

MINUTES OF THE COMMON COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
SEPTEMBER 2, 2025

A meeting of the Common Council of the City of Oneida, NY was held on the second day of September 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input 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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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"/>	Public Safety Comm. Dave Jones	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
City Clerk Sandy LaPera	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Attorney Paul Smyth	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Fire Chief Scott Jones	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Police Chief Steve Lowell	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance/Roll Call

PUBLIC COMMENT

Brian Bortree-Leonard St., Oneida

- Reported reckless use of e-bikes on sidewalks, ignoring stop signs, and carrying children without helmets; fears a serious accident.
- Suggested tightening youth curfew from midnight to 10 p.m. due to kids riding after dark without lights and no purpose to be out at later hours
- Mentioned cars still speeding through neighborhoods “like a racetrack.”
- Questioned lack of police presence, urged hiring 5–6 additional officers in the upcoming budget.

Cat House (in support of Liberty Resources)-Elizabeth St., Oneida, accompanied by Rachel Chenel

- Spoke publicly for the first time to support Liberty Resources' proposal.
- Supervises the Madison Crisis Respite, serving much of the county's homeless population.
- It was reported that 61 people sought help with homelessness in the past year, excluding unreported cases due to fear or stigma.
- Noted the absence of shelters locally, leaving domestic violence victims and disabled adults without options.
- Shared, her mother-in-law would be homeless without family support despite being a lifelong resident.
- Stressed these are neighbors and lifelong residents being displaced.
- Urged support for the program as a vital community resource.

Joe Magliocca, Grand St., Oneida

- Addressed agenda item #2 regarding a long-delayed project related to the Rail Trail.
- Recalled efforts dating back 10 years, when the city first received a verbal agreement from the former property owner to allow the trail through old track land.
- Described repeated but unsuccessful attempts by city officials to secure an easement or property sale; the property owner was unresponsive.
- Noted the city moved ahead with landscaping and improvements, resulting in 6 million uses of that trail section.
- Praised current DPW work and said with cooperation of the new property owner, Dave Stirpe, the project will be even stronger.
- Thanked the Mayor, City Manager, Council, and City Attorney for their efforts in moving the project forward.

Adam Best (in support of Liberty Resources)

- Did not initially plan to speak but signed up to support his girlfriend (Rachel Chenel) and Cat House, both connected to Liberty Resources.
- Said he has learned more about the program since his girlfriend began working there.
- Observed that many people in the community turn a blind eye to homelessness, drug addiction, and mental health crises.
- Praised Liberty Resources for the services it provides locally and across New York State.
- Said the program is worthy of any community support available.

Police Chief Steve Lowell (responding to a question presented by Councilor Szczerba pertaining to staffing)

- Expressed pride in leading a unified department providing high-quality service; emphasized commitment to meeting public expectations with training, tools, and technology.
- Noted five recruits in the academy and six in field training; one recent retirement leaves one active vacancy. Staffing levels fluctuate due to vacations and other absences, impacting coverage.
- Acknowledged community complaints about traffic enforcement (Middle Road, West Elm Street, etc.). Limited staffing means officers can't be everywhere at once, but patrols are directed to problem areas.

- Addressed e-bikes, noting 2024 changes to New York State Vehicle and Traffic Law. The department hosted state-sponsored training in the spring, resulting in more tickets and enforcement. May need to explore local code changes.
- Referring to a 2022 workload analysis by NYS DCJS that confirmed staffing challenges; administrative demands have outpaced the city's job updates, leaving the department behind in capacity.
- Said budget proposal will be reasonable but include adjustments reflecting the growing need for police. Continued investment is necessary to sustain enforcement actions.
- Praised the last eight hires as dedicated and community-minded, confident they will carry the department forward for the next 20 years.
- Announced the addition of a new crisis worker, Julie Mosley, whose first official day was last Monday.
- Julie Mosley is a crisis worker through the Rural Violent Crime Reduction Initiative and will serve as liaison to County resources.
- She is available Monday through Friday, generally from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., to connect people in crisis to services quickly.
- She brings prior community experience and was described as a fantastic asset to the department.

OLD BUSINESS: None

REPORTS:

Mayor's Report

- Announced continuation of Trick-or-Treat Street on Cleveland Ave, an event started last year.
- Details are not finalized yet; encouraged community members to volunteer to help block streets at barricades.
- Praised last year's event, noting a Parks and Recreation worker brought DJ equipment, making it enjoyable for families.
- Said more information will be shared soon.

City Manager's Report

- Reported budgets were submitted on time and are now under internal review with Lee Ann.
- Said they will be meeting with department heads individually throughout the month.
- It is anticipated that budget meetings will begin in October once dates are set.
- Addressed vacancy in the Chamberlain's office and outlined temporary coverage plan.
- Noted that the current City Chamberlain resigned, with Friday (August 29, 2025) as her last day.
- Chamberlain office hours will be Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. (with lunch break 12–12:30), staff will rotate to provide coverage.
- Noted this arrangement is temporary until a replacement is hired and asked for patience while coverage is maintained.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Moved by Councilor Hitchings
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the regular meeting of August 19, 2025, are hereby approved as presented.

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

MOTION CARRIED

APPROVAL OF WARRANT

Moved by Councilor Simchik
Seconded by Councilor Laureti

RESOLVED, that Warrant No. 17, checks and ACH payments in the amount of \$651,120.89 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 (Winchell/Pagano)

MOTION CARRIED

BUDGET TRANSFERS/AMENDMENTS

RESOLUTION 25-162

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.

To	From
2025 Budget Adjustments	
\$27,200.52	003.8110.0200.0000 003.0022.2680.0000

Sewer Equipment

Sewer Insurance Recovery

To re-allocate funds for the purchase of necessary equipment that was damaged during the 6/22/25 storm and reimbursed by insurance

\$10,000.00

001.5110.0402.0000

001.0001.0912.0000

Tree Contract

General Fund Balance

To allocate funds needed to address tree trimming and removal related to the June storm event

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

Absent: 2 (Winchell/Pagano)

MOTION CARRIED

DISCUSSION

Councilor Laureti asked what the first line item for \$27,200.52 in sewer equipment represented. City Manager Lovell explained that the amount covered water pumps, hose stations, and related equipment used to remove water from homes after the recent storm. He noted that debris and silt from the collection system caused damage to the equipment. While staff addressed as many homes as possible, the equipment ultimately absorbed the impact.

CONVEYANCE OF AN ACCESS AGREEMENT-DAVID STIRPE

RESOLUTION 25-163

Moved by Councilor Hitchings

Seconded by Councilor Simchik

WHEREAS, David Stirpe is owner of real property located at 558 Broadway Street in the City of Oneida, known as Tax Map No. 38.48-1-47, access to and over which is needed to complete the Oneida Rail Trail; and

WHEREAS, the City of Oneida is owner of real property located on Broadway Street in the City of Oneida, known as Tax Map No. 38.48-1-69.2, over which David Stirpe does desire access in order to obtain ingress and egress to his property; and

WHEREAS, in consideration for an access easement from the City of Oneida, David Stirpe does desire to provide the City with an easement for Rail Trail purposes.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT

RESOLVED, that in exchange for the Rail Trail easement, the City of Oneida Common Council does hereby approve the conveyance of an access easement, by means of an easement agreement, over lands owned by the City of Oneida located on Broadway Street, known as Tax Map No. 38.48-1-69.2, to David Stirpe, owner of real property located at 558 Broadway Street, known as Tax Map

No. 38.48-1-47, for residential ingress and egress purposes to the real property located at 558 Broadway Street, and authorizing the City Manager to execute any and all documents to facilitate such conveyance.

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

Absent: 2 (Winchell/Pagano)

MOTION CARRIED

DISCUSSION

The Mayor further added to what Joe Magliocca previously stated during Public Comment, noting that the project will connect the rail trail from the high school trail to Allen Park, completing the pathway through the area.

NEW BUSINESS: None

PRESENTATION: Liberty Resources-Transitional Housing Project

Presentation by Liberty Resources on Transitional Housing Proposal

- Proposal for new transitional housing facility at 252 Liberty Street in Oneida.
- Planned building will include 14 separate bedrooms, large kitchens, and common rooms, designed as a holistic program.
- Facility will be staffed 24/7 with extensive safety and security measures including surveillance, door access systems, and exterior lighting.
- Current structure on site is not historic; plan is to remove existing building and construct a new one on the property.
- All referrals will go through Madison County's Single Point of Access (SPOA) system, overseen by Tisha Cook, Director of Community Services.
- Admissions restricted to Madison County residents only; priority given to local homeless individuals to reduce street homelessness.
- Maximum stay will be 90 days; focus on connecting residents with housing, vocational programs, health care, and therapy.
- Behavioral contracts will be used to address issues such as drug use or rule violations; residents may be referred to rehabilitation facilities if necessary.
- Office of Mental Health will regulate and license the program; residents cannot be discharged without a safe placement.
- Program intended to relieve stress on police, emergency rooms, and other local services by providing structured support.
- Liberty Resources currently owns four properties and leases others in the city; maintains strong landlord relationships to support client housing.
- Success data from other Liberty Resources programs shows consistent outcomes year to year, except during COVID disruptions.

- Liberty Resources operates additional apartment treatment programs to help participants transition toward independent living; these are not group homes but scattered apartments, including two within the 218 Liberty Street building.
- Crisis Respite program is also located at 218 Liberty and overseen locally. Other residential programs exist under OPWDD, run separately.
- Goal of all programs is to gradually transition participants into self-sufficiency, including managing medications, therapy, and housing stability.
- New construction at 252 Liberty Street will also create community benefits:
- 14 permanent full-time professional positions (staffed across three shifts for 24/7 coverage).
- 45 construction jobs are expected each month during the year-plus building phase.
- Anticipated economic impact from workers and staff patronizing local businesses.
- This proposal is part of a statewide initiative, with 14 similar programs awarded across New York.
- Facility will work in partnership with other programs in Syracuse, Utica, and beyond if placements closer to home are needed.
- Viewed as a “pre-Venture House” level of care, designed to bring in people currently on the streets, not engaged with services, and connect them with support.
- Acts as both an entry point into services and a fallback option for individuals leaving Venture House or apartment programs who may need additional short-term stabilization.
- Overall goal is to reduce homelessness and street encampment in Oneida by providing a structured, service-oriented pathway to long-term stability.

DUE PROCESS HEARINGS-WATER/SEWER BILLS
COMMON COUNCIL CHAMBERS
109 N. MAIN ST. ONEIDA, NY 13421
SEPTEMBER 2, 2025

CUSTOMER NAME	PROPERTY ADDRESS	OWNER	ACCOUNT #	AMOUNT
Mary Smith		Same		\$170.00

Did not attend Due Process Hearing

EXECUTIVE SESSION: To discuss a personnel matter, with no action taken afterwards

EXECUTIVE SESSION

RESOLUTION 25-164

Motioned by Councilor Szczerba
Seconded by Councilor Hitchings

RESOLVED, that the meeting is hereby adjourned to Executive Session at 7:16p.m. to discuss a personnel matter, with no action taken afterwards.

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

PRESENT: ☒ Mayor ☒ City Manager ☒ Council ☒ Other Attorney Paul Smyth
City Manager Lovell left at 7:50pm

1. Discussion was held to: Discuss a personnel matter with no action taken afterwards.

Motioned by Councilor Simchik
Seconded by Councilor Szczerba

RESOLVED, that Executive Session is hereby adjourned to the regular meeting at 8:08p.m.

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

Motion to adjourn by Councilor Simchik
Seconded by Councilor Szczerba

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

The regular meeting is hereby adjourned at 8:09 p.m.

CITY OF ONEIDA

Sandra LaPera, City Clerk