



CITY OF ONEIDA COMMON COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Date:	August 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: Mary Cavanagh	☒
Attorney (Other)	☐	Supervisor: _____	☐
Fire Chief Jones	☐	Other: _____	☐
Police Chief Lowell	☒	Other: _____	☐

PUBLIC HEARING: Proposed Local Law overriding the tax levy limit established in General Municipal Law §3-C in the City of Oneida

OPEN PUBLIC HEARING

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

RESOLUTION 26-109

Moved by Councilor Jones

Seconded by Councilor McHugh

RESOLVED, that the Public Hearing on a proposed Local Law overriding the tax levy in limit established in General Municipal Law §3-C in the City of Oneida is hereby opened at 6:31 p.m.

Ayes: 7

Nays: 0

Absent: 0

MOTION RESULT: ☒ Passed ☐ Failed

APPEARANCES

DEE KARADSLEH-CEDARCREST LANE

Dee Karadsleh stated that property taxes on her home have increased approximately 14% over the past six years and expressed concern that annual tax increases are not a sustainable long-term solution. She stated that she believes the City should focus on generating additional revenue rather than relying on increased property taxes. The resident also expressed the opinion that the City is not business-friendly, which she believes contributes to ongoing budget challenges. She further noted concerns about the City's declining population, stating that increasing taxes on a shrinking tax base is unsustainable. She asked what alternative revenue-generating strategies the City has explored to address budget gaps without placing additional tax burdens on residents.

JIM COULTHART-BROADWAY

Jim Coulthart inquired about the purpose and timing of the proposed tax levy override local law. He noted that during his tenure with the Council, a tax cap override was typically considered during the annual budget process and asked why it was being proposed at this time rather than during budget deliberations. He also asked whether the proposal was being made in anticipation of a citywide reassessment or for another specific reason.

RESPONSE BY CITY MANAGER, KYLE LOVELL

City Manager Lovell explained that New York State establishes an annual property tax cap, and municipalities wishing to exceed that cap must first adopt a local law authorizing a tax levy override. He stated that the proposed local law does not establish the tax levy but provides the Council with the authority to exceed the tax cap, if necessary, during the budget process. He further explained that the local law requires three meetings to complete the legislative process, which is why it is being introduced in advance of budget deliberations. He noted that the proposal is an administrative measure commonly undertaken by municipalities to provide flexibility during budget development.

Councilor Cimpi added that the previous Common Council did not adopt a tax cap override, which limited budget flexibility and contributed to the use of approximately \$1.3 million from the General Fund to balance the prior year's budget. He stated that the City is exploring opportunities to increase revenues while minimizing tax increases but emphasized the need to maintain a balanced budget.

CLOSE PUBLIC HEARING

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

RESOLUTION 26-110

Moved by Councilor Jones
Seconded by Councilor Smith

RESOLVED, that the Public Hearing on a proposed Local Law overriding the tax levy in limit established in General Municipal Law §3-C in the City of Oneida is hereby closed at 6:37 p.m.

Ayes: 7

Nays: 0

Absent: 0

MOTION RESULT: ☒ Passed ☐ Failed

PUBLIC COMMENT

BRIAN BORTREE-ONEIDA

Mr. Bortree expressed concerns regarding the disclosure of information discussed during a non-public Council meeting and questioned whether confidential discussions had been improperly shared. He also questioned whether the meeting was properly conducted under the Open Meetings Law and suggested that any Council member responsible for disclosing confidential information should be held accountable.

The City Attorney responded by explaining the distinction between an executive session conducted pursuant to the Open Meetings Law and a private meeting held for the purpose of receiving legal advice from counsel. She stated that legislative bodies may meet privately with legal counsel for legal advice, even though such meetings are not executive sessions under the Open Meetings Law. She further noted that she was not addressing the allegations regarding the disclosure of confidential information. Mr. Bortree concluded by urging the Council to promote transparency and accountability.

OLD BUSINESS

Councilor Cimpi inquired about complaints and calls for service related to the property located at 607 Stone Street.

The City Attorney reported that, at the City Manager's request, the Police Department, Fire Department, and Codes Department had compiled information regarding the property to determine whether it meets the City's definition of a public nuisance under the applicable local law. She stated that the information is currently being reviewed to determine whether enforcement action is warranted and noted that the matter remains under active review.

Councilor Cimpi inquired about the status of bonding for the Madison Street demolition project and the purchase of a plow truck. The City Manager responded that a final update regarding the demolition bonding for the three properties would be provided during his remarks later in the meeting. He further stated that there was not yet a definitive update regarding the plow truck.

Lastly, Councilor Cimpi requested an update on the status of the City's inside/outside district review in advance of budget discussions. The City Attorney responded that the matter is complex due to the structure of the existing districts and stated that additional research is needed before an update can be provided.

Councilor Smith requested an update on the development of regulations for short-term rentals (Airbnb, Vrbo, Seasonal, temporary rentals), and expressed interest in establishing a framework that could also generate additional City revenue.

The City Attorney explained that regulation of short-term rentals would require the adoption of a local law establishing definitions, permitting requirements, inspection standards, operational requirements, enforcement provisions, and applicable fees. She also discussed options used by other municipalities, including annual permit fees, conditional use permits, and procedures for addressing violations or revoking permits.

Council members discussed whether the City's primary objective should be regulating short-term rentals, generating revenue through permit or occupancy fees, or both. The discussion also referenced Madison County's recently adopted short-term rental regulations and the potential need to supplement, rather than duplicate, those requirements. Supervisor Cavanagh advised that she would get more information and provide it to council upon receipt. Councilor Jones suggested the use of sub committees to address concerns and discuss the framework for issues council might wish to consider.

The City Attorney suggested that a Council committee could review available options, identify policy objectives, and develop recommendations before preparing a proposed local law for Council consideration.

Council members discussed the value of holding Council work sessions or utilizing Council committees to develop policy proposals before requesting legal review or draft legislation. Councilor Simchik noted that discussing policy objectives in advance could help provide direction and reduce unnecessary legal costs.

The discussion also clarified that the proposed Property Accountability Program and the regulation of short-term rentals, including the potential for occupancy or permit fees, are separate initiatives. Council members agreed that these matters should proceed independently.

COUNCIL COMMITTEES:

Council members continued discussing the use of Council work sessions and special Council committees to develop policy proposals before requesting legal review. The City Attorney reviewed the City Charter and explained that the Mayor may appoint special committees of the Common Council for specific purposes without Council approval, while committees that include other City officials or residents require Common Council approval. She also advised that Council committees should remain small to avoid quorum and Open Meetings Law concerns.

Council members discussed meeting procedures for Council committees and work sessions. The City Attorney explained that committee meetings are subject to public notice requirements when they constitute a meeting under the Open Meetings Law. She further noted that committees without a quorum of the Common Council are generally not subject to the same requirements and that municipalities may choose to allow public attendance at committee meetings, although doing so is not required.

Councilor Cimpi stated that the Council has been exploring various revenue-generating initiatives in an effort to reduce reliance on property tax increases. He also expressed support for making Council committee meetings open to the public when feasible, noting that residents possess valuable expertise that could benefit the City's decision-making process.

MAYOR'S REMARKS: Mayor Rossi reminded residents that green waste collection may be delayed during the paving season and asked for the public's patience as crews complete roadway work. He also announced that the final Park Passport event of the season would be held on Thursday and encouraged residents to monitor the Parks and Recreation Department's Facebook page for the event location and details, noting that a 96-foot inflatable obstacle course would be featured.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT: See Attachment A

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Councilor Jones

Seconded by Councilor McHugh

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the meeting held on July 21, 2026, are approved as presented.

Ayes: 6

Nays: 0

Absent: 0

Abstain: 1 (Smith)

MOTION RESULT: ☒ Passed ☐ Failed

APPROVAL OF WARRANT

Motion by Councilor Simchik

Seconded by Councilor Smith

RESOLVED, that Warrant No. 15, including checks and ACH payments totaling \$210,156.76, 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

DUE PROCESS HEARINGS-DESIGNATE COMMON COUNCIL AS

DUE PROCESS HEARING OFFICERS

RESOLUTION 26-111

Moved by Councilor Smith

Seconded by Councilor Cimpi

RESOLVED, that in accordance with the City of Oneida Water Department Rules and Regulations, the Common Council will conduct any due process hearings for termination of water service as per Article XIX. B. 4.

Ayes: 7

Nays: 0

Absent: 0

MOTION RESULT: ☒ Passed ☐ Failed

AGREEMENT-SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER

RESOLUTION 26-112

Moved by Councilor Simchik

Seconded by Councilor Cimpi

RESOLVED, to authorize the City Manager to execute any and all agreements necessary to provide contracted police services to Madison-Oneida BOCES through the assignment of a School Resource Officer with Madison-Oneida Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), a supervisory school district of the State of New York, with its principal Offices located at 4937 Spring Rd., Verona, NY 13478.

Ayes: 6

Nays: 1 (McHugh)

Absent: 0

MOTION RESULT: ☒ Passed ☐ Failed

DISCUSSION: During discussion of the proposed School Resource Officer (SRO) agreement with Madison-Oneida BOCES, Councilor McHugh asked several questions regarding the terms of the agreement and the purpose of the assignment.

Police Chief Lowell explained that the three-year agreement is consistent with the school district's funding cycle, despite BOCES holding a longer-term lease for the North Broad Street facility. He stated that the agreement had been reviewed by both the City's labor attorney and BOCES' legal counsel.

Chief Lowell explained that the assigned officer would serve the North Broad Street BOCES behavioral program, where the Police Department regularly responds to incidents involving students who leave the building, behavioral concerns, and other safety-related matters. He stated that having an on-site School Resource Officer is intended to improve school safety, reduce response times, assist with de-escalation, and foster positive relationships between students and law enforcement. He also noted that BOCES staff have reported positive outcomes from similar SRO programs at other campuses.

Councilor McHugh asked whether the assigned officer could be relocated to another BOCES campus. Chief Lowell responded that the agreement specifically identifies the North Broad Street location and that any changes in assignment would require coordination with the Police Department.

Councilor McHugh also emphasized the importance of ensuring that behavioral issues appropriate for school personnel and mental health professionals continue to be handled by those staff and not unnecessarily shifted to law enforcement.

Councilor McHugh expressed support for the proposed School Resource Officer program but emphasized the importance of ensuring that behavioral matters appropriate for school personnel and mental health professionals are not unnecessarily shifted to law enforcement.

She also inquired about the required specialized School Resource Officer training, staffing, and scheduling. Police Chief Lowell stated that the required 40 hours of specialized training would be funded through the Police Department's existing training budget. He further explained that the position would be filled by reassigning an experienced officer, with BOCES reimbursing the City for the associated costs, allowing the Department to hire a replacement officer. Chief Lowell added that the assigned officer would generally follow the school's operating schedule while remaining available for staff activities and other school-related needs beyond student hours.

Councilor Smith inquired about the long-term staffing impact of the proposed School Resource Officer agreement, specifically whether the backfilled position would remain within the Police Department after the agreement concludes.

Police Chief Lowell explained that the agreement does not include a fixed sunset provision and noted that future staffing levels would depend on retirements, contract terms, and future budget decisions by the Common Council. He added that the Department is currently at full staffing but anticipates upcoming retirements that could affect future personnel needs.

Councilor Pagano stated that he had received positive feedback from teachers at the North Broad Street BOCES program regarding the Police Department's assistance. He noted that staff generally strive to manage situations independently but have expressed appreciation for the professionalism and support provided by officers when police assistance has been required.

BUDGET TRANSFERS/AMENDMENTS

RESOLUTION 26-113

Moved by Councilor Simchik
Seconded by Councilor Jones

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>
2026 Budget Adjustments			
\$	39,400.00	001.1640.0401.0000 Gasoline	001.0001.0912.0000 General Fund Balance

\$

42,300.00

001.1640.0402.0000

001.0001.0912.0000

Diesel

General Fund Balance

To allocate funds for the fuel needs expected through 12/31/26

DISCUSSION: During discussion of the proposed budget transfer for central fuel, Councilors asked questions regarding current fuel inventory, fuel purchasing practices, and the impact of seasonal pricing and global events on fuel costs. It was questioned why the 2026 fuel budget request was significantly higher than the previous year's expenditures.

Police Chief Lowell explained that fuel is purchased through the State contract and that the City's storage capacity requires tanks to be replenished regularly rather than allowing large quantities of fuel to be stockpiled. Councilor Simchik further noted that fuel costs have been affected by market conditions and that the City utilizes a fuel storage tank owned by its fuel supplier, avoiding the significant cost of replacing a City-owned tank while continuing to receive fuel at State contract pricing.

Council members continued discussing the proposed budget transfer for central fuel, focusing on fuel usage, budgeted amounts, and the impact of increased fuel costs. City Manager Lovell noted that fuel prices have risen and indicated that fuel consumption may have increased due to upgrades at the wastewater treatment plant, although additional information would be gathered to verify the cause. It was also noted that winter operations and increased use of City equipment may have contributed to higher fuel usage.

Councilor Jones discussed the importance of providing detailed financial data to support requests for budget transfers from the General Fund, emphasizing the need for sufficient information to make informed budget decisions while maintaining essential City services and preserving the General Fund balance.

Councilor McHugh	NO
Councilor Cimpi	NO
Councilor Smith	NO
Councilor Jones	NO
Councilor Pagano	YES
Councilor Simchik	YES
Mayor Rossi	YES

MOTION RESULT: ☐ Passed ☒ Failed

Council further discussed the proposed budget transfer to fund gasoline and diesel expenses for the remainder of the year. Questions were raised regarding whether unused appropriations from other budget lines could be identified and transferred rather than utilizing General Fund balance. Mayor Rossi explained that transferring funds from other appropriated accounts would require reducing or eliminating other budgeted services and that any such reductions could ultimately require additional funding later. Councilor Jones noted that, as of July 31, approximately \$21,000 remained in the gasoline account and just over \$6,000 remained in the diesel account, indicating the City would not immediately run out of fuel. Several members expressed concern that the City

must maintain essential operations and that insufficient appropriations during the budget process had contributed to the current situation. Council discussed reviewing departmental budget lines for potential savings before reconsidering the matter. Mayor Rossi noted that budget season would provide an opportunity for a more comprehensive review of departmental funding needs.

NEW BUSINESS – DISCUSSION OF POTENTIAL JUVENILE CURFEW AMENDMENTS

Councilor Jones discussed the possibility of amending the City's juvenile curfew ordinance by increasing the applicable age from 16 to 18 years old and extending curfew hours from 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. based on a letter received from a constituent. The proposal was presented as a means of addressing juvenile vandalism, misconduct, and reducing the risk of juveniles becoming victims of crime, exploitation, or violence.

Councilor Jones suggested this could be forwarded to the City Attorney for preliminary review so that Council could better understand the legal implications before determining whether to pursue legislation. A question was raised by Councilor Pagano regarding potential legal costs if additional attorney time were required beyond the budgeted amount, particularly in light of Council's recent position on transfers from the General Fund. It was suggested that the matter first be discussed by a committee or through a work session before undertaking formal legal work.

The City Attorney noted that New York law generally defines minors as individuals under the age of 18, although many statutes historically reference age 16. She cautioned that increasing the age or modifying the ordinance would require careful legal review.

Chief Lowell referenced a prior legal challenge involving the City of Rochester's juvenile curfew ordinance, which was declared unconstitutional. He explained that the case involved constitutional concerns regarding restricting the freedom of minors who were not otherwise engaged in unlawful activity. He noted that Rochester has since attempted to revisit its ordinance with revised language and recommended that Council review Rochester's experience before considering any amendments.

City Manager Lovell confirmed his familiarity with the Rochester litigation and agreed it would provide useful guidance. He also suggested that Council evaluate whether the existing curfew ordinance is being adequately enforced before considering changes, as increased enforcement of the current law may address some of the concerns raised by residents.

City Attorney Bell stated that the primary concern was not juveniles who were simply outside after curfew, but rather incidents involving vandalism, disorderly conduct, and other criminal behavior. Chief Lowell emphasized that officers already have authority to address criminal conduct whenever it occurs and encouraged residents to continue reporting suspicious activity, including locations and descriptions, to assist law enforcement.

Discussion also addressed the challenges of the juvenile justice system. It was noted that diversion and youth court programs have become increasingly limited following New York's Raise the Age legislation, with fewer residential placement options and reduced availability of intervention

programs for juveniles. No action was taken, and Council agreed the matter warranted additional legal review and discussion before any proposed amendments are considered.

Mayor Rossi expressed support for exploring revisions to the juvenile curfew ordinance, stating that, if legally permissible, it could serve as another tool to help reduce late-night juvenile activity. It was acknowledged that while a curfew would not prevent all incidents, it could help keep some juveniles off the streets during overnight hours.

Resident Bob Britton shared concerns about seeing young children, including those believed to be 12 and 13 years old, out in the early morning hours without adult supervision. A question was raised regarding whether repeat curfew violations could result in penalties for parents or guardians. The City Attorney responded that Council could review the existing ordinance to determine what enforcement options are already available and whether any modifications could be considered.

The discussion concluded with the consensus that additional review of the current ordinance, its enforceability, and any legal limitations would be appropriate before considering legislative changes. No formal action was taken, and the meeting proceeded with other items of New Business.

Mayor Rossi asked Council how they wished to proceed with the outstanding issues and whether subcommittees should be established to review and develop recommendations. The following summarizes Council's discussion and level of interest in pursuing each item.

ESTABLISHMENT OF COUNCIL COMMITTEES

Inside/Outside District Committee

Councilor McHugh	NO
Councilor Cimpi	YES
Councilor Smith	YES
Councilor Jones	YES
Councilor Pagano	NO
Councilor Simchik	NO
Mayor Rossi	YES

MOTION RESULT: ☒ Passed ☐ Failed

Committee Members: Smith-Jones-Simchik

Residency

Councilor McHugh	YES
Councilor Cimpi	NO
Councilor Smith	YES
Councilor Jones	NO

Councilor Pagano NO
Councilor Simchik NO
Mayor Rossi NO

MOTION RESULT: ☐ Passed ☒ Failed

Council will not pursue this.

Short-Term Rentals

Councilor McHugh YES
Councilor Cimpi YES
Councilor Smith YES
Councilor Jones YES
Councilor Pagano NO
Councilor Simchik YES
Mayor Rossi YES

MOTION RESULT: ☒ Passed ☐ Failed

Committee Members: McHugh-Cimpi-Pagano

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION:

Councilor McHugh raised concerns about the appearance of a city entrance near the Five Corners/Walmart area, noting that overgrown vegetation creates a poor first impression for visitors. Although the location is on a state roadway, it was suggested that the City could coordinate with the appropriate agency or explore whether the Department of Public Works (DPW) could address the issue as a way to improve community appearance and morale.

The discussion then shifted to the condition of the DPW building. Councilor McHugh expressed concern that the facility is in poor condition and suggested that relatively small improvements, such as painting, repairing lighting, or fixing long-standing maintenance issues, could improve employee morale while the City works toward a long-term solution.

The City Manager explained that the City has approximately \$2 million in FEMA funding designated for replacing the DPW facility, which sustained flood damage. However, preliminary design estimates for a new building ranged from \$4 million to \$6 million, and construction costs have likely increased further. Because the FEMA funding is specifically intended for replacement of the facility, it cannot be used for repairs or improvements to the existing building.

When asked whether funding could be identified elsewhere in the budget for modest improvements to the current building, the City Manager stated that no funding is currently budgeted for that purpose but acknowledged that it could be considered during future budget discussions. Councilor McHugh also suggested contributing a portion of her council salary toward small improvements, such as paint.

In response, the City Manager stated that the Council's decision not to approve the budget transfer for fuel could have a more immediate impact on employee morale, particularly if available fuel funding affected employees' ability to perform their work, while recognizing the concerns raised regarding improvements to the building.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn by Councilor McHugh
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

Ayes: 7

Nays: 0

Absent: 0

MOTION RESULT: ☒ Passed ☐ Failed

The meeting adjourned at 7:51 p.m.

CITY OF ONEIDA

Sandra LaPera, City Clerk