED**, to approve the Mayor's appointment of Brian Bortree to the Water Board to complete the term previously held by Dave Cimpi, set to expire on July 19, 2027.

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

**EXCELLUS CONTRACT**

**RESOLUTION 25-243**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

**RESOLVED**, to authorize the City Manager to sign a revised contract with Excellus for the City's 2026 medical plan renewal.

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

**MOTION CARRIED**

DISCUSSION: City Manager Lovell reiterated his previous comments stated above for this resolution.

**NEW BUSINESS:** None

Motion to adjourn by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

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

**MOTION CARRIED**

The regular meeting is hereby adjourned at 6:49 p.m.

**CITY OF ONEIDA**

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Sandra LaPera, City Clerk