

**MINUTES OF THE COMMON COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING
NOVEMBER 7, 2022**

A special meeting of the Common Council of the City of Oneida, NY was held on the seventh 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>	Present	Absent	Arrived Late
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, City Engineer, Jeff Rowe

**2023 CITY OF ONEIDA BUDGET DISCUSSION
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS**

The City Engineer discussed the highlights of his budget as follows:

BUILDING EXPENSES:

- Telephone expense was removed from this budget to the IT line
- Contracts MB/FD (Municipal Buildings/Fire Department) include the cooling tower inspection and the elevator inspection, elevator preventative maintenance, the emergency generator and Honeywell (HVAC). Councilor Simchik questioned why the request for this line item was at \$71,000 and the Mayor lowered it to \$61,000. City Engineer Rowe stated that he felt the reduction was based on tracking of actual costs incurred to date but noted that there were some additional costs that were not incurred.
- Contracts JC (Justice Center)-the Comptroller advised that this is broken out and kept separate, as NYS has a contract with the City whereby there is a reimbursement of a certain percentage and if it is combined, we get a lower reimbursement percentage. If it is separated and we can prove this contract is strictly for the Justice Center, the City gets a 49% reimbursement, as opposed to

14% if combined.

- Copier expense was an estimate, because the City has gone solely to paying per copy, which is much lower than prior contracts. This will include more copy machines at a cheaper rate. The Comptroller advised that she combined other departments expenses for this all into one that were paying separately.

CENTRAL GARAGE:

- The bulk of the expenses for account lines 1640 and 1660 are for gasoline and diesel for the fleet vehicles. The current budgeted amounts are for all departments and are slightly lower than what might be required due to the increasing costs associated with gas and diesel prices going up.
- Vehicle repairs were discussed, and the Comptroller advised where we are year to date in response to an inquiry from Councilor Rossi. Some of these repairs included batteries and if these should be included in a warranty/lease agreement. Leased vehicles were also discussed and the inability to get vehicles during covid. The savings will start to show after the program is able to kick in.

TRAFFIC EXPENSES:

- Salaries and overtime are consistent with 2022
- Equipment is to replace 2 traffic boxes; one at Broad Street and Farrier and the other is at West Elm and Main Street; street light maintenance and repairs. There was a discussion about the need for traffic lights at certain intersections and the expenses associated with them. These are the last 2 boxes that are owned by the City that need to be replaced. All others have been replaced and updated.

DEMOLITION EXPENSE:

- This is for pre demolition surveys and demolitions for 210 Sconodoa Street and 140 Madison Street, which have been reallocated to a Capital Project, as we do not have the money for this right now. The Comptroller advised that the City needs to own the properties in order to bond for them and the Mayor has been working on trying to expedite this, which could be time consuming. Councilor Laureti asked if the demos could be done in house. The City Engineer advised that his department does not have the capabilities to do this and that they do not have the right equipment or expertise to do this. Councilor Simchik advised that whoever permforms asbestos abatement must have an asbestos license

MOSQUITO EXPENSE:

- The current Mosquito Control Technician is an MEO (Motor Equipment Operator) 90% of the year for the DPW, as well as doing the mosquitos.
- The overtime is because the pesticide and herbicides must be applied in early morning and early evening hours.
- Other expenses are for DEC permits
- Training is for online DEC recertification classes and training for the licenses
- We currently have one Mosquito Control Technician, with two other individuals who are in the program at different stages of experience. Councilor Laureti asked if a shift adjustment could

relieve any of the overtime, however, the City Engineer advised that the herbicide needs to be applied in the early morning between the hours of 5-7 and between 6-9, typically in the same day. The Comptroller noted that the contract specifies their work schedule during the summer hours. City Engineer Rowe stated that it was not uncommon for the individual to work all day and then must go and do mosquitos in the evening.

ADMINISTRATION EXPENSES:

- There was discussion about the need for an Assistant City Engineer and the percentage of this position to the DPW (50%); Water (25%); and Sewer (25%). Councilor Laureti asked what the difference was between a Civil Engineering Tech and an Assistant City Engineer. City Engineer Rowe advised that an Assistant City Engineer has more supervisory experience and is more seasoned. A Civil Engineering Tech requires a 2-year degree, and an Assistant City Engineer requires a 4-year degree. There was discussion about whether a Water Superintendent was needed or if the Assistant City Engineer could do that. The Comptroller and City Engineer advised that this would not help the DPW and we need a full-time Water Superintendent.

Councilor Laureti inquired what the difference is between the Water Superintendent and Chief Water Treatment Operator. City Engineer Rowe explained that the Water Superintendent position requires a 4-year Bachelor of Science degree and one year experience or a PE. The Chief Water Treatment Operator does not require a 4-year degree or a PE. There was discussion about filling this position, as the current "acting" Water Superintendent has come back twice now after retirement to help and is only part-time. Filling this position has been difficult according to City Engineer Rowe, as he believes the City is not offering enough money for the position. There was discussion as to whether the current Chief Water Treatment Operator could fill this role on a temporary basis; however, he was not interested in assuming the additional responsibility and his salary is already comparable.

Councilor Laureti asked if we took some of the money from the superintendent, could this be allocated to the Chief Water Treatment Operator to take on additional responsibilities. Councilor Simchik advised that we would still need a Water Superintendent, as the Chief Water Treatment Operator runs the plant and the Water Superintendent runs everything-maintenance workers, outlying water districts etc. There was discussion about the salary for the Water Superintendent and that current employees do not have the qualifications to fill this position, according to the way the Civil Service job description is written. Also, currently according to our Charter, the City Engineer is first in line, the Water Superintendent is second in charge and the Assistant City Engineer is third.

There was further discussion about the salary of the Water Superintendent, and Comptroller Wells advised that Council could set the salary level higher if they choose, as that position is not split and stays within the Water Department. She noted that Water is fully funded, and their Fund Balance is very high at 91% and if they bump the Water Superintendent's salary, they will also need to adjust the City Engineer's salary, as he oversees that person. This might present a conflict among other department heads.

City Engineer Rowe advised the Water Department is fully staffed with 5 individuals at the Water Treatment Plant and the rest are associated with the distribution system and meter reading.

STREET MAINTENANCE EXPENSES:

Councilor Kinville asked about the salaries line. Comptroller Wells stated that the Mayor cut one of the MEO positions to fund the Assistant City Engineer. This was an unfilled position that was created in this budget with eliminating the laborer/CDL's and moving them all into the Motor Equipment Operators. In 2022 there were 9 MEOs and 4 Laborer/CDL's and now there is only 12 MEOs, so by combining them, it eliminated one MEO.

- City Engineer Rowe stated that overtime was for snowplowing and road work during annual street surfacing/road program
- Equipment is for chain saws and misc. hand tools, weed eaters
- Line 402 is for emergency tree removal for storm related damage, and anything above that would be a separate project. The cost to remove a tree is approximately \$1,500-\$2,000.
- The Comptroller stated a city-wide tree and sidewalk project has been moved to a Capital Project, which can be bonded due to the number of sidewalks and trees that need to be done.
- Rentals were discussed and Councilor Rossi asked where we were at year-to-date. This is for a tub grinder that is used for green waste and more than what a chipper can handle. This will be rented for 2-3 days and comes with the equipment and the operator. It will be used later this month and that is why money has not been spent yet.
- Council discussed a dump trailer that the Recreation Department needs as well. Councilor Kinville stated that they do not want to purchase -one for each department. There was also discussion over the purchase of a Gator and how much could be saved by sharing between departments.

CENTRAL GARAGE EXPENSES:

- Salaries and overtime are similar to 2022's budget
- Equipment is for a tire dolly, plasma cutter and a ¾" torch wrench
- DPW Maintenance and Repair is for repair to parts and equipment for the fleet vehicles
There was discussion as to how much longer the DPW garage would last and where to put a new one. This would require bonding and going to Public Referendum
- Office Technology was moved to the IT line

SNOW AND ICE EXPENSE:

- Materials and Supplies are for brine for road pre-treatment
- Salt and Sand needed to keep the roads clean

STORM SEWER EXPENSES:

- Moved to a Capital Project for Annual Street Resurfacing as it is an eligible reimbursement

CAPITAL PROJECTS:

- Councilor Kinville inquired about the Main Street Mill and Fill Project and why it was not finished. City Engineer Rowe advised that it because of two competing factors- one being that by time this was ready to go to bid, there were so many contractors that were busy at the time, the price would be inflated as part of the bid, so it was recommended to hold off on putting it out to bid

until early 2023; secondly, part of that project of Main St. is involved with the DRI Grant.

The Comptroller advised that regarding Capital Projects, the only ones with money allocated to them in the budget are in the top portion where you see transfers to Capital (strictly Water and Sewer Funds this year), Serial bonded requests that will come before Council throughout the year and any Grant funds available. All General Fund Serial bonds are for the City Engineer's departments, except for Capital Project 23-5, Purchase of Body Cameras, and Lexipol Program/Service, which is for the Police.

- Higinbotham Brook Culvert-Construction Phase
City Engineer Rowe advised that this is a multi-phase project, noting the design phase has been authorized and is progressing. This phase is for the construction phase, estimated at \$950,000 for the worst/highest priority sections. If each project is a well-defined project, under \$1M, it is not subject to a Public Referendum per Comptroller Wells in response to a question from Councilor Simchik. City Engineer Rowe stated that the Higinbotham culvert runs from west of Main Street to east of Elizabeth Street-it is one continuous underground culvert, where digging will take place within the easement. It was noted that there are sections now that are caving in, and this should have been done sooner.
- Capital Project 23-4 Fleet Fueling Tank-it was noted that if the Central Garage is moved, this can be moved as well.

The debt service and bonding were briefly discussed. The Comptroller reminded Council that regarding bonding, when we sign to bond, we are putting the full faith and credit of the City up, saying that we will raise taxes to cover this, and no matter what happens, we will make the payments. The City Engineer also advised that regarding Capital Projects, they do not get cheaper to wait. The longer you put off a project, the more expensive it will be.

SEWER DEPARTMENT

Sewer rates were discussed, and the Comptroller explained that she and the City Engineer worked closely to come up with the 35% increase, which was based on the use of three Reserve Funds for the Wastewater Treatment Plant, which were put into the revenues to balance the budget and keep it above the Fund Balance that it needs to be. She noted that the City will have additional revenue coming in when the plant is up and running, and the biggest expense is the debt service. The Comptroller did not want to do a long-term bond until she knows the final cost of the project. She did a BAN, which you can only do for one year. Also, with a bond, if you go out to bond before you get any grant funds you would no longer be eligible for those grant funds. This BAN would be renewed for another year in March, depending on where we are at that point in time-possibly less time to save on interest.

SEWER EXPENSES

The Comptroller stated that one of the expenses from the 2022 Budget that she eliminated from this budget is the \$467,920 that was going to be put into a Bond Reserve. She took this out because we would only be able to pay for the Bond and not the BAN;

therefore, we would be under in our Fund Balance, which we could not afford to do at this time. We have to pay for the debt service sooner. The 35% is based on consumption and balances the budget. Councilor Simchik asked where this would put us going forward. City Engineer Rowe stated that when the plant is fully constructed, we will be able to start seeing an increase in revenues. The expenses designate what the rate increase will be and hopefully, in 2024, the plan/goal is to have other revenue sources that will bring the rate down. This rate will equate to \$20.57 per quarter, half of the rent users will pay less, and half will pay more.

- The City Engineer is expecting to take bids for chemicals in December for Chlorine Polymer and Liquid Iron Salts and is anticipating projected increases in those due to rising chemical costs.
- Salaries-we currently have one Senior WWTP Operator, and the City Engineer is proposing to have a second. We currently have a Chief WWTP Operator who has a 4A certification; the current Senior WWTP Operator is currently a 3A and plans on sitting for his exam this month. Potentially at some point we will have 5 WWTP Operators, as they work seven days a week. The Senior Operator position will be a promotion. Depending on when the new position is filled, it could result in a savings.
- Biosolids were discussed-Madison County Landfill for 2022 was \$200,000 and this is projected to be \$35,000 next year. Under the current agreement, the City takes our Biosolids to the landfill in exchange for accepting their leachate. With the current plant, we were only able to take a portion of their leachate and will be able to increase the amount we can accept and ultimately take all of it when the plant is up and running.
- Utility costs were reviewed and are high because of the equipment used. The costs were lower in previous years possibly due to Covid. Gas consumption should be lower also when the plant is built.
- Capital Project 23-9 (Infiltration and Inflow) Currently an evaluation is being conducted to start measuring flows and gathering data within the collection system. During typical dry weather flows to the plant, it is around 2.5M gallons a day and during high, wet weather events, the flows exceed 10M gallons per day, likely due to clean water getting into the sanitary sewer system. If it gets to the WWTP, it needs to be pumped. The more water we can get out, the more we will save in cost.

COMPTROLLER/SUMMARY

The Comptroller discussed solar power, the credits we receive and the process of charge backs. She also addressed the IT budget line, which includes Total Solutions, all phones, and the Internet. She was unaware of any discussions with the County about the use of their services.

Councilor Laureti questioned vehicle repairs, and it was noted that tires was a big expense. It was determined that it was better to centralize these expenses other than the DPW, which is separate. The Fire Department has not been pulled out as they have their own repair line currently.

The expense of the vehicle for the CSO was discussed due to the expense, and it was noted that it might

have had some upfitting added in. The Comptroller will look at the lease and advise.

Streetlights and control boxes were discussed and the possibility of having a study done to determine the need for all the streetlights we have and maintain. This study will not produce an answer in enough time for this budget, but the use of an intern to perform this was discussed as a possibility, as well as involving the Traffic Safety Board. We have 2 control boxes left to do, and this is an expensive project. We currently have an individual who can do this for less, but if something happens where he can no longer do the work, it will cost more. It was also noted that the State might have data available. Council proposed to leave one box in and take one box out but would like to wait for a study to be done. The City Clerk advised that the Traffic Safety Board is made up of volunteers and only meet quarterly. She also noted that they were losing two members in December and that they probably would not do the study but may be able to recommend someone to do it. Council agreed to leave the requested amount until a study can be done.

Council also discussed the Water Superintendent position and the Assistant City Engineer position. There was discussion of contracting the Water Superintendent position out, even though it is not ideal. The duties of the Civil Engineering Technician were discussed, as well as the funding and allocations. The Comptroller advised that she has to rely on the expertise of the Department Heads to tell her what they need. Councilor Simchik said we would need to look at the Charter for any changes involving titles and reporting.

The Water Department Budget will be held on Tuesday, November 8.

Motion to adjourn by Councilor Kinville

The special meeting is hereby adjourned at 8:52 p.m.

CITY OF ONEIDA

Sandra LaPera, City Clerk