

**MINUTES OF THE COMMON COUNCIL  
SPECIAL MEETING  
NOVEMBER 15, 2021**

A special meeting of the Common Council of the City of Oneida, NY was held on the fifteenth day of November, 2021 at 6:00 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 Thomas Simchik

<u>Attendees</u>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Absent</b>	<b>Arrived Late</b>
Mayor Acker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Councilor Earl	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Councilor Laureti	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Councilor Coulthart	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Councilor Kinville	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Councilor DuBois	<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 Clerk Sandy LaPera	<input type="checkbox"/>	Deputy City Clerk Andrea Hitchings	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Comptroller Lee Ann Wells	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Police Chief John Little	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		Public Safety Com. Kevin Salerno	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

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**2022 CITY OF ONEIDA BUDGET DISCUSSION**

POLICE DEPARTMENT

Deputy Mayor Simchik asked if all received the updates to the Proposed Budget. All confirmed receipt.

Police Chief John Little was welcomed and the Chief confirmed that all received a copy of his narrative and stated that he would be referencing this throughout the meeting. A copy of the Chief's narrative packet is received and [attached](#) hereto.

**Salaries Police 001.3120.0101.000**

- Chief Little stated they are putting in for 3 new positions and this remained in the Mayor's budget. Two of these positions will be for road patrol on road shifts, and the third will be a supervisory Sergeant position which will lead up the Discovery process and oversee the evidence room. This Sergeant position has been discussed with the Union, as far as how they would like to deploy this,

as there has to be agreements with the Union when there is a schedule change. An agreement needs to be reached, and the Chief does not foresee any issues with the shift scheduling negotiations. The two road positions will have one day shift position and one hybrid shift position, but it all depends on the discussion with the Union for scheduling. The idea is to bolster day shift and have extra manpower in the evenings, so they are not short staffed but have an officer or extra manpower for warrants or for special assignments to assist in investigations to help with cases rather than being out on the road all the time.

- Councilor Laureti asked how many people the Supervisor will oversee. Chief Little responded that the issue is that with the Discovery Law, right now we have an officer assigned as an evidence tech but more and more, they are more of a processor for discovery, and it has made the Account Records Clerk take on more work that has never had to be done before. The Chief cited an example that since the Discovery Law, when you arrest someone, there is a link where the entire case has to be uploaded to the DA office, and there are strict timelines as to when all of this has to be completed. All files including video, have to be processed right away and made available. It is a very time-consuming process, so the new Sergeant will have more authority to request the evidence needed from the officers and expedite the process.
- In answer to Councilor Laureti's question, the Chief continued that It will be more of an administrative roll and oversee the Evidence Tech. This will allow the Evidence Tech to be able to catch up on the Evidence Room duties. Councilor Earl questioned how many people are on the day shift and night shift. The Chief stated that it depends. Different days are different numbers. Some days there might be 5. Some days there might be 3 plus a Lieutenant. On average there are 4. Some days there might be 2, and 2 is not a safe number to patrol 22 square miles. Scheduling differs, as sometimes a lieutenant might come in half way through the patrol shift to be half on each shift. Earl further questioned if there are more on nights. The Chief confirmed this stating that there is a Y shift where someone works 7pm to 3am, so there is more coverage during the midnight to 3 am timeframe. Councilor Coulthart questioned if the administrative position has to be a Sergeant, and the Chief responded yes. Because that position will be giving command decisions, it needs to be of a supervisory nature to ensure that proper respect for the authority of the rank of position is given. The Chief further stated this position will be used with updating policies. The Public Safety Commissioner had been assisting with this but has been tied up with negotiations.
- Councilor Earl questioned the reason that the policies are not being updated. The Chief replied that it is part of the accreditation process, and they are being updated as they go along. Some of the policies have not been updated in quite some time. Chief Meeker had been trying to update but had the same issue with time constraints and no staff to devote to this. The Chief believes there is someone dedicated to the accreditation process, and Councilor Laureti confirmed this. There is not enough manpower to do the accreditation process at this point. The Chief expanded on the CEASE program and stated that it is run in collaboration with the Sheriff's Department. He further stated they have a good partnership with them.
- Councilor Earl questioned where we are with the OT line as of right now. The Chief responded that as of this morning the OT is negative \$3,281.00. This is currently pulling from the Salary line because the 2 replacement hires for this year were not hired until March and April. Deputy Mayor Simchik posed the question to Council about their thoughts on adding the new hires, to which all agreed to listen to the full presentation before deciding, and they will come back to this topic.

### **Overtime Police 001.3120.0102.000**

- This line is increased for this year. As of right now, we are over this budget line for the year. This year is partially due to the struggle with COVID, injuries, and 2 open spots. Overtime earlier this year was highest, even higher than the summer. It has now evened off since. He feels that the \$75,000 for next year will cover the needs for next year. Councilor Laureti inquired if the new hires are approved, will the Overtime Expense go down, to which the Chief explained that it will not go down until the new hires are fully trained and ready to work a full shift. The Chief further stated that even if it is a lateral transfer, the new hire would have to field train for 4-6 weeks. With canvassing for the position through Civil Service, it will take even longer and longer still if the new hire is in the Police Academy. The PD would not see the new hire until the following year if the new hire is entering the Academy. Councilor Earl asked if anyone was eligible to retire, and the Chief responded that he is the only one eligible to retire.
- Councilor Laureti also inquired how it will work if the OT is fully expensed and there is nothing left in the Salary line and we lowered the amount from \$75,000 to \$70,000 or \$65,000. Comptroller Wells responded that if there was a shortfall, it would be taken from the Fund Balance. Deputy Mayor Simchik asked Councilor Laureti if he was proposing lowering the number, and Councilor Laureti responded that it really does not matter because if they need the money for overtime, it has to be paid regardless of what number is in the budget. He is entertaining ideas. Lowering the amount might not make a difference. The Chief stated that it is a struggle to find people.
- Councilor Earl questioned the timeline of new hires and the Chief responded that it is hard to tell. It could potentially take months, and ideally canvassing would start in December. It would be a heavy lift to have all 3 right away. Councilor Earl suggested tiering the new hires so that some would be hired right away, and some could be later on in the year with a goal of having all 3 by June. This would allow for a lower budget amount for the months without the new hire to decrease that budget line. Commissioner Salerno said that it depends on whether or not the hiring is internal or a lateral move. It is hard to say until the person is hired.
- Councilor Coulthart questioned if there were any internal candidates for the Sergeant position, and the Chief stated that he would have to consult with Civil Service, but there is a good pool from the list currently. Commissioner Salerno stated that we have to hire internally unless the outside candidate took a test that matched our test perfectly. This would be determined by the Civil Service Commission. More than likely it would be internal hire. The 3 positions would be hired at the base rate of pay.
- Councilor Coulthart questioned if the total budget for 2022 includes the 3 new hires to which the Chief confirmed that it does. Councilor Earl stated that with moving the money around, we could potentially save about \$5,600 a month until the new hires come in. This money could be used for overtime if needed. Discussion continued about options to modify the salary and overtime lines. Council is concerned with upcoming years and possible expenses.

### **STEP Overtime 001.3120.0108.000**

- The Chief felt it important to give this budget item a separate line. This line targets areas where we have our most accidents including aggressive and distracted driving along with traffic details to address these items. This expense would be a wash with the revenue received from grants.

### **DWI Overtime 0013120.0109.000**

- Likewise, this line is also matched with money received from the County through the State for DWI expenses. This expense matches the revenue line. This was previously in the Overtime Budget line. The Chief stated that whatever is expensed, we will get reimbursement.

### **Comp Time Buyout 001.3120.0113.000**

- This is a contractual item. The Chief did send out a notice to employees to remind them of who would like to buy it out this year. It is hard to forecast who will do it. There is a state limit for Comp Time of 480 hours. Councilor Kinville inquired if they can roll it over, and the Chief confirmed they can roll it over and that this is addressed in the negotiations.

### **Cameras 001.3120.0202.000**

- Chief Little stated that he did not spend the allotted \$5,000 for this year, as the PD secured a grant for \$50,000. Of the \$50,000 grant, \$20,000 is for the mobile cameras which are on order and waiting on due to the supply issues. The other \$30,000 of the grant will be for filling in blank spaces. There is still a capital project in the amount of \$30,000 for the radios which this grant can also be used towards. The County is supposed to be giving us some money as well. Chief Little stated that they are “scroungers” and are not proud to state that they patchwork some things in order to save money. They do their best to save money by obtaining grants and networking to receive used equipment. This can only be done as long as it does not sacrifice safety in the process. Comptroller Wells stated that this is why she does not bond right away. She waits for the grant money to come through and then will bond if the money is still needed. Councilor Earl questioned that since they are receiving the grant funding, do they still need the \$5,000 for this, and the Chief replied that they do still need it since things will break, and they do need money for maintenance and replacement of parts. The Chief also explained that the DA’s office has asked that the OPD upgrade their interview room equipment and have to start moving toward this. They may be able to secure a grant for this future project, and they also may use some of this requested \$5,000 to start the upgrade. Much of their equipment is out of date and can take hours to transfer data over. Councilor Laureti stated that the County is upgrading the system and maybe the City can take on the County’s old equipment. Councilor Laureti will reach out to the Chief with specifics.

### **Side by Side ATV- Rail Trail Patrol 001.3120.0203.000**

- The money for this is included in the ARPA funding. The Chief explained currently they have a Green Gator that was procured years ago through the military program that allowed us to get equipment. The Green Gator is getting older, and they do not have anything to patrol the Rail Trail or Parks properly. The \$10,000 is for a low-end Side by Side, and perhaps that could be increased a bit through the ARPA. Councilor Earl stated that the Side by Side is very important and suggested possibly taking some money from the Salaries Line for the first couple months and add this to the ATV budget which would increase the amount to get a better ATV. This would allow the money to stay in the ARPA to be used for something else later on. Deputy Mayor Simchik asked when the ATV would be ordered. Chief Little stated that the other issue is supply. The PD is still waiting on the vehicles. Comptroller Wells stated that we need to know where it is coming from so the PO can be done. Chief Little stated that it is a good idea to get a higher end ATV if possible and budget for more than the \$10,000. Councilor Earl agreed and further stated that the officers need it to be able to navigate through the parks effectively and safely. The Chief further commented that he would rather see the 2 positions right in the beginning of the year and wait on the 3<sup>rd</sup> position a little longer if they plan to use this money to fund the ATV. Comptroller Wells reminded Council to keep in mind that \$10,000 is not going to change the Fund Balance that much. Council needs to decide where the money is coming from in order to complete the PO and it cannot be reversed after that. Deputy Mayor Simchik asked if the \$10,000 is realistic. Chief Little commented that what they need for the ATV expense is closer to \$18,000. Councilor Earl proposed that we put the ATV back in the budget and remove it from the ARPA. She added this is

something that is needed in the Spring. Councilor Laureti commented that we don't want to short the Salaries budget. She further proposed that we take the money needed for the ATV from Salaries line and move to the ATV line. Deputy Mayor Simchik reminded the group that Council needs to approve the positions and the Salaries line before the amount for this expense can be transferred out of ARPA and back into the budget. Councilor Kinville questioned what the salary would be for the new hires. Comptroller Wells stated she can provide the group with the starting salaries so they can determine how much can be moved to the ATV budget line. Councilor Laureti questioned if the Sergeant position duties for the requested position can be delegated to an existing Sergeant. Chief Little commented that no, this would not work, since the current Sergeants have specific duties including supervising, handling calls, complaints, and reports. They do not have time so this would not work.

#### **Contracts 001.3120.0403.000**

- Currently over budget, so this has been increased. Included within this are contract expenses for copy machine maintenance, range fees, archive maintenance, Live Scan for fingerprints, Live Scan maintenance, Law Books, etc.

The Chief discussed the remainder of the PD budget for Material Supplies, Clothing, Chief's Expense, Radio Maintenance and Repair, Training, Education Expense, and Travel to which there were no questions posed.

Councilor Earl questioned the Chief about overall calls related to COVID and if the calls, mainly violence related, have decreased since last year. The Chief responded that arrests are up 15% from last year and that this alone should be the reason they approve the extra manpower. He further stated that he cannot say if it is COVID related or not. The Chief further explained that Bail Reform has also created issues with officers having to spend more time arresting the same person repeatedly. Deputy Mayor Simchik asked if anyone had anything further for the Chief to which all stated that they had nothing further. Councilor Earl thanked the Chief for his thorough descriptions. Deputy Mayor Simchik thanked the Chief and stated that they may need to meet with him again after the Council Meeting on November 16<sup>th</sup>, when Council discusses the final budget. Before leaving, Chief Little expressed that they recently lost their Account Clerk to a different employer and that traditionally Public Service has had stability. It is difficult to let someone leave because they tell you they are making more money elsewhere, but you are not able to offer more. Clerks and especially Management Confidential is the lifeblood that runs the whole machine, and they definitely need to have Council go above and beyond for them.

The Police Department concluded their budget discussion at 7:10 pm.

There was a short break from the Meeting from 7:10 pm to 7:15 pm. During the break, Councilor Earl and Comptroller Wells discussed the salary amount for the PD that could be moved to the ATV line. If the PD holds off on hiring someone until May, there will be about \$20,000 available to purchase the ATV. Comptroller Wells stated that Council should review the ARPA budget and stated that some of the numbers are able to be changed. For example, the sound system is not going to be \$100,000. Certain items there is no room to move. The smaller items will be able to be moved back to the Department's budget without much of an impact on the Fund Balance.

After the break, Council resumed 2022 Proposed Budget discussion for various departments.

### **Police Department Further Discussion-**

- Deputy Mayor Simchik asked the group what their thought is on approving the new positions for the PD. Councilor Earl is in favor of approving all 3 positions. She feels there are a lot of changes with technology etc. There are not a lot of people out patrolling, especially at night. She feels we need to show the public that we care about their safety. The first 2 positions would be the Patrol and then the last one in May will be for the Sergeant position. She also wondered if we can utilize other departments with crossover of the shifts. She cited examples of possibly having the County, State, Nation PD, etc. assist our officers. Deputy Mayor Simchik stated that those departments are short of help as well. Comptroller Wells stated that the PD does an excellent job with the grants and Assistant Chief Lowell has been devoting a lot of time to this to try to save money. She wanted to make sure the Council is aware of how good of a job they are doing. Councilor Coulthart is in favor of the Sergeant position and one patrol officer. Councilor Earl sought clarification from Councilor Coulthart and he stated that he is in favor of 2 new positions not 3. Deputy Mayor Simchik stated that this will result in saving about \$61,000 for 2022 proposed budget. Councilor Earl is supportive of this thought as well, but she would prefer the 3 new hire total, with hiring 2 right away and the other in May. Councilor Laureti has concerns for next year, and once we go through the ARPA funds, how can we sustain the PD numbers. Other Councilors commented that the ARPA and Salary are not related, and the only ARPA item PD may need is for the ATV. Councilor Laureti further questioned what the actual budget is after the revenues are considered. Comptroller Wells stated that the revenues are about \$56,000. This is not a big difference.
- Discussion continued on the PD new hire request. Deputy Mayor Simchik stated that he agrees with Councilor Coulthart that we should hire 2. Councilor Earl agreed with this. Councilor Laureti stated that it would be nice to have all. Councilor Coulthart questioned the crime that is going on at Mount Hope and the Rail Trail. Councilor Earl explained the various crimes that are occurring at Mount Hope and Duross specifically and why having the ATV is important. Councilor Laureti suggested getting another ATV from military surplus to save money, and Councilor Earl commented that she has no doubt they will get the best deal possible. Councilor Laureti further stated that he would love to do 3 but if every department is asking for a lot, we have to cut somewhere. We may have to cut some other departments requests for extra help too. If the DPW positions are cut then money can be moved to the PD.
- Discussion concluded on the new hires. Councilor Coulthart stated that he is supportive of the new Sergeant position, for a total of 6 Sergeants and having 14 patrol officers total when all is said and done. All but Councilor Kinville were supportive of this, as she would like to see all of the positions approved. Deputy Mayor Simchik reminded the group that we will need to continue discussions on this with Chief Little on November 16<sup>th</sup> and include Councilor DuBois, who was absent for this meeting.

### **DPW Further Discussion-**

- The DPW already has a new position that is approved this year for an MEO. Deputy Mayor Simchik commented that there will be DPW workers retiring and that the driver positions are very important. DPW is requesting a CDL Laborer position and is requesting a Mason. The MEO requested on the 2022 budget is being filled now so they cannot cut that. Councilor Laureti questioned if the Laborer position can be trained in masonry skills, and all agree that this will need to be discussed with Civil Service and Jeff Rowe. Further discussion included what the masonry requirements are and the possibility of eliminating the Mason and using a Laborer for these duties. Councilor Kinville questioned what we would have to pay from the 2023 budget that we

are using the ARPA for next year. Deputy Mayor Simchik commented salt, tree, and sidewalk expenses. Councilor Kinville stated that if we do the sidewalks and trees this year, it will be a noticeable difference for the public. Councilor Earl further commented that the \$200,000 should get us far with the sidewalks. The sidewalks are weather permitting too. Councilor Earl suggested we do half this year and half next. Councilor Kinville reminded all that if we only use the \$100,000 from ARPA, then we can use it next year anyway. There is a sidewalk list going back a few years of people waiting to take advantage of the 50/50 program. Councilor Coulthart reminded the group that this is the reason the Mason is wanted. They anticipate the large amount of sidewalk work. Councilor Laureti reiterated the needs again for the DPW stating that they are asking for a MEO, Summer Help, Laborer, and Mason. Some felt the Mason should be kept and others felt the Laborer should be kept. They will discuss with Jeff Rowe during final budget discussions on November 16, 2021. Comptroller Wells will find out more specifics for the Mason and Laborer/Mason job duties and bring to discussion on November 16<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Parks and Rec Discussion Further Discussion-**

- Discussion occurred about the nature of the seasonal employee and having to pay the unemployment in the off-season. Typically, the same person does the seasonal summer and seasonal winter work, as long as the average for the time worked stays under 30 hours a week. Comptroller Wells stated that they do monitor it to make sure it stays in line with the requirements. After discussing the nature of the seasonal employee, Councilor Earl asked the group their thoughts on the requested full-time employee in the budget. Councilor Coulthart commented that nothing should change from the way the department is structured today, and the budgeted item should not be approved. Deputy Mayor Simchik stated that this position is asked for every year. Councilor Earl questioned who is doing the work now and stated they seem to be getting by. Deputy Mayor Simchik stated that part timers are doing the work now, and it has cost us money in broken pipes and other things not having a dedicated, full-time employee. Councilor Coulthart stated that he is under the impression that Director Griff wants the position, because he is tired of training a seasonal worker every year. All agreed with this sentiment.
- Councilor Earl is curious where everyone is at. Councilor Kinville suggested a compromise where we approve the full-time position and take away a seasonal employee. Councilor Laureti questioned what the seasonal employee does, to which Councilor Earl stated they maintain the gardens and other park duties, and Deputy Mayor Simchik stated they also do lawn mowing. Deputy Mayor Simchik stated we need people for mowing and plowing the snow at the parks. Councilor Kinville commented that he is doing it with 4 people and can still do it with 4, one less seasonal and 1 full time. Councilor Laureti questioned what the seasonal worker salaries are, to which Comptroller Wells stated that it is hard to explain, because they are all different. Councilor Earl commented that there is no real structure in this department, and perhaps we ask Director Griff to restructure and note which which employees have which responsibilities. There needs to be clarification. Councilor Coulthart added that this was supposed to be done in prior years.
- Councilor Laureti questioned the different specialist positions and the difference in salaries. Comptroller Wells stated that they are based on different duration of weeks and amounts of hours per week. Councilor Laureti commented that maybe they need just 1 specialist instead of the 2. Councilor Earl stated that just because it has been this way for 10 years does not mean it has to stay this way, and perhaps we should consider the full-time employee. Deputy Mayor Simchik commented that the other thing to consider is the full-time employee will require benefits, so it will be more costly. Comptroller Wells stated not necessarily, as we are paying unemployment for the seasonal employees. Councilor Coulthart then commented that sometimes it matters how

you do things and neatness and organization counts. Councilor Coulthart further stated that the Recreation Department budget was one of the less structured presentations of all and the presentation needs to be more organized and concise. Deputy Mayor Simchik stated that it is an unusual department, because you have a lot of different schedules needed for the different areas, and further stated that the positions almost have to be part time positions. Earl disagreed stating that she believes some people might like the split shift and flexibility of not working 8 straight hours. Councilor Laureti agreed with Councilor Coulthart that the department could stay as is without approving any positions and see what happens next year. Councilor Earl commented that we are trying to understand his structure and how he is budgeting for things, and we need to talk to Director Griff about it. Councilor Kinville stated that she believes they can maintain at 4 and she is supportive of eliminating a seasonal employee to give a full-time employee, and added this would put \$15,600 back in the General Fund. Councilor Earl would like to see some structure to the department before making a decision on the proposed budget. She further stated that the budget has been this way for so long that maybe Director Griff does not know that it needs more structure. Comptroller Wells questioned how he could restructure in the time we need him to. Councilor Earl responded that they could still approve the budget, and that he can just restructure within that budget.

- There was discussion on the Pool Salaries and the increase this year due to the increase of 2 additional weeks and increase in minimum wage. Council discussed decreasing the Pool Budget to \$40,000 which would save \$24,000 on that line, and Councilor Kinville stated that if that savings is added to her proposal to cut the seasonal worker for \$15,600, that would be a total savings of \$39,600 which would pay for the full-time employee. Councilor Laureti commented to not change anything and that Council will look at it again next year. Deputy Mayor Simchik responded that we have had this discussion every year as far as he can remember. Councilor Laureti suggested to not approve the full-time position and decrease the pool salary to \$40,000. Councilor Earl asked for the breakdown of the Pool Salaries. This year's Pool Salary was \$23419 for 7 weeks. The \$40,000 should suffice for next year. All agreed to decrease the Pool Salaries to \$40,000. There needs to be further discussion on the full-time employee and talk to Director Griff further about this tomorrow, November 16<sup>th</sup> after the Council Meeting. Councilor Laureti commented on the stone dust on the Rail Trail from Seneca to Sayles and said he likes the grass better. Councilor Kinville agreed that she too likes the grass better. Councilor Earl stated that we spoke of possibly moving the stone dust to ARPA. Council would also like to talk about the stone dust with Director Griff.

#### **Codes Further Discussion-**

- Comptroller Wells stated that for the Clothing Allowance, there is nothing in the Contract that states we need to provide clothing allowance, and also you can tell someone that they cannot wear jeans. Councilor Earl feels that the coat and shirt are sufficient for clothing provided. Councilor Kinville asked Councilor Earl if she was supportive of the boots, and Councilor Earl stated no to this. Councilor Kinville is supportive of paying for the boots, because the Codes Department goes to places where they would want to properly protect their feet. Councilor Coulthart thinks they should have a consistent look. Councilor Earl agreed and stated this can be accomplished with a shirt and coat and further stated we can tell them what pants to wear. Councilor Coulthart stated some of the people they deal with are less than savory and respond better to someone dressed in official and authoritative clothing. Councilor Earl stated they do not need matching boots to accomplish this. Comptroller Wells commented that they can have matching boots, but we do not have to provide them. Discussion continued on this topic and what they needed and



how much would be allotted for this. Councilor Earl discussed the total allowance per employee to which all agreed \$750 total or \$250 each is sufficient. Office staff is not included in this. It will include staff that go into the field only. All agreed that the department needs to be more established before we approve more than this.

- Discussion began about the budget request for a new Administrative Aide. Comptroller Wells stated that the Codes Department just hired an Account Clerk, so if Council approves this, Codes will have to possibly fire the Account Clerk. The desired position of the Administrative Aide very likely has a separate valid hire list which the Codes Department must select the candidate from. The Account Clerk is not on the list so would have to be let go in order to fill the Administrative Aide position. Civil Service is checking into whether or not there is a valid list for an Administrative Aide. All agreed to no change with this and leave it is an Account Clerk.

Council paused the discussion for a break at 8:32pm, and the meeting resumed at 8:35.

#### **Fire Department Further Discussion-**

- Deputy Mayor Simchik addressed if there was anything to discuss with the Fire Department. Council stated that all that was needed to be discussed was the requested salary increase for the Fire Chief. At that point, Deputy Mayor Simchik brought up the topic of salary increase for all Department Heads. The Fire Chief had requested an 8% increase. Comptroller Wells stated the rationale behind this 8% amount is because there was no increase last year, and this amount is for 2 years.

#### **Salary Discussion-**

- Council further discussed how last year none of the Department Heads received a salary increase. Councilor Kinville stated that some have received 2% if they just received the new position and others that have been in the position received 4.5%. Councilor Earl questioned if there are any other criteria other than time here that justified giving the 4.5% increase. The increases are not based on merit of job performed or a review process. Councilor Kinville commented that we are not in a position to say and further stated in years past picking and choosing who received raises caused problems in City Hall, so now all get similar raises to remain consistent. Comptroller Wells stated that Civil Service would have to establish a review process, and that has not been done yet. Deputy Mayor Simchik stated that it used to be the raise would follow the CSEA/Fire/Police Contract, but now the Mayor decides what the raise should be. Councilor Earl does not understand how someone can get a raise if they are not doing a good job, and Councilor Laureti agreed. She further commented there is no rhyme or reason to the raises received. Councilor Coulthart affirmed this and stated there was an attempt 3 years ago through CSEA to make things more consistent. Comptroller Wells stated this is still being worked on.
- Councilor Earl further stated that she is not saying the Fire Chief does not deserve it, but she disagrees with the process of how raises are given. Deputy Mayor Simchik asked about discussing all Department Head raises, and Councilor Laureti asked if we were going over all Department Head wages at this point. Councilor Kinville stated that we cannot pick and choose. Councilor Earl stated that we can in a sense if we go through each department. Deputy Mayor Simchik stated that we can go through each and set them and move them if we choose to. Deputy Mayor Simchik asked if there are any Department Head raises that are in question. He further stated that we can pick and choose to which Councilors Laureti and Kinville did not think that was a good

idea. Councilor Earl agreed to leave the raises as is, but she feels for the future that there needs to be a better process for determining salary increases. Comptroller Wells stated that this will be part of the HR processes they are working on for the future.

- Councilor Kinville commented that she thinks the Mayor deserves a raise. Councilor Coulthart feels that we should be looking at a City Administrator and with this, you can reduce the Chamberlain's salary, because it will be just a bill collector, reduce the Planning Department, and reduce the Mayor to a figure head "ribbon cutter" position and then levy a fee against the other departments to help pay for the salary. Councilor Earl agrees with the Administrator because it allows for consistency of Operations. Wells commented that the Administrator is still at the whim of the Mayor. Deputy Mayor Simchik stated that the Administrator would be structured to report to Council alone and would require the support of the Mayor because some power would be taken away from that position. Councilors Earl and Coulthart were not in favor of a raise for the Mayor. Councilor Kinville stated she is in favor and that the salary for the Mayor position was much higher. Deputy Mayor Simchik stated that when Jim Chapelle was Mayor, the amount was lowered because he was retired and could only make a certain amount of money on retirement. This process continued through subsequent Mayors. Councilor Earl asked Councilor Kinville how much of an increase she was thinking about, to which Councilor Kinville responded either the 2% or 4.5%. Deputy Mayor Simchik stated that the Mayor and the Council have received one raise in the last 15 years. Deputy Mayor Simchik is not opposed to the raise, Councilor Kinville supports raising it and so does Councilor Laureti. Councilor Coulthart is not in favor of it, and Councilor Earl needs to think about it. Deputy Mayor Simchik will include these on the list to discuss the Department Heads' and Mayor's raise on November 16<sup>th</sup> after the Council meeting.

#### **Feral Cat Further Discussion-**

- Council discussed putting the \$1,000 back into the budget for this expense. This will be on the list for discussion on November 16<sup>th</sup> as well.

#### **Website Discussion-**

- Councilor Earl stated that there is no money for this in the 2022 Budget. Comptroller Wells stated that there is still \$17,000 in the contingency and, ideally, we will have a new website decision by the end of the year. If it is not, then the money will go back to the General Fund. She further stated that the issue is that we will lose our emails because Ipage owns the domain name, and we cannot redirect. Total Solutions is looking into a resolution for this issue.

#### **Sewer Further Discussion-**

- Comptroller Wells stated the Mayor is able to have the \$100,000 as part of the project with ESG, including repair of the roof, so the expense is back to \$3,000. Sewer rent calculations resulted in a suggested increase of 30% for the quarter starting in 2022. Councilor Wells discussed her calculations and reiterated the project is supposed to produce revenue. We can look at the rent rate each year and assess what the rate should be. With the 30%, the increase would be \$22.50 based on a \$75.00 bill. Councilor Kinville stated an increase to 35% would result in about \$4.00 more. Council discussed raising it 30% or 35%. Those in favor of the 35% increase are Councilors Kinville, Simchik, and Earl. Those in favor of the 30% are Councilors Coulthart and Laureti. Those in favor of the higher number feel that this is the year to be higher since taxes did not increase. The final number will be decided on November 16<sup>th</sup> when Councilor DuBois will be present.

Councilor Simchik recapped the meeting and reminded the Council that the following items will need to

be addressed at the budget discussion after the Common Council Meeting on November 16<sup>th</sup>. The goal is to wrap it up after the Council Meeting.

- Department Head Increases
- Mayor's Raise
- Sewer Rate Increase
- Feral Cat Budget
- Police Positions- meet with Chief Little
- DPW Positions- meet with City Engineer Rowe
- Recreation Position, Pool Salaries, Stone dust- meet with Director Griff

Motion to adjourn by Councilor Kinville

The special meeting is hereby adjourned at 9:26 p.m.

**CITY OF ONEIDA**

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Andrea Hitchings, Deputy City Clerk