

**MINUTES OF THE COMMON COUNCIL  
SPECIAL MEETING  
NOVEMBER 2, 2022**

A special meeting of the Common Council of the City of Oneida, NY was held on the second day of November 2022 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Councilor Rossi	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Councilor Kinville	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Councilor Pagano	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Councilor Simchik	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____

Also Present: Comptroller Lee Ann Wells  
City Clerk Sandy LaPera  
Director of Planning and Development Chris Henry  
Recreation Director Luke Griff

**FISCAL CONDITION OF THE CITY  
Comptroller Lee Ann Wells**

Comptroller Lee Ann Wells did a Power Point presentation on the fiscal condition of the city, reviewing the tax rate information, noting that the 2023 Budget can have a maximum tax rate increase of 4.4% to stay under the tax levy cap and that each 1% increase in the tax rate will equal approximately \$50,000 in additional revenue for the City.

She provided revenue and expense projections, discussing the Fund Balance and reviewing the Fund Balance Policy per Resolution 15-274 adopted on November 17, 2015. There was discussion over the Fund Balance Projections and the current state of the Fund Balance with the following points:

- The 2023 Budget leaves the Fund Balance at 21.5%, which is 1.5% over the legal minimum
- In 2022 to date, the Common Council has authorized \$662,378 over the approved adopted budget Fund Balance appropriation of \$250,116

- The additional 2022 authorized Fund Balance of \$662,378 is equal to a 13.25% tax rate increase
- The 2023 Budget will allow for \$240,000 additional Fund Balance to be authorized for the 2023 fiscal year. This will leave no available Fund Balance.

She then discussed problems with having a low Fund Balance, such as creditworthiness may downgrade, which is crucial in our bond sale rates (we currently have a AA- rating), and appropriating non-existing Fund Balance in the budget can cause a structurally unbalanced budget.

Comptroller Wells pointed out that consistently appropriating Fund Balance to comply with tax cap or to keep taxes low, causing excessive tax increases in a subsequent year is a problem, as when you run out of Fund Balance, rates generally have to increase exponentially.

### **2023 CITY OF ONEIDA BUDGET PLANNING DEPARTMENT**

Director of Planning and Development, Chris Henry

Director of Planning and Development, Chris Henry thanked Council for the opportunity to speak and for the help and support he has received this year, noting that he was new to the position and there was no overlap with his predecessor. He provided a State of the Department including the following (a copy of which is on file in the City Clerk's office):

- Vision for the Department
- Task Interruption
- Project and Property Research
- Inter Departmental and Governmental Communications
- Accomplishments
- Conclusions and Goals

There was a lengthy discussion over the cost associated with the flowers/flowerpots for downtown, and where cuts might be considered, such as obtaining bids from different vendors, cutting down on the amount of pots and using our own staff or alternative for the watering and maintenance. Also, an "Adopt A Pot" program was suggested, whereby downtown business owners would purchase and maintain their own flowerpots or share in the cost.

Director Henry also requested 2 new computers for his department, as those currently in use are old and obsolete; however, the Comptroller advised that there is money in his current 2022 budget that will cover that expense, and no additional funding under the 2023 Budget would be necessary, thus saving the \$2,000 expense for that item.

**2023 CITY OF ONEIDA BUDGET**  
**PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT**  
Director Luke Griff

Parks and Recreation Director, Luke Griff reviewed with Council his 2023 Budget, which included the following:

- Personal Services
- Equipment
- Contracts
- Programs
- Facility Use Revenue

Personal Services included salaries for full time administration, part time recreation and part time pool employees, noting that part time recreation is seasonal employees needed to assist in the successful operations of the Parks & Recreation Center, and part time pool employees are seasonal employees needed to assist in maintaining a safe and enjoyable experience at the pool.

Equipment is for indoor/outdoor folding chairs, mats, lockers, tools, etc., playground wood fiber, software, a Ferris mower, Rail Trail materials (stone dust), a side-by-side ATV and a dump trailer. There was discussion about the side-by-side and dump trailer and the sharing of equipment between the Parks and Recreation and the DPW.

Contracts are for materials and supplies, pool chemicals (a significant increase due to the increased cost of chlorine), contractual services (internet/elevator), buildings & ground maintenance, travel, meals and training, swimsuits and open/close the pool and park beautification (flowers in the Spring and mums in the Fall). There was discussion over the costs associated with the pool and the possibility of increasing the fees to increase revenue and/or possibly closing the pool altogether. Director Griff advised that they did cut the hours from 9 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. down to 12:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., which has helped keep the expenses down.

Programs included those that generate revenue, as well as those that are an expense only. The amount of Art Camp was discussed and the possibility of cutting that down from the requested \$3,000. There was discussion about the Zumba classes, which have been offered for free since Covid and have not been an expense to the City or participants. It was determined that the amount for this program could be removed from the Budget and put back into the General Fund, and should there be an expense for this in the future, it could be offset by charging participants. Concerts in the Park were also discussed and the fees the City is being charged by the musicians. Councilor Laureti advised, as a musician himself, the rates were higher than industry standard, and the City could get them for less. Director Griff stated that although things had slowed down the last couple of years due to Covid, the OC3 is planning on starting back up their market this year in Higinbotham Park, and in anticipation of this, he added the concerts to his budget.

Revenues derive from the use of Parks and Recreation facilities, such as the pool, field and park rental, Recreation Center rental and the Kallet Civic Center rentals. It was noted that the Recreation Center will not need any repairs this year.

## **2023 CITY OF ONEIDA BUDGET**

### **CITY CLERK**

City Clerk Sandy LaPera

City Clerk, Sandy LaPera spoke to Council about the duties and responsibilities of her department and stated that she came before Council to discuss salaries only, as expenses and revenue were consistent with previous years. She advised that she was requesting the 3.5% cost of living increase for herself, noting that Department Heads have a large responsibility, not only to the City, but to New York State to adhere to laws, guidelines and codes set forth by the State and that the current cost of living adjustment is now over 8% in New York State. She advised that Department Heads often come in early, stay late, work through lunches and on the weekends to ensure that the City runs efficiently and provides the best service possible to the residents.

She requested that Council consider an increase in salary for the Deputy City Clerk for taking on the additional title of Website Administrator this year, as the old City Website had to be taken down abruptly due to a serious hack, and a new site had to be designed and built from scratch. In her new role, she will be responsible for the updates and maintenance going forward, as she continues to work with Department Heads and Administration to keep the platform safe, user friendly and aesthetically pleasing for the residents.

She advised that industry standards dictate that the position would pay anywhere from \$32K to \$67K alone, and she was currently the Deputy City Clerk, Secretary to the Mayor and Secretary to the Traffic Safety Board. She had also taken on the responsibility of honorary "Chairperson" to the Special City Manager/Administrator Committee, whereby she prepared for the meetings, performed research, coordinated zoom calls, and followed up with minutes and communication. The requested increase would compensate for the additional title and bring her to a place more consistent with the positions held.

### **SUMMARY**

In conclusion, Council decided on the following:

#### **PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

The Planning Director was asked to reach out to the current vendor for an estimate of the breakdown for what is now being provided for the flowers/flowerpots and potential new

vendors, with the possibility of putting this out to bid.

- Funds in the current budget for the Planning Department will be used for the purchase of 2 computers, resulting in a \$2,000 savings in the 2023 Budget

#### PARKS AND RECREATION

- Zumba expense will be removed from the 2023 Parks and Recreation Budget, resulting in a \$2,000 savings in the 2023 Budget
- Concerts and Entertainment was reduced by \$1,500
- Art Camp was reduced to \$1,500
- Councilor Simchik will reach out to Director Griff regarding the stone dust for the Rail Trail, including how much is needed, what sections they will be doing, etc.
- Council will reach out to the City Engineer to discuss the sharing of equipment

#### CITY CLERK

- Salaries will be discussed at a later meeting

**TOTAL BUDGET SAVINGS:    \$7,000**

Motion to adjourn by Councilor Kinville

The special meeting is hereby adjourned at 8:49 p.m.

#### **CITY OF ONEIDA**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Sandra LaPera, City Clerk