

**MINUTES OF THE COMMON COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING
NOVEMBER 8, 2023**

A special meeting of the Common Council of the City of Oneida, NY was held on the eighth day of November 2023 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 Deputy Mayor, Michelle Kinville

<u>Attendees</u>	Present	Absent	Arrived Late
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 Rossi	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Councilor Kinville	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input 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

City Attorney Nadine Bell	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fire Chief Scott Jones	<input type="checkbox"/>
City Clerk Sandy LaPera	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Parks & Rec Director Luke Griff	<input type="checkbox"/>
City Engineer Jeff Rowe	<input type="checkbox"/>	Police Chief Steve Lowell	<input type="checkbox"/>
Codes Director Bob Burnett	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Public Safety Com. Kevin Salerno	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comptroller Lee Ann Wells	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Supervisor Mary Cavanagh	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		Supervisor Matt Roberts	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		Councilor Elect Andrea Hitchings	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		Councilor Elect Rob Winchell	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**2024 CITY OF ONEIDA BUDGET
CODES DEPARTMENT**

Director of Code Enforcement, Bob Burnett

Deputy Mayor Michelle Kinville welcomed Director of Code Enforcement, Bob Burnett, to the meeting to discuss his Budget for 2024.

Director of Codes, Bob Burnett, reviewed his Revenue lines, including Certificates of Occupancy, Sign Applications, Vacant Property Registry Fees, Lot Mowing, Rental Inspection Fees, and Building Permits, whereby he advised those particular fees have been adjusted to promote building.

Mr. Burnett then reviewed his expenditures, including salaries and overtime. He explained the overtime line of \$2,500 was being used mainly for the clerk who is overtasked with her daily duties and

responsibilities and went from 35 hours a week to 37. This is being paid as straight time and not overtime. All other lines were standard, with the addition of a Process Server who is needed to serve notices in person to those property owners who are out of town, due to requirements from the courts.

Audience member Brahim Zogby stated that the revenue mentioned earlier regarding rental inspection fees of \$75 per unit (\$51,000), if doubled, would result in revenue of over \$100,000, as opposed to the budgeted amount of \$55,000 (Director Burnett advised that based off of inspections will actually be \$51,000). Mr. Zogby asked if this could be changed, either now or by the future Council, as the rest of the taxpayers in the City, whose taxes are going to go up, are subsidizing private enterprise by people who own rental properties and who are making money on that. He feels if they charge people more who own rental properties, they are not throwing business out of town, but are making more money from people who are making money.

Audience member, Larry Bavo, commented that people who own rental properties pay more in taxes than those that own their own house due to the Star Program and other exemptions that rental property owners do not get. He stated that there are also maintenance expenses, to which Mr. Zogby responded they still get more revenue, and this is a business.

Mr. Zogby suggested that either this Council or the next should meet with the Codes Director and consider increasing the cost of inspections and fines, noting that the violations will go away, and income will increase. Deputy Mayor Kinville stated that they would make note of this and take it under advisement.

Supervisor Roberts stated, from the standpoint of running the City, inflation fluctuates, and suggested increasing fees slowly over the course of time, without huge jumps, similar to the discussion that was had about the Wastewater Treatment Plant and increasing sewer fees. He noted that if they were increased slowly, we wouldn't be in the situation we are currently in.

Councilor Szczerba inquired as to what the typical inspection rates are from other municipalities. Director Burnett responded that it varies from one to another. Mr. Burnett advised that most of what he models is from Oswego. He noted that there have been more permits since 2021 due to lowering the fees.

Councilor Rossi advised that he reached out to several other local municipalities to see what they charge, and \$75 was the average inspection fee.

Councilor Kinville inquired about lawn mowing and if this could be contracted out. Currently, DPW and Parks and Rec mow lawns. The Comptroller advised that there might be contract issues that should be looked into first. Director Burnett explained the process, stating if someone is in violation, DPW will mow, and his department bills the property owner. If not paid, the fee is levied against the property. He noted that the fee is \$150 for the average lawn in the inside district and can be adjusted depending on the size of the lawn.

There was discussion about whether there would be a problem with contracting this out, and for what Mr. Burnett deals with, he does not feel there would be any issues with this being done by outside sources. To date, there have been 9-10 property owners that have been billed.

The Codes portion of the Budget Meetings concluded at 7:16p.m.

Sandra LaPera, City Clerk

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The meeting was called to order by Deputy Mayor, Michelle Kinville

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Councilor Szczerba	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
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City Attorney Nadine Bell	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fire Chief Scott Jones	<input type="checkbox"/>
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City Engineer Jeff Rowe	<input type="checkbox"/>	Police Chief Steve Lowell	<input type="checkbox"/>
Codes Director Bob Burnett	<input type="checkbox"/>	Public Safety Com. Kevin Salerno	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comptroller Lee Ann Wells	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Planning Director Chris Henry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		Supervisor Mary Cavanagh	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		Supervisor Matt Roberts	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		Councilor Elect Andrea Hitchings	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		Councilor Elect Rob Winchell	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**2024 CITY OF ONEIDA BUDGET DISCUSSION
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

Director of Planning and Development-Chris Henry

Director of Planning and Development, Chris Henry, addressed Council to review his 2024 Budget. Mr. Henry started with expenditures including Legal Notices, Training, and the Flowerpot line, which allowed for an increase in expenditures over last year. He received word that OC3, who in the past did more than half, might not follow through this year. Councilor Szczerba asked about using hanging pots, which would cut down on vandalism and would look aesthetically more pleasing. Director Henry advised that he would

look into this, as the City owns the pots currently being used, along with some owned by OC3. Councilor Kinville stated that although they looked great, maybe we could cut down on the number of pots as well, as there seemed to be a lot, especially near the Kallet. Vandalism and restitution was discussed, as well as maintenance, with Director Henry concluding that he would provide Council with more information. He also advised that the DRI construction work on Main Street would be scaled back to 2025, and next year would be more of planning.

Councilor Kinville asked about James Street landscaping, and what is the plan for this. Director Henry advised it is the last year for this, and the amount requested is for what the City is obligated to provide for maintenance and flowers. This has to be maintained as it was, and if the City does not maintain this, we have to give the money back per the grant. Councilor elect, Andrea Hitchings asked Director Henry if he could provide them with a copy of the contract. Comptroller Wells advised that \$3,680 was allocated for this in 2022, and he was increasing it this year to allow for any increase in cost.

Travel and Training accounts for training fees for the Planning Board members that are required to have 4 hours per year, as well as the increase in cost of fuel. There is also a professional membership fee for the American Planning Association for access to their resources and for marketing RFP's.

The Comprehensive Plan expense line is for grant writing services to potentially contract with a grant writer to get money to renovate and restore the Kallet.

Councilor elect Hitchings asked for a breakdown for Travel and Training, to which Director Henry advised he would provide that to everyone.

Councilor Laureti inquired about the status of the hotel (former Hotel Oneida). Director Henry stated they just got estimates back to finalize the financing and have done the first round of Planning Board approvals; however, the Board required them to come up with a parking plan. He noted that this process has been slow due to State contracts. Parking was discussed, and a layout plan is supposed to be provided this week. He advised that the applicant sponsoring this has been highly motivated.

Supervisor Roberts advised that they have had discussions with Senators Schumer and Giliibrand to assist the City with the possibility of expanding parking beyond what we thought we could with FEMA (which is a National Policy), noting it can't hurt to ask and having the help of people who yield a lot of power in Washington is beneficial.

Councilor Szczerba asked why the turbines were being held up, to which Director Henry advised that it is standard practice to put items on the agenda when there is new information to be submitted. The biggest hanging item is a conflict with the initial FAA Determination (Federal Aviation Administration-No Hazard Determination) that was issued, whereby apparently, the DOD Clearinghouse did not consult with the local AFRL (Air Force Research Laboratory). The chain of command was not followed, and there is supposed to be a meeting taking place soon between New Leaf Energy and the AFRL. The Board is waiting for the official determination (possibly taking place next week), which he noted can significantly impact the decision, along with everything that has been submitted to date. This includes public input, via statements, comments, emails, and a public hearing, of which the Board considers heavily and when there is significant opposition. He stated that his role is to be the Administrator and Secretary to the Board. All decisions are made by the Board. Also, a geotechnical study regarding water will be brought in, which has also been a concern.

Tom Griffith, a member from the audience stated that the Chairman of the Board can take any action, at any time, as he pleases, and this should have been on the agenda this month. He stated this could take months or years, advising that all the Chairman needs to do is tell them to be here, vote the variance down and table this for 2 years, noting the Zoning Board Chairman is the most powerful person in the City. He stated that this person should be open to the public and has not been.

Deputy Mayor Kinville advised that the next Budget meeting will be held Monday, November 13 at 6:30p.m.

Motion to adjourn by Councilor Szczerba and seconded by Councilor Laureti

Ayes: 6

Nays: 0

MOTION CARRIED

Planning Budget Meeting concluded at 8:00p.m.

Sandra LaPera, City Clerk