

**MINUTES OF THE COMMON COUNCIL  
SPECIAL MEETING  
NOVEMBER 16, 2023**

A special meeting of the Common Council of the City of Oneida, NY was held on the sixteenth 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>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Absent</b>	<b>Arrived Late</b>
Councilor Szczerba	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Councilor Laureti	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 6:32p.m.
Councilor Simchik	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 6:50p.m.

**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 type="checkbox"/>	Public Safety Com. Kevin Salerno	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comptroller Lee Ann Wells	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Water Super. John Monaghan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**2024 CITY OF ONEIDA BUDGET DISCUSSION  
WATER**

Water Superintendent-John Monaghan

Water Superintendent John Monaghan advised Council that this was his first budget, and he might need some guidance on how the process works. Deputy Mayor Kinville advised that they would be reviewing the expense portion of the Budget, line by line, explaining the items that were cut by the Mayor and why, as well as what items were requested. She advised that the Council cannot touch the revenue portion of the Budget, so they would not be discussing that.

**Salaries:** Superintendent Monaghan advised that the Mayor did give him a Water Plant Operator Trainee position, as a Water Treatment Plant Operator, who has been an employee for 44 years, could retire at any time, and it takes approximately 1 year for a new person to become qualified. If this person were to

retire in 4 months, this would leave the plant short and create the need for overtime.

Superintendent Monaghan advised that he would like to add an Assistant Water Maintenance Supervisor. He explained that this would not actually “add” an additional person but rather move some of the current positions around, noting the current Water Maintenance Supervisor will be retiring at the beginning of 2025. He advised that in addition to the Maintenance Supervisor, the senior Water Maintenance Worker will be retiring in August of 2024. Between the two of them, they have over 30-years of institutional knowledge, and he thinks it is important that the Assistant Maintenance Water Supervisor becomes the “shadow” of the current supervisor. After discussion with the Council and the Comptroller, it was clarified that this would eventually eliminate a Water Maintenance Worker, bringing the number down to 3 instead of 4, which they currently have. This will cover the majority of the amount needed for the new position.

The Comptroller advised that because this would be considered a new position, the Council would set the salary, and it would be a Civil Service position and a competitive/tested position. She explained that this would be the first step, and then she would take it to the Civil Service Commission where a job description would be set. Supervisor Monaghan advised that this would not need to be for a full year and could start in March or April. Deputy Mayor Kinville suggested that this be presented to the Council in March. There was concern over the time needed by Civil Service, to which Comptroller Wells advised it would only take a couple of weeks.

Superintendent Monaghan also discussed the Clerk and Billing Clerk positions. He advised that the Billing Clerk historically has only done billing, and currently when this individual is off, there is no one to perform this duty. He noted there has been no cross-training, which he feels is not a good thing to run a department. Mr. Monaghan advised the Billing Clerk is willing to train the Clerk in billing and learn payroll, and the Clerk is willing to learn billing, even though it is not in her job description, and train the Billing Clerk in payroll if they each could get a small monetary increase.

**Overtime:** this was just a prediction, based on past history.

**Equipment:** requested is a Skid Steer (Kubota with tilt box), as there are a lot of areas on the transmission line that they cannot get into with regular pickup trucks. This also includes fuel alarm boxes, box fans, tools, teeth for disc mulcher.

**Materials/Supplies:** water bills, door hangers, toner, etc.

**Equipment Maintenance/Repair:** general repair and maintenance

**Other Chemicals:** used for benchtop testing

**Chemicals:** chlorine was an estimate. Noted is that the City uses chlorine gas at the Water Treatment Plant and not liquid chlorine, because you can treat more water with chlorine gas than you can with liquid chlorine. The issue is that there are very few vendors who sell chlorine gas, it is dangerous (noting that the one thing in our favor is the location of the plant) and is getting harder to get. Superintendent Monaghan advised that sooner or later, the City will need to convert the process at the Water Treatment Plant to liquid chlorine, which is currently used in the City. All other chemicals have remained basically the same and are easier to obtain. Some current providers have asked to extend their contracts.

There was discussion about the budgeted amounts as opposed to where we currently are with the phosphates line. If this line is decreased to \$50,000, the remaining \$11,000 can be applied toward the new Assistant Water Maintenance Supervisor (\$4,000), as well as toward the \$16,527 needed to balance

the City Manager position.

**General Maintenance:** this depends on system failures

There was discussion about the Glenmore Dam Project, which will take approximately 2 years to complete. It was advised that City Engineer Rowe is working with the engineers to get this going.

**Meters & Parts:** The water meters generate revenue-the figure is based off of 305 meters and the bid price last year. Superintendent Monaghan is exploring the possibility of opening the City up to Neptune meters as opposed to Census meters. The City currently uses Census, and if the switch is made to Neptune, we have roughly 360 radio reads that would no longer work at \$180 each, and we would have to buy Neptune's equipment at approximately \$14,000 so the water bills could be generated. Superintendent Monaghan advised that at some point in the meter worlds, the City is behind, as we are still using mechanicals, which are accurate to .025. The new ultrasonic meters are accurate to .003. When someone gets a small leak, the mechanicals will not spin, and the City is losing revenue. With the accuracy of the ultrasonic meter, revenue is generated.

**Water Main Extension:** none are planned for 2024

**Utilities and Telephone:** standard

**Contracts:** Information Technology was budgeted for in 2 places and was eliminated in the Water budget

**Contracts:** there is a revenue line that matches this. Due to a change in the way the Comptroller does this, it is more efficient.

**Postage, Committees and Training:** postage is standard, committees are for conferences, and training is for individuals who have to take classes for their certification. The title of training will be changed to licensing to better describe this line.

**Lab Testing:** this is for samples, and it was noted this will probably come in lower.

**Travel-Meals:** standard

**Infrastructure Improvements:** HDPE (High Density Polyethylene) plastic pipes to be used on Fitch Street. HDPE is known for its high resistance to corrosion, bacteria, and chemical buildup, and has a longer life expectancy. This is also cheaper and is the future of water. Two sections of Fitch Street have already been done, and this will complete the project.

**Contingency:** the Comptroller advised that she cannot transfer from Contingency and has to do a budget adjustment for this (cannot purchase off this line). She advised there is \$50,000 available.

The Comptroller explained Transfer to General, Transfer to Reserve and Transfer to Capital: Transfer to General is a chargeback from Water and Sewer that accounts for all administrative staff and office space etc.; Transfer to Reserve is offset by reserves taken in on the revenue side, and Transfer to Capital leads into Capital Projects per the Capital Project schedule.

It was determined, based on adjustments discussed earlier, that \$11,000 would be taken from the Phosphates line, as it is currently under budget (with \$4,000 going to Contingency for the requested

Assistant Water Maintenance Supervisor position), \$4,500 to be taken from General Maintenance line and \$4,500 from Lab Testing, which would make up the amount needed for the City Manager salary allocation.

Comptroller Wells advised that the DPW Relocation was due to the water staff employees located in that area.

There was discussion about fuel and the fuel provider. The boiler is original to the building and needs to be replaced. There was only one vendor that was willing to do this, and the estimated cost is \$75,000.

The need for a Second Clearwell at the WTP was discussed. The City currently has only one Clearwell, and the tank is in bad shape. The City hired an engineering firm in 2018 to design the project that is ready to go, but funding is needed. There was discussion about whether this would need to go to Public Referendum, but the Comptroller advised that if the funding came from the Fund Balance, or enough of the Fund Balance to stay under the \$1M limit, it would not need to go to referendum. Superintendent Monaghan advised that if there was no Dam and no Clearwell, then there would be no water. It was noted that his department has a healthy Fund Balance at 103%. It was advised that the boiler has already been allocated for in this budget, and the purpose of the Fund Balance is to fund Capital Projects. The council discussed this further, and it was decided that the longer we wait, the higher the cost would be, and the money in the Fund Balance would be used for this project.

The Budget can be balanced by taking away from Contingency for year-to-date expenses that have not come in yet. The Town of Verona is expected to drop off in 2025, which will result in a significant loss of revenue for the City. They are going to Rome, as the City of Oneida does not have the amount of water needed. Also noted though, was that the Oneida Indian Nation is expanding and will need more water.

Sewer and Water rates were discussed, and it was decided by the Council to set the rates for each at 15%.

Water Superintendent Monaghan provided an example of what this percentage means:

A Water bill is approximately \$70.

The bill with the 15% would increase by approximately \$10.

Bottled water purchased from Walmart in a case with 40 bottles at 28oz each equals approximately 5 gallons of water.

The example pays \$5.86 for the case of water.

The Water Dept. sells the example 748 gallons of water for \$3.56 and sends it to the example's house.

City water is cheaper, and also is tested 10 times more than the bottled water.

It was noted that the more water is consumed, the cheaper the price is in Oneida, unlike other communities. Lead-Copper lines were also discussed, and it was advised that the City is in great shape. The State is forcing everyone to convert, and the City has only 6 lines.

The Council thanked Water Superintendent Monaghan for his time and contribution.

The Water Department Budget Meeting concluded at 7:45P.M.

Sandra LaPera, City Clerk