

**MINUTES OF THE COMMON COUNCIL  
SPECIAL MEETING  
NOVEMBER 9, 2022**

A special meeting of the Common Council of the City of Oneida, NY was held on the ninth 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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Councilor Rossi	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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**

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"/>
PS Commissioner Kevin Salerno	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Police Assistant Chief Steve Lowell	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**2023 CITY OF ONEIDA BUDGET DISCUSSION**

**POLICE DEPARTMENT**

Councilor Kinville welcomed Chief Little, Assistant Chief Little, and Public Safety Commissioner Salerno to the meeting and instructed them to address the budget lines that they would like to see changed first, and then other parts of the proposed budget will be discussed.

Chief Little began his narrative with the Salaries Budget Line stating that he had requested some part-time positions, which is the reason for the original amount being increased, but these positions were removed. He added his intention for the positions was to offer the ability to the School District for a part-time officer and have part-time officer to help in the Evidence Room to assist with the County's transition to a digitized system. Chief Little further commented that these part-time requests are contingent on the Union approving the part-time classification requests. He believes that the Union is receptive to both positions and was hopeful the budgeted amount would be approved.

The next line Chief Little discussed was the Comp Time Buyout Budget Line. This line was reduced by \$5,000.00 to \$15,000.00, and it is tied to the Union contract that was just signed. He said that this amount

is difficult to determine, as we do not know who will take advantage of the Comp Time Buyout. When officers work overtime, they can take it as a Comp time buy-out, so it is difficult to know this ahead of time. Councilor Kinville questioned if between \$15,000.00 and \$20,000.00 is an accurate estimate for this expense, to which Chief Little confirmed it is.

Chief Little continued with his narrative and addressed that the Camera Budget Line was decreased from \$6,000.00 to \$3,000.00. He explained that PD updated their camera system this year including in the interview rooms, and when this was done, they created the slots to add the more cameras, but need the actual cameras to complete the project. Additional cameras were added this year, but PD was able to secure grant funds to help pay for these cameras. Councilor Simchik asked how helpful and close to completion using the \$3,000.00 would be (rather than the requested \$6,000.00), to which Chief Little stated that they should be able to get some cameras with the \$3,000.00 and do a few at a time.

Materials and Supplies Budget Line was also decreased from \$19500.00 to \$18000.00. The 5-year average is about \$17,300.00, and everything is getting more expensive. Examples of items included in this line are drug test kits, items for the evidence rooms, parking ticket sleeves, CD's, crime scene items, ammunition, law books, pepper spray, etc. Chief Little stated that they have received grants from the state to receive some inexpensive ammunition, so this has helped defray the cost.

The Clothing budget line was also decreased from \$41,000.00 to \$35,000.00. A large amount of this is contractual. Each officer has a \$750.00 clothing allowance. Assistant Chief Lowell commented that it sounds like a lot, but when you consider one shirt and one pair of pants is about \$120.00, plus a pair of boots at \$150.00-\$200.00, it is not a lot for the year. Chief Little added that the duty gear, the collar brass, etc. are all included in this line. New hire clothing is also outfitted from this line, and this can be about \$3,000.00-\$4,000.00 for each new hire to start off. The ballistic vests are also expensed to this line at about \$1,100.00 each. They do rotate the expense for this each year, but about \$5,000 is spent each year on the vests alone. Chief Little added that they do pursue and receive grants for the vests as well, so this helps.

Radio Maintenance and Repair and Training Budget lines each decreased from \$9,000.00 to \$7,000.00 and from \$18,000.00 to \$17,000.00 respectively. For the Radio Maintenance and Repair, if the \$7,000.00 is the final number, it will be cutting it close assuming there are no cost increases. For the Training, the jump in the amount is due to a grant fund received for \$8,000.00 that is added into the budgeted figure. This grant money amount is restricted for what it can be expensed toward, and this needs to be accounted for when deciding on the final budgeted amount. Chief Little shared that PD has done more training this year than in years past and has also hosted training. Because PD hosted, they received training spots at no cost which helped to keep the expense down.

Equipment Maintenance is a new line item and includes current camera updates and maintenance, replacement of equipment in cars, and other items that are not included in the Materials and Supplies Budget Line.

The Capital Project for PD includes the body camera purchase and the Lexipol software system. A portion of the cost for the body cameras may be funded with grant money as PD has applied for grant funding to defray the costs. Lexipol ensures that PD remains compliant with training, policies, procedures etc. Chief Little feels that the Lexipol software purchase is imperative for the department to ensure we stay up to date with ever changing regulations and guidelines. Chief Little recognized Public Safety Commissioner for his hard work on updating the policy and procedures manual and thanked him for this huge

undertaking that he is helping with. Comptroller Wells stated that bonding for these expenditures will not be completed until all grant funding is received. Councilor Simchik commended the department for grant funding they have applied for and received. Chief Little recognized Assistant Chief Lowell for his hard work and efforts in applying for the grants. Councilor Kinville asked if the PD currently wears body cameras, to which Chief Little stated that they do not. All agreed that they are needed. Assistant Chief Lowell added that it is not just the expense of the body cams, but also the storage of the data, and the administrative burden that results from gathering and storing all that data. This is one of the reasons the Chief requested the additional part time help within the Salary Budget Line.

Chief Little summarized the accomplishments of the Police Department for the year. He stated that in 2020 there were a total of 904 arrests for the year, in 2021 there were 1035 arrests, and for 2022 through October there are 1043 arrests. If we stay on the same trend for the remainder of 2022, there will be 20% more arrests for this year. Chief Little stated how proud he is of his department and how much positive engagement they have achieved over the last couple of years. For ticket issuance, there were 1265 tickets written in 2021, and so far in 2022, through 10/31, there were 1691 tickets written. He added that the department has seen a drastic increase in violations where a ticket is necessary such as suspended licenses and distracted driving.

Councilor Szczerba asked Chief Little how the department plans to handle the drug problem, adding that we can add all the cafes and stores we want downtown, but if there are crack heads running around, no one is going to come downtown. Chief answered that they have done several search warrants and have made quite a few drug arrests. Adding that as of the end of October, there are 70 drug arrests. It is a challenge to the department, as PD arrests people, but there is little support from the state on this. He cited an example where an individual was arrested and charged with several misdemeanors and felonies, including assault and drug charges, and yet was released after 3 months. Chief Little stated we need to keep plugging away and arresting and charging. He is hopeful there will be some changes on the state level to help hold offenders more accountable and see the crime levels drop. PD works closely with other agencies as well. Chief Little referenced the issue with the Stone Street drug house discussed at a prior budget meeting, and this was a collaborative effort with several areas, not just one department. It was a joint effort, working together to put the pressure on the landlord. Working together is the key and teamwork works well. He further added that citizens helped with this too. They used the nuisance abatement laws to achieve this, and Chief Little believes this a route they can take in the future too. Councilor Simchik stated that if there is anything Council can do to help, to let them know.

Councilor Szczerba also expressed his concerns for the traffic speed on Middle Road and the need for different road striping and signage. Chief Little stated that this will need to be addressed with Traffic Safety Board. Chief Little added that there are some hot spots where they do utilize the digital speed sign and are working toward getting a new sign. They will continue to monitor these hot spots.

The Police Department concluded their budget discussion at 7:36 pm.

General budget discussion continued among Council Members. Councilor Kinville questioned those present to see if they wanted to try to finish the discussion, to which all agreed that they would wait to make final decisions until all are present. Councilor Kinville shared Councilor Laureti's email about where they could save money. Councilor Laureti's email suggested cutting the side by side and the dump trailer from the Rec Department budget, decreasing the budget for flowers, cutting \$20,000 from the traffic boxes until we see the results of a traffic study, eliminating PAC 99, increase Rec Dept fees, and possible increase to taxes by 2%. Councilor Simchik commented that he is supportive of removing the dump trailer

and traffic boxes. He would prefer the side-by-side cost be expensed to the ARPA funds from COVID, this would still save money from the actual budget. Others present agreed with the suggestions. Additionally, Councilor Simchik suggested that the money for the flowers be left in a contingency fund in case we do need to transfer it to the budget for flowers should we need to, or it can be used for other general fund items if needed. This will give Council more oversight with the flower expense and gives Councilor Szczerba the opportunity to research less expensive alternatives.

Additional discussion continued about what budget amounts could be cut or decreased, but no final decisions will be made until Councilors Laureti and Rossi can be present for discussion.

Motion to adjourn by Councilor Kinville

The special meeting is hereby adjourned at 7:58 pm.

**CITY OF ONEIDA**

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Andrea Hitchings, Deputy City Clerk