

MINUTES OF THE COMMON COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
FEBRUARY 4, 2025

A meeting of the Common Council of the City of Oneida, NY was held on the fourth day of February 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.

<u>Attendees</u>	Present	Absent	Arrived Late
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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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

City Attorney Nadine Bell	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Public Safety Comm. Dave Jones	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
City Clerk Sandy LaPera	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Assessor Rebecca Lennon	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Fire Chief Scott Jones	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Police Chief Steve Lowell	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance/Roll Call

PUBLIC HEARING: A Local Law amending the income ranges for senior citizens and amending the Alternative Veterans' Exemption and Cold War Veterans' exemption as set forth in Chapter 165 of the Oneida City Code

OPEN PUBLIC HEARING

**A LOCAL LAW AMENDING THE INCOME RANGES FOR SENIOR CITIZENS AND AMENDING THE
ALTERNATIVE VETERANS' EXEMPTION AND COLD WAR VETERANS' EXEMPTION AS SET FORTH IN
CHAPTER 165 OF THE ONEIDA CITY CODE**

RESOLUTION 25-28

Moved by Councilor Hitchings
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

RESOLVED, that the Public Hearing for a Local Law amending the income ranges for senior citizens and amending the Alternative Veterans' Exemption and Cold War Veterans' exemption as set forth in Chapter 165 of the Oneida City Code be hereby opened at 6:31 p.m.

Ayes: 5
Nays: 0
Absent: 2 (Laureti/Winchell)

MOTION CARRIED

APPEARANCES

None

CLOSE PUBLIC HEARING

**A LOCAL LAW AMENDING THE INCOME RANGES FOR SENIOR CITIZENS AND AMENDING THE
ALTERNATIVE VETERANS' EXEMPTION AND COLD WAR VETERANS' EXEMPTION AS SET FORTH IN
CHAPTER 165 OF THE ONEIDA CITY CODE**

RESOLUTION 25-29

Moved by Councilor Hitchings
Seconded by Councilor Pagano

RESOLVED, that the Public Hearing for a Local Law amending the income ranges for senior citizens and amending the Alternative Veterans' Exemption and Cold War Veterans' exemption as set forth in Chapter 165 of the Oneida City Code be hereby closed at 6:32 p.m.

Ayes: 5
Nays: 0
Absent: 2 (Laureti/Winchell)

MOTION CARRIED

PUBLIC COMMENT

RALPH KOHLER-ONEIDA

Mr. Kohler expressed his concerns regarding the availability and transparency of the Mural Law. He stated that he had previously highlighted the shortcomings of the proposed legislation. At the last Council meeting, a Public Hearing was held on the law; however, he noted that the revisions were not made publicly available.

Mr. Kohler stated that he did not receive the revised Local Law until it was published in the packet this week. While he acknowledged that he was unaware of the specific rules regarding the publication of changes, he felt that receiving the document on Friday did not provide sufficient time for review. He reiterated his concerns that the law remains vague, emphasizing that a vague law is a bad law. Mr. Kohler further stated that if the Council were voting on the law tonight, he would like to hear from those supporting it why they believe it is a good idea.

OLD BUSINESS: None

REPORTS:

- **Mayor's Report:** None
- **City Manager's Report:** City Manager Lovell stated that City Assessor Rebecca Lennon would be giving a presentation this evening on the specifics of a city-wide assessment. He clarified that the presentation is for informational purposes only and that no action will be taken at this time. In the interest of transparency and accountability, he invited her to the meeting to provide an overview of the process, its implications, and potential steps forward.

He further emphasized that while a city-wide assessment is a possibility, and the sooner it begins, the more beneficial it would be, his primary goal at this time is to initiate discussion and encourage dialogue on the matter.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Moved by Councilor Hitchings
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

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

Ayes: 5
Nays: 0
Absent: 2 (Laureti/Winchell)

MOTION CARRIED

APPROVAL OF WARRANT

Moved by Councilor Simchik
Seconded by Councilor Pagano

RESOLVED, that Warrant No. 3, checks and ACH payments in the amount of \$445,952.29 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: 5
Nays: 0
Absent: 2 (Laureti/Winchell)
MOTION CARRIED

ADOPT A LOCAL LAW AMENDING CHAPTER 180, ARTICLE II OF THE CITY OF ONEIDA CODE TO PROHIBIT PARKING ON CERTAIN SECTIONS OF BOSTON STREET AND PHILLIPS STREET

RESOLUTION 25-30

Moved by Councilor Hitchings
Seconded by Councilor Pagano

WHEREAS, pursuant to the provisions of the Municipal Home Rule Law, a proposed Local Law, titled "A Local Law Amending Chapter 180, Article II of the City of Oneida Code to Prohibit Parking on Certain Sections of Boston Street and Phillips Street" was presented and introduced at a Regular Meeting of the Common Council of the City of Oneida held on January 7, 2025; and

WHEREAS, a public hearing was held on such proposed Local Law on January 21, 2025, by the Common Council of the City of Oneida and proofs of publication of notices of such public hearings, as required by law, having been submitted and filed, and all persons desiring to be heard in connection with said proposed local law having been heard, and said proposed Local Law having been in the possession of the members of the Common Council of the City of Oneida in its final form in the manner required by Section 20 of the Municipal Home Rule of the State of New York; and

WHEREAS, the enactment of the Proposed Local Law has previously been determined to be an unlisted action and will have no significant effect on the environment, thus concluding the environmental review process; and

WHEREAS, it is in the public interest to enact said Proposed Local Law.

NOW, THEREFORE, it is

RESOLVED, that the Common Council of the City of Oneida, Madison County, New York, does hereby enact a Local Law of 2025 as follows:

**"CITY OF ONEIDA
PROPOSED LOCAL LAW OF 2025**

**A LOCAL LAW AMENDING CHAPTER 180, ARTICLE II OF THE CITY OF ONEIDA CODE TO PROHIBIT
PARKING ON CERTAIN SECTIONS OF BOSTON STREET AND PHILLIPS STREET**

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

SECTION 1. AUTHORITY.

This Local Law is enacted pursuant to the New York State Constitution and New York Municipal Home Rule Law §10.

SECTION 2. AMENDING §180-22 ("TOTAL PROHIBITION FOR CERTAIN PLACES") OF CHAPTER 180 ("VEHICLES AND TRAFFIC")

Section 180-22 of Article II ("Stopping, Standing and Parking") is hereby amended to add subsections (F) and (G) which shall read in their entirety as follows:

"(F) It shall be unlawful for any operator to park any motor vehicle on the southerly side of Phillips Street between its intersection with Chappell Street on the east side and Boston Street on the west side.

(G) It shall be unlawful for an operator to park any motor vehicle on the easternly side of Boston Street between its intersection with Phillips Street on the north side and McGuire Street on the south side."

SECTION 3. VALIDITY AND SEVERABILITY.

If any section or part of this Local Law is declared invalid or unconstitutional, it shall not be held to invalidate or impair, the validity, force or effect of any other section of this Local Law.

SECTION 4. EFFECTIVE DATE.

This Local Law shall take effect upon the filing with the office of the Secretary of State of the State of New York, as provided in Section 27 of the Municipal Home Rule Law."

Mayor Rossi:	<u>YES</u>
Councilor Szczerba:	<u>YES</u>
Councilor Laureti:	<u>ABSENT</u>
Councilor Hitchings:	<u>YES</u>
Councilor Winchell:	<u>ABSENT</u>
Councilor Pagano:	<u>YES</u>
Councilor Simchik:	<u>YES</u>

MOTION CARRIED

**ADOPT A LOCAL LAW CREATING A NEW CHAPTER 96, TITLED "MURALS," IN THE
CITY OF ONEIDA CODE**

RESOLUTION 25-31

Moved by Councilor Hitchings
Seconded by Councilor Pagano

WHEREAS, pursuant to the provisions of the Municipal Home Rule Law, an amended proposed Local Law, titled “A Local Law Creating a New Chapter 96, titled, “Murals,” in the City of Oneida Code” was presented and re-introduced at a Regular Meeting of the Common Council of the City of Oneida held on January 7, 2025; and

WHEREAS, public hearings were held on such proposed Local Law on December 17, 2024, and January 21, 2025, by the Common Council of the City of Oneida and proofs of publication of notices of such public hearings, as required by law, having been submitted and filed, and all persons desiring to be heard in connection with said proposed local law having been heard, and said proposed Local Law having been in the possession of the members of the Common Council of the City of Oneida in its final form in the manner required by Section 20 of the Municipal Home Rule of the State of New York; and

WHEREAS, the enactment of the Proposed Local Law has previously been determined to be an unlisted action for purposes of SEQRA and the Common Council has determined that a short environmental assessment form (EAF) was required in connection with this matter; and

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

WHEREAS, it is in the public interest to enact said Proposed Local Law.

NOW, THEREFORE, it is

RESOLVED, that 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 SEQRA; and it is further

RESOLVED, that the Common Council of the City of Oneida, Madison County, New York, does hereby enact a Local Law of 2025 as follows:

“City of Oneida
Local Law of 2025

A LOCAL LAW CREATING A NEW CHAPTER 96, TITLED “MURALS,”
IN THE CITY OF ONEIDA CODE

Be it enacted by the Common Council of the City of Oneida, as follows:
Section 1.

So that a new Chapter 96, titled “Murals,” shall be added to the Oneida City Code, which shall read, in its entirety, as follows:

“§96-1 Purpose.

The City of Oneida recognizes the aesthetic value of murals in the community. Artists, property owners and community residents are encouraged to work together in the creation of public art murals to beautify the environment and promote community pride. Any group or individual that wishes to paint or create a mural must obtain permission from the property owner, whether it is a private individual or public agency. Painting murals on public or private property without permission of the property owner is illegal and punishable by law. The City does not condone any type of illegal graffiti or art, irrespective of artistic content.

§96-2 Definitions.

As used in this Chapter, the following terms shall have the meanings indicated:

MURAL - A painting, mosaic, fresco, or other permanent artwork attached or applied directly to the outside of a structure. It is usually a graphic display that covers all or a portion of a wall and depicts a scene or event of natural, social, cultural or historic significance.

§96-3 General guidelines.

- A. These guidelines provide anyone who wants to install a mural with a reasonable process that safeguards both the interests of the community and those of the individual building/property owner. The guidelines are designed to assure that murals within the City of Oneida enhance the community's appearance without confusing drivers and/or pedestrians or causing any other negative impact on public safety or welfare.
- B. In reviewing a proposal for a mural, the following criteria shall be considered:
 - 1. Location, with consideration of safety issues, maintenance, and building geometry.
 - 2. Number of murals within close proximity.
 - 3. Size, with consideration of the local streetscape.

§96-4 Detailed guidelines and criteria.

In addition to the general guidelines above, the Planning Commission/ Zoning Board of Appeals shall evaluate mural proposals based on the following:

- A. Design.
 - 1. Relevance of the piece to the building or City, its values, culture, and people. Murals within the City of Oneida should be based on one or more of the following themes: natural beauty; history of the City; school pride; or other relevant themes.
 - 2. Prohibitions.
 - a. Murals shall not be allowed in any residential zoning district.
 - b. Murals with moving parts.
 - c. Murals affixed, applied, or mounted above, upon or suspended from any part of the roof of a structure.

- d. Murals that project away from a wall surface.
- B. Suitability of the work for outdoor display, including its maintenance and conservation requirements.
- C. Relationship of the work to the site and the community, especially how it serves to activate or enhance public space.
- D. Appropriateness of the scale of the artwork.
- E. Site selection considerations.
 - 1. Is the site visible and accessible to the public?
 - 2. Does the mural enhance the site where it is located?
 - 3. Does the mural enhance the overall public environment?
 - 4. The mural should not obscure windows or entranceways nor disrupt normal pedestrian circulation.
 - 5. The mural should not disrupt the site's landscaping and maintenance requirements.
 - 6. The mural should not be so large as to overwhelm adjacent architecture or become a visual distraction.
 - 7. The mural should not detract from its surroundings nor create blind spots where illegal activity can take place.
- F. Construction and maintenance.
 - 1. Murals shall be well designed and incorporate high-quality materials that enhance the overall appearance of the site and do not adversely affect the safe and efficient movement of vehicles and pedestrians. Materials may include paint or other media appropriate for exterior use, such as tile or mosaic. Materials shall be long-lasting and graffiti-resistant to the greatest extent possible.
 - 2. Colors, though vibrant, should be complementary and harmonious with the exterior colors of the building structure, as well as consistent with the chosen theme. Neon, fluorescent, or reflective-type colors or materials are discouraged.
 - 3. The mural shall be designed and supervised by a qualified artist/muralist, one with sufficient knowledge and experience with the application of mural materials.
 - 4. Mural size shall be determined by the wall surface to be covered. Smaller walls may be completely covered. On large walls, murals should be large enough to dominate the wall surface but not so large as to overwhelm the local streetscape. Generally, one mural shall be permitted per structure.
 - 5. Where the number of signs or a maximum square footage for signage applies to a particular location, a mural shall not count as a sign nor figure into the allowable square footage for signage.
 - 6. The proposed mural, by its design, construction, and location, shall not obscure or detract from the significant architectural features of the building structure, nor should the building's architecture be altered to accommodate the mural.

7. The proposed mural, by its design, construction, and location, shall not have an adverse impact on adjacent properties or permitted uses. If the mural requires special lighting or other related construction, all applicable permits shall be required as part of installation. No flashing or moving lighting is permitted. No internal illumination is allowed.
8. Routine maintenance of an artwork becomes the responsibility of the building owner and/or sponsoring group where the artwork is located. As part of the contractual requirements, the artist should develop a maintenance program in cooperation with the building owner or manager for the proper long-term care of the artwork.
9. If, for whatever reason, the mural falls into disrepair, the building owner shall be notified, in writing, and required to make necessary repairs within 120 days. If the repairs are not made within the specified time, the City reserves the right to repair the mural at the owner's expense, remove the mural at the owner's expense, or cover the mural with opaque paint at the owner's expense.
10. If property ownership is transferred, all obligations for mural construction, maintenance and repair shall be assumed by the property owner.

G. Application review and approval process.

1. An applicant desiring to install a mural on is required to submit a formal application, a scaled color rendering of the proposed project, and a photograph showing the building location of the proposed mural to the City offices for review by the Department of Code Enforcement and the Planning Commission/ Zoning Board of Appeals.
2. Mural proposals that do not meet the design criteria/guidelines may be denied by the Planning Commission/ Zoning Board of Appeals or accepted with required modifications.
3. Mural proposals must comply with any applicable New York State Department of Transportation rules and regulations regarding visual appearance and possible effect on traffic in the area of the mural. Written approval from New York State Department of Transportation may be required, depending upon location of the mural.
4. Submission of a formal application, subject to review and approval by the Department of Code Enforcement and the Planning Commission/ Zoning Board of Appeals, shall not be required for those murals that are in existence prior to the effective date of this Chapter; such murals may be continued, restored, repaired, and maintained, without application, review and approval.

H. Schedule.

1. Mural installation must begin within 180 days of approval and must be completed within six (6) months of the start date. If these dates are not met, the Planning Commission/ Zoning Board of Appeals may, at its discretion, revoke the mural permit. A one-time extension for an additional 60 days may be granted if the request is submitted in writing prior to the end of the initial 60-day period.

I. Decommissioning.

1. When a mural is at the end of its life span, or if the mural is to be removed without a

replacement mural, the surface of the building or structure shall be restored and repainted.”

SECTION 2. Validity and severability.

If any section or part of this local law is declared invalid or unconstitutional, it shall not be held to invalidate or impair the validity, force or effect of any other section of this local law.

SECTION 3. Effective date.

This local law shall be effective upon filing with the office of the Secretary of State.”

Mayor Rossi: NO
Councilor Szczerba: YES
Councilor Laureti: ABSENT
Councilor Hitchings: YES
Councilor Winchell: ABSENT
Councilor Pagano: YES
Councilor Simchik: YES

MOTION CARRIED

APPROVE BID-LIQUID IRON SALTS

RESOLUTION 25-32

Moved by Councilor Hitchings
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

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

Ayes: 5
Nays: 0
Absent: 2 (Laureti/Winchell)

MOTION CARRIED

APPROVE BID-LABORATORY SERVICES-ANALYTICAL

RESOLUTION 25-33

Moved by Councilor Hitchings
Seconded by Councilor Pagano

RESOLVED, to approve the lowest bid meeting specifications for Laboratory Services-Analytical to Certified Environmental, 7280 Caswell St., North Syracuse, NY 13212.

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

Absent: 2 (Laureti/Winchell)

MOTION CARRIED

APPROVE BID-POTASSIUM PERMANGANATE

RESOLUTION 25-34

Moved by Councilor Hitchings
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

RESOLVED, to approve the lowest bid meeting specifications for Potassium Permanganate to Carus Chemical LLC, 315 5TH St., Peru, IL 61354.

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

Absent: 2 (Laureti/Winchell)

MOTION CARRIED

APPROVE BID-LIQUID CHLORINE AND SODIUM HYPOCHLORITE

RESOLUTION 25-35

Moved by Councilor Hitchings
Seconded by Councilor Pagano

RESOLVED, to approve the lowest bid meeting specifications for Liquid Chlorine and Sodium Hypochlorite to Slack Chemical, PO Box 30, 465 South Clinton St., Carthage, NY 13619.

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

Absent: 2 (Laureti/Winchell)

MOTION CARRIED

APPROVE BID-LIQUID ZINC ORTHOPHOSPHATE AND LIQUID POLYPHOSPHATE

RESOLUTION 25-36

Moved by Councilor Hitchings
Seconded by Councilor Pagano

RESOLVED, to approve the lowest bid meeting specifications for Liquid Zinc Orthophosphate and Liquid Polyphosphate to Coyne Chemical, 3015 State Rd., Croydon, PA 19021.

Ayes: 5
Nays: 0
Absent: 2 (Laureti/Winchell)
MOTION CARRIED

SPECIAL EVENT-FALL FEST 2025

RESOLUTION 25-37

Moved by Councilor Hitchings
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

WHEREAS, pursuant to Section 9-11 of the Oneida City Code, the possession or consumption of alcohol is permitted on City-owned property if properly authorized by the City of Oneida Common Council; **and**

WHEREAS, the John R. Deschamps Sr., Police Benevolent Association, and employee organization representing the full-time, permanent police officers of the Oneida Police Department, and the Oneida City Parks and Recreation Department is sponsoring a "Fall Fest" to be held on October 4, 2025, during the hours of 11:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., on property owned by the City of Oneida located at Mott Street; **and**

WHEREAS, the Fall Fest is intended to provide a celebration that is recreational in nature for City residents and serves to improve the quality of life for residents; **and**

WHEREAS, as part of the Fall Fest activities, wines and alcoholic beverages will be available for purchase by the public; **and**

WHEREAS, it is the desire of the Common Council to promote public interest and participation in community events and to allow such sales by vendors; **now, therefore be it**

RESOLVED, that the City of Oneida Common Council does hereby authorize the distribution and consumption of wine and alcoholic beverages in a restricted area of Mott Street during the hours of the Fall Fest on October 4, 2025; **and be it further**

RESOLVED, that the City of Oneida Common Council does permit such distribution and sales of wine and alcoholic beverages by private vendors upon application to the City of Oneida Clerk and submission of proof of a general liability insurance policy in the amount of \$1,000,000, with the City of Oneida named as an additional insured, no less than 30 days prior to the event.

Ayes: 5
Nays: 0
Absent: 2 (Laureti/Winchell)

MOTION CARRIED

WATER DEPARTMENT SERVICE CHARGES (2025)

RESOLUTION 25-38

Moved by Councilor Hitchings
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

RESOLVED, to approve the 2025 Water Service Charges, as attached.

Ayes: 5
Nays: 0
Absent: 2 (Laureti/Winchell)

MOTION CARRIED

BUDGET TRANSFERS/AMENDMENTS

RESOLUTION 25-39

Moved by Councilor Hitchings
Seconded by Councilor Pagano

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.

	To	From
2024 Budget Adjustments		
\$3,155.00	001.1420.0410.0000	001.8020.0101.0000

Legal Litigation

Planning Salaries

To re-allocate funds to cover 2024 legal expenses

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

Absent: 2 (Laureti/Winchell)

MOTION CARRIED

APPROVE BID-LIQUID POLYMER

RESOLUTION 25-40

Moved by Councilor Hitchings

Seconded by Councilor Simchik

RESOLVED, to approve the lowest bid meeting specifications for Liquid Polymer to Polydyne Inc., 1 Chemical Plant Road, Riceboro, GA 31323.

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

Absent: 2 (Laureti/Winchell)

MOTION CARRIED

AGREEMENT-NELSON ASSOCIATES (ART SMOLINSKI)

RESOLUTION 25-41

Moved by Councilor Hitchings

Seconded by Councilor Pagano

RESOLVED, to authorize the City Manager to sign an agreement with Nelson Associates Architectural Engineering, 1 North Park Row, Clinton, NY 13323 for professional engineering services for the City of Oneida Water Department for February and March 2025, NAAE Proposal No. 6143-A.

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

Absent: 2 (Laureti/Winchell)

MOTION CARRIED

AGREEMENT-POLICE MUTUAL AID (CITY OF SHERRILL)

RESOLUTION 25-42

Moved by Councilor Hitchings
Seconded by Councilor Pagano

RESOLVED, to authorize the City Manager to sign a Police Mutual Aid Agreement with the City of Sherrill, 373 Sherrill Rd., Sherrill, NY 13461.

Ayes: 5
Nays: 0
Absent: 2 (Laureti/Winchell)
MOTION CARRIED

CONTRACT-DRESCHER & MALECKI LLP (2024 YEAR END AUDIT)

RESOLUTION 25-43

Moved by Councilor Hitchings
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

RESOLVED, to authorize the City Manager to sign a contract with Drescher & Malecki LLP, 2721 Transit Rd., Suite 111, Elma, NY 14059, to provide Annual Financial Statement Audit Services for the City of Oneida, for year-ended December 31, 2024.

Ayes: 5
Nays: 0
Absent: 2 (Laureti/Winchell)
MOTION CARRIED

NEW BUSINESS: Discussion with the City Assessor regarding a citywide reassessment

City Assessor Rebecca Lennon, at the request of City Manager Lovell, provided information on a citywide assessment. She referenced a PowerPoint presentation she had developed and submitted to the Council prior to the meeting. Additionally, she noted that extra copies were available for any residents who had questions.

Assessor Lennon discussed the following:

- The City of Oneida has not conducted a full city-wide revaluation since 2007.
- New York State recommends reassessments be done every 4 to 6 years.
- A reassessment does not necessarily mean taxes will increase; tax rates are determined by the

levy. Depending on the budget and its components, taxes may or may not be affected.

- Individual property assessments only occur when triggered by building permits, demolition permits, or property sales. As a result, homeowners who have purchased property in the last 5–10 years are being reassessed for improvements, while those who have owned their homes for decades have not had their assessments updated in nearly 20 years.
- This has created an imbalance, and a reassessment would help distribute the tax burden more equitably.
- The State determines an Equalization Rate based on recent sales and market values. Currently, the City of Oneida’s rate stands at 71%, whereas it should be at or near 100%.
- Recent homebuyers are paying taxes at a higher rate, while at 71%, the City’s taxable property values amount to approximately \$488 million. If the Equalization Rate were at 100%, the taxable value would be about \$692 million, representing a significant increase in taxable property, excluding exemptions.
- A city-wide revaluation is a complex and costly process requiring the engagement of an external firm. State lands and utilities are excluded, as their values are assessed by the State.
- The City’s sole Assessor, with no additional office staff, stated that conducting the re-assessment alone would be impossible. The process could take up to a year to complete.
- The estimated cost ranges from \$350,000 to \$600,000, with the possibility of bonding for the expense. The hired firm would manage all public relations, data collection, photography, and required documentation.

The City Attorney inquired about the availability of grant funding for the citywide assessment. Attorney Bell stated that she was aware that the State encourages municipalities to update their Comprehensive Plans every 10 years and strongly recommends re-evaluations every 6-7 years and was wondering if the Assessor was aware of any potential options to assist with the cost. Assessor Lennon advised that she was not aware of any specific grants; however, she noted that the State offers a reimbursement program that provides between \$2 to \$3 per parcel. City Attorney Bell suggested that potential funding sources be explored when the Request for Proposals (RFP) is issued.

City Manager Lovell stated that this would be included in the RFP and expressed his belief that it could qualify for a grant, emphasizing that this is just the first step in an important discussion. While attending budget discussions, Manager Lovell noted that the City is more than 20 years overdue for an assessment, with the last one conducted in 2006-2007. He pointed out that the previous administration’s decision to slash taxes at that time resulted in minimal long-term benefits for the City, despite the significant investment of time, effort, and money.

Moving forward, it is essential to prioritize government efficiency and proper taxation. Manager Lovell emphasized that this issue warrants consideration and stated that he made the decision to bring it before the Council.

City Clerk, Sandy LaPera advised that as she does the City Newsletter and has had residents reach out looking for an update on the Hotel Oneida, she reached out to Ed Riley who is the developer for the project. She read his statement as:

“With the completion of the Parking amendment in January’s City meeting to our previous Site Plan and special Use Permit approvals, we are now in a position to move forward with the project, finalize financing and execute the DRI with the State. I anticipate that we will be beginning demolition work within the next

2 to 3 months and follow with renovation construction thereafter. We are shooting for a opening of the project in mid-2026.

Councilor Szczerba inquired about the status of an employee who has been placed on administrative leave. City Attorney Bell recommended that Council go into Executive Session to discuss this as it is a personnel matter and that no action would be taken.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

RESOLUTION 25-44

Motion to go into Executive Session by Councilor Hitchings
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

RESOLVED, that the meeting is hereby adjourned to Executive Session at 6:57 p.m. to discuss a personnel matter with no action taken.

Ayes: 5
Nays: 0
Absent: 2 (Laureti/Winchell)

MOTION CARRIED

PRESENT: ☒ Mayor ☒ City Manager ☒ Council ☒ City Attorney
ABSENT: Councilor Laureti/Councilor Winchell

1. Discussion was held to discuss a personnel matter with no action taken.

Motioned by Councilor Pagano
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

RESOLVED, that Executive Session is hereby adjourned to the regular meeting at 7:45p.m.

Ayes: 5
Nays: 0
Absent: 2 (Laureti/Winchell)

MOTION CARRIED

Motion to adjourn by Councilor Pagano
Seconded by Councilor Szczerba

Ayes: 5
Nays: 0
Absent: 2 (Laureti/Winchell)

MOTION CARRIED

The regular meeting is hereby adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

CITY OF ONEIDA

Sandra LaPera, City Clerk