

**MINUTES OF THE COMMON COUNCIL  
SPECIAL MEETING  
NOVEMBER 8, 2022**

A special meeting of the Common Council of the City of Oneida, NY was held on the eighth 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, Water Superintendent Art Smolinski

**2023 CITY OF ONEIDA BUDGET DISCUSSION  
WATER DEPARTMENT**

Interim Water Superintendent, Art Smolinski, provided Council with a copy of his Water Department and Hydrant Budget, in conjunction with his 2021 Annual Report, prior to this meeting, which he reviewed as follows:

**WATER FUND**

**CONSUMPTION:**

Mr. Smolinski explained that most of the revenue comes from the sale of water, and annually he tries to project out how much water we are going to sell for the current year and projects how much will be sold next year, adjusting as needed. He explained the calculation used, noting that the Town of Verona is included in this budget even though they will be going to the City of Rome soon. Due to delays in construction, he was informed that they plan on purchasing water from

the City of Oneida all of next year and should be with the City of Rome in 2024.

VEHICLES:

Most vehicles are relatively new, and he does not have any plan for replacement in 2023.

PROPERTY TAXES:

The City of Oneida is a municipality that owns property outside of our taxable boundaries in the Town of Annsville (a dam, a treatment plant, and a transmission main); the City of Rome a transmission main; and the Town of Verona a transmission main. We also own the water pipes in the Village of Oneida Castle and the pipeline that goes into the City of Sherrill, all of which we pay taxes on.

CHEMICAL BIDS:

There was a significant increase in the cost of chlorine, as well as other chemicals. He increased these slightly from the 2022 price and anticipates that the price will continue to increase.

HISTORIC FUNDING-WATER MAIN REPLACEMENT:

Pipe and material prices have increased significantly. Mr. Smolinski advised that he tries to replace pipes on a 100-year cycle due to undersize (not sized to meet the demands of water flow), break history and water quality. Since 1990, the city has replaced 12.33 miles. There has been no replacement over the last two years, as there has been no one in the department to get the designs done. He noted that currently there are two projects (Fitch Street and Glenwood Ave.) that will go out to bid next week. Because of delays in receiving pipe, which will not be received until July of next year, a budget amendment will be needed. Normally, they start in May.

There was discussion about the condition of Fitch Street where there is corrosion breakage, not due to capacity, and Glenwood Ave. He explained the situation with Fitch Street in that for every 18 feet of pipes, there are 8 bolts at each joint that have rotted out. They have been patched/replaced with corrosion resistant bolts. Push on pipe that is poly wrapped to protect from corrosion will be installed to replace. He has already ordered some of the pipe for the area between (Glenwood Ave.) Fairview Ave and the pump station, which will improve fire flows to the Business Park and also downstream to the Nation owned properties where they are building to replace 1883 pipe. They have already purchased about 1200 feet of the piping, but it is a 3500 feet project for 12-inch pipe, which is \$45-50 per foot. They will start with what they have for now. They still need to finalize the design and get the health department's approval. Superintendent Smolinski stated that due to plant closures and Covid, PVC production decreased.

WATER DEPARTMENT BONDING COSTS:

There are two outstanding bonds currently, Fish Creek for \$2,095,000, which will be paid off in 2029, and Glenmore Dam, with a 30-year term for \$8M which started in 2021. Total bond payments for 2023 will be \$557,000. He noted that we are already paying off the debt associated with Glenmore Dam, even though we have not started the project yet. They have met with DEC to finalize the permit, which has been going on since 2011.

WATER FUND CONDITION:

There is money in the bank, with a projected balance of \$3,158,828 by 2023.

Budget line items were discussed, and a brief explanation was provided for those that were highlighted.

**HYDRANT FUND**

Superintendent Smolinski then discussed the Hydrant Fund, advising that this is a separate fund used to maintain the hydrants in the City of Oneida. If a house is located within 600 feet of a hydrant, even those who live in the country who have no public water who might be within the 600 feet, will pay a Hydrant Fund tax.

The Water Department does all the work for the Hydrant Fund, including the shoveling of hydrants and clearing snow. Over the next few years, where there is excessive fund balance, they plan on dropping the tax rate for the Hydrant Fund, as well as the charges for maintenance agreements and contracts with other municipalities.

There is one Capital Project for a concrete floor for the pole barn, with an estimated completion time in the Summer of 2023. The projected cost is \$60,000.

He reviewed water rates for 2023 and provided a chart of historic water rates for comparison purposes and highlighted line items for the Sewer Charge Back 2023, Water Revenues and Water Expenses.

A copy of the 2021 Water Department Annual Report and the 2023 Water and Hydrant Budget prepared by Superintendent Smolinski are on file in the office of the City Clerk.

**SALARIES-MANAGEMENT CONFIDENTIAL**

Council discussed salaries for the individuals who fall under Management Confidential, which includes all the Department Heads, the Executive Secretary to the Civil Service, the Deputy Comptroller, and the Deputy City Clerk. Although an elected position, the City Chamberlain's salary was also discussed.

It was determined that those present did not have an issue with the 3% increase for most, which is consistent with what others in the City were getting according to contract. There was discussion on the request for a higher percentage for the Comptroller, Deputy Comptroller, Executive Secretary to the Civil Service, the Director of Code Enforcement, and the Deputy City Clerk.

Councilor Simchik advised that some positions have been held for a long time and were only given

slight raises over the years, and in some positions, there has been repeated turnover. This is to bring some up to industry standards and brought to where they should be, noting that there were some years that Department Heads did not get a raise at all. The Councilors would like to be consistent, but also mindful of what other municipalities and possibly what the private sector is paying for industry standard.

Percentages, as well as the additional job responsibilities incurred to some were discussed, and it was determined that the Deputy Mayor would reach out to the Mayor for Performance/Employee Evaluations to determine the justification for her recommendations before any decisions were made.

### SUMMARY

The Comptroller advised, based on the actual adjusted budget approved to date, approximately \$912,000 will be taken from Fund Balance based on a schedule prepared earlier. She noted that an additional \$150,000 will be added to that based on recent approvals. She advised that if all the revenues and expenses come in as they are supposed to, they will need to take over \$1M in Fund Balance. She stated that sales tax is trending well though and will be a driving force in what we end up with at the end of the year. A tax increase was discussed, with the Comptroller advising that each 1% increase equates to approximately \$50,000.

Proposed cuts included the side by side, flowerpots and the dump trailers, as well as discussing the streetlights and traffic boxes and whether these could be put off for a year to allow time for potential new revenue to come in. It was decided the dump trailer would be removed for a savings of \$10,000. Councilor Laureti suggested that they take the rest of the week and come up with a way to make further cuts, with Councilor Simchik stating that they cannot continue to take money from the savings without raising taxes, and the budget was already at the bare minimum.

Motion to adjourn by Councilor Kinville

The special meeting is hereby adjourned at 8:33 p.m.

CITY OF ONEIDA



Sandra LaPera, City Clerk