

MINUTES OF THE COMMON COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
MAY 21, 2024

A meeting of the Common Council of the City of Oneida, NY was held on the twenty-first day of May 2024 at 6:30 p.m. at the Common Council Chambers, 109 N. Main, Oneida, NY 13421.

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Rick Rossi.

<u>Attendees</u>	Present	Absent	Arrived Late
Mayor Rossi	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Councilor Szczerba	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Councilor Laureti	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Councilor Hitchings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Councilor Winchell	<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"/> _____

Supervisors

Matt Roberts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mary Cavanagh	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Brandee DuBois	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Michelle Kinville	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Also Present

City Attorney Nadine Bell	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fire Chief Scott Jones	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
City Clerk Sandy LaPera	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Police Chief Steve Lowell	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
City Engineer Jeff Rowe	<input type="checkbox"/>	Public Safety Com. Dave Jones	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Codes Director Bob Burnett	<input type="checkbox"/>	Acting City Manager John Monaghan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Comptroller Lee Ann Wells	<input type="checkbox"/>	Attorney Stacy Marris	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance/Roll Call

PROCLAMATION: Oneida Public Library 100th Anniversary
Received by Director Michele Ryan

Proclamation

City of Oneida - Office of the Mayor

WHEREAS, the Oneida Public Library has stood as a beacon of knowledge, enlightenment, and community for the past century, fostering intellectual growth and cultural enrichment, **and**

WHEREAS, for one hundred years, the Oneida Public Library has been a cornerstone of our community, bridging generations, nurturing imaginations, and preserving our collective heritage, **and**

WHEREAS, on this auspicious occasion, we gather to honor the enduring legacy of the Oneida Public Library and celebrate its unwavering commitment to education, literacy, and the pursuit of knowledge, **and**

Now therefore, be it proclaimed that on this 30th day of April 2024, we, the City of Oneida, do hereby declare our profound gratitude and admiration for the invaluable contributions of the Oneida Public Library to our cultural landscape and societal fabric.

Signed and sealed on this 21st day of May in the year 2024, in the presence of all who cherish the profound significance of the Oneida Public Library.

Mayor Rick Rossi

PUBLIC HEARING: Local Law amending Section 17-1 of the Code of the City of Oneida and establishing a new chapter regulating the harboring of hens within the City of Oneida.

RECEIVE/PLACE ON FILE: The Mayor received and placed on file, email comments submitted from residents Peter Hedglon and Caitlin Cook

OPEN PUBLIC HEARING

A LOCAL LAW TO AMEND CHAPTER 17, §17-1 OF THE ONEIDA CITY CODE AND TO ESTABLISH A NEW CHAPTER REGULATING THE HARBORING OF HENS WITHIN THE CITY OF ONEIDA

RESOLUTION 24-114

Moved by Councilor Winchell
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

RESOLVED, that the Public Hearing on a proposed Local Law to amend Chapter 17, § 17-1 of the Oneida City Code and to establish a new chapter regulating the harboring of hens within the City of Oneida be hereby opened at 6:33 p.m.

Ayes: 5
Nays: 0
Absent: 2 (Szczerba/Hitchings)

MOTION CARRIED

APPEARANCES

ROBERT BRITTON-ONEIDA

Mr. Britton expressed confusion over why this issue continues to be raised, as it has been brought up in the past and voted down. He emphasized that it is unnecessary for the City of Oneida, stating that the City is not a farm. He highlighted concerns about attracting coyotes, foxes, raccoons, and rats, as well as the potential risk of a bird virus that is currently spreading.

PETER HEDGLON-449 BROAD STREET

Former Mayor, Peter Hedglon, urged the Council to reject the current Harboring of Hens proposal for reasons stated in his email submission that was provided to Council prior to the meeting, which is included with these minutes under “**ATTACHMENT A.**”

MELISA MANNIX-341 STONE STREET

Ms. Mannix began by thanking the Council for their time and stated that she feels the newly proposed law is well written. She acknowledged that the Committee's suggestions were well received, and changes

were made to better suit Oneida, rather than the city from which it was originally drafted. She noted that several people present support the newly proposed law, although they did not sign up to speak. Ms. Mannix concluded by stating that she appreciates all the time and effort the Council put into this.

CLOSE PUBLIC HEARING

A LOCAL LAW TO AMEND CHAPTER 17, §17-1 OF THE ONEIDA CITY CODE AND TO ESTABLISH A NEW CHAPTER REGULATING THE HARBORING OF HENS WITHIN THE CITY OF ONEIDA

RESOLUTION 24-115

Moved by Councilor Pagano
Seconded by Councilor Winchell

RESOLVED, that the Public Hearing on a proposed Local Law to amend Chapter 17, § 17-1 of the Oneida City Code and to establish a new chapter regulating the harboring of hens within the City of Oneida be hereby closed at 6:39 p.m.

Ayes: 5
Nays: 0
Absent: 2 (Szczerba/Hitchings)

MOTION CARRIED

PUBLIC HEARING: Local Law for a Moratorium on Wind Energy Conversion Systems in the City of Oneida

OPEN PUBLIC HEARING

A LOCAL LAW FOR A MORATORIUM ON WIND ENERGY CONVERSION SYSTEMS IN THE CITY OF ONEIDA

RESOLUTION 24-116

Moved by Councilor Laureti
Seconded by Councilor Winchell

RESOLVED, that the Public Hearing on a proposed Local Law imposing a Moratorium on Wind Energy Conversion Systems in the City of Oneida be hereby opened at 6:40 p.m.

Ayes: 5
Nays: 0
Absent: 2 (Szczerba/Hitchings)

MOTION CARRIED

APPEARANCES

ALEX ROWE-4924 FOREST AVENUE

Mr. Rowe stated that he lives on Forest Avenue, where a "Mega" windmill is being erected. This windmill, typically only allowed in the ocean, would be the first of its kind in New York State. He remarked that he believes the Planning and Zoning Board has created a problematic situation for the city, which the Moratorium aims to address.

He mentioned that several audience members, who regularly attended Planning Board meetings, shared his frustration with the situation. Living directly across from the site, Mr. Rowe's first question was whether permission had been obtained from the Air Base, given its location in the airway for airplanes and helicopters. He was initially assured that "it was covered," but later discovered that approval had not been granted due to national security concerns, making the location unacceptable. Despite this, the Planning Board permitted a study by WEC, which he believes should have been outright denied. He stated that because the City approved the project's start, it now risks being sued for now telling them no. He stated that it is not the City that would be telling them no, it is the Airforce Base, the United States that is telling them no.

CLOSE PUBLIC HEARING

A LOCAL LAW FOR A MORATORIUM ON WIND ENERGY CONVERSION SYSTEMS IN THE CITY OF ONEIDA

RESOLUTION 24-117

Moved by Councilor Winchell
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

RESOLVED, that the Public Hearing on a proposed Local Law imposing a Moratorium on Wind Energy Conversion Systems in the City of Oneida be hereby closed at 6:44 p.m.

Ayes: 5
Nays: 0
Absent: 2 (Szczerba/Hitchings)

MOTION CARRIED

PUBLIC HEARING: Funding under Round 8 of the Restore NY Communities' Initiative Municipal Grant Program for the rehabilitation of Madison Street

OPEN PUBLIC HEARING

FUNDING UNDER ROUND 8 OF THE RESTORE NY COMMUNITIES' INITIATIVE GRANT PROGRAM FOR THE REHABILITATION OF MADISON STREET

RESOLUTION 24-118

Moved by Councilor Simchik
Seconded by Councilor Pagano

RESOLVED, that the Public Hearing to apply for funding under Round 8 of the Restore NY Communities' Initiative Municipal Grant Program for the rehabilitation of Madison Street be hereby opened at 6:45 p.m.

Ayes: 5
Nays: 0
Absent: 2 (Szczerba/Hitchings)

MOTION CARRIED

APPEARANCES
None

CLOSE PUBLIC HEARING

FUNDING UNDER ROUND 8 OF THE RESTORE NY COMMUNITIES' INITIATIVE GRANT PROGRAM FOR THE REHABILITATION OF MADISON STREET

RESOLUTION 24-119

Moved by Councilor Simchik
Seconded by Councilor Winchell

RESOLVED, that the Public Hearing to apply for funding under Round 8 of the Restore NY Communities' Initiative Municipal Grant Program for the rehabilitation of Madison Street be hereby closed at 6:45 p.m.

Ayes: 5
Nays: 0
Absent: 2 (Szczerba/Hitchings)

MOTION CARRIED

OLD BUSINESS

The owner of the property at 238 Allen Park Place stated he was present to provide an update. He reported that the asbestos survey results showed no asbestos. He has applied for the required permit from Codes and is moving forward with the clean-up. The debris has been cleared, and the partial garage has been taken down. He will address the roof as soon as he obtains the permit, which Acting City Manager Monaghan advised would be issued within 1-2 days. Mayor Rossi thanked him for all of his efforts.

REPORTS:

Mayor's Report: Mayor Rossi reminded everyone of the Memorial Day parade, which will take place on Friday, May 24, beginning at 6:15. He advised the festivities will commence at Triangle Park and finish at the American Legion.

- Supervisor's Report None
- Acting City Manager's Report None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Moved by Councilor Winchell
Seconded by Councilor Pagano

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the regular meeting of May 7, 2024, are hereby approved as presented.

Ayes: 5
Nays: 0
Absent: 2 (Szczerba/Hitchings)

MOTION CARRIED

APPROVAL OF WARRANT

Moved by Councilor Simchik
Seconded by Councilor Pagano

RESOLVED, that Warrant No. 10, checks and ACH payments in the amount of \$469,259.91 as audited by the Voucher Committee are hereby approved for payment in the usual manner at the discretion of the Comptroller.

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

Absent: 2 (Szczerba/Hitchings)

MOTION CARRIED

MONTHLY REPORTS

RESOLUTION 24-120

Moved by Councilor Simchik

Seconded by Councilor Pagano

RESOLVED, that Monthly Reports from the City Clerk, City Engineer, Codes Department, Comptroller, Fire Department, Parks and Recreation Department, and Police Department are hereby received and placed on file.

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

Absent: 2 (Szczerba/Hitchings)

MOTION CARRIED

SPECIAL EVENT-JESSICA'S HEROES 5K RUN/WALK

RESOLUTION 24-121

Moved by Councilor Simchik

Seconded by Councilor Winchell

RESOLVED, to approve the application from Jessica's Heroes Foundation for the annual Jessica's Heroes 5K Run/Walk scheduled for September 21, 2024.

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

Absent: 2 (Szczerba/Hitchings)

MOTION CARRIED

AUTHORIZE PAYMENT-BEST WESTERN COOPERSTOWN INN & SUITES

RESOLUTION 24-122

Moved by Councilor Winchell
Seconded by Councilor Pagano

RESOLVED, to authorize payment of \$69.44 to Best Western Cooperstown Inn & Suites, 50 Commons Drive, Route 28, Cooperstown, NY 13326 for taxes charged in connection with training for City Assessor, Rebecca Lennon.

Ayes: 5
Nays: 0
Absent: 2 (Szczerba/Hitchings)
MOTION CARRIED

WATER BOARD RECOMMENDATION-WAIVE PENALTY

RESOLUTION 24-123

Moved by Councilor Simchik
Seconded by Councilor Pagano

RESOLVED, to approve the recommendation by the City of Oneida Water Board to waive a penalty of \$24.46 charged to Account No. 23-070001-00, Edward Zaleski, 86 E. Seneca Ave., Oneida Castle, NY that was incurred due to a bank error.

Ayes: 5
Nays: 0
Absent: 2 (Szczerba/Hitchings)
MOTION CARRIED

AUTHORIZATION-NYS DCJS-GRANT FUNDING-PLACE NETWORK INVESTIGATIONS

RESOLUTION 24-124

Moved by Councilor Simchik
Seconded by Councilor Pagano

RESOLVED, to authorize the Acting City Manager and Police Chief to sign agreements with NYS DCJS, St John Fisher College, and any of their associates, regarding grant funding to support a research partner to assist with implementing a Place Network Investigations (PNI) strategy to address factors contributing to crime.

Ayes: 5
Nays: 0
Absent: 2 (Szczerba/Hitchings)
MOTION CARRIED

AUTHORIZATION-NYS DCJS-LAW ENFORCEMENT TECHNOLOGY GRANT

RESOLUTION 24-125

Moved by Councilor Simchik
Seconded by Councilor Pagano

RESOLVED, to authorize the Acting City Manager and Police Chief to sign agreements with NYS DCJS to receive grant funds and execute contracts regarding the Law Enforcement Technology Grant (Grant amount of \$212,000).

Ayes: 5
Nays: 0
Absent: 2 (Szczerba/Hitchings)
MOTION CARRIED

AGREEMENT-AXON ENTERPRISES INC.

RESOLUTION 24-126

Moved by Councilor Winchell
Seconded by Councilor Pagano

RESOLVED, to authorize the Acting City Manager and Police Chief to sign an agreement with Axon Enterprises, Inc. to reflect an amended invoice schedule for Quote Q-453615 necessary to draw down grant funds for Body Worn Cameras.

Ayes: 5
Nays: 0
Absent: 2 (Szczerba/Hitchings)
MOTION CARRIED

APPROVE BID-FERRARIO AUTO TEAM OF ELMIRA

Pulled from the Agenda

RESOLUTION 24-XX

Moved by Councilor
Seconded by Councilor

RESOLVED, approve the lowest bid meeting specifications to Ferrario Ford d/b/a Ferrario Auto Team of Elmira, 1 Adventure Trail, Elmira, NY 14903-7999 for the purchase of a 2023 RAM 1500

Classic for the Water Department for \$43,244.60.

Ayes:

Nays:

MOTION CARRIED

REMEDIAL ACTION-238 ALLEN PARK PLACE

RESOLUTION 24-127

Moved by Councilor Simchik

Seconded by Councilor Winchell

RESOLVED, authorize the City Engineer to obtain quotes to undertake all such measures as are necessary to effectuate the remedial action recommended by the Fire Marshal for property located at 238 Allen Park Place in accordance with the terms outlined in Resolution 24-113 from the Common Council meeting held on May 7, 2024.

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

Absent: 2 (Szczerba/Hitchings)

MOTION CARRIED

DISCUSSION: Acting City Manager John Monaghan explained that this resolution was added to the agenda to protect the City if no remedial action is taken on the property. He stated that it grants the City the authority to proceed if the property owner fails to comply with the required remedial actions designated on May 7.

APPROVE BID-MAPLE DRIVE SANITARY SEWER REPAIR

RESOLUTION 24-128

Moved by Councilor Simchik

Seconded by Councilor Pagano

RESOLVED, to approve the lowest bid meeting specifications for Maple Drive Sewer Repair to D & S Excavating, 106 Putnam Estate Drive, Frankfort, NY 13340.

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

Absent: 2 (Szczerba/Hitchings)

MOTION CARRIED

BUDGET TRANSFERS/AMENDMENTS

RESOLUTION 24-129

Moved by Councilor Simchik
Seconded by Councilor Pagano

		<u>To</u>	<u>From</u>
2024 Budget Adjustments			
\$ 13,000.00		003.8110.0435.0000	003.0003.0912.0000
		Sewer-Payments to other communities	Sewer Fund Balance
<i>To allocate funds to cover prior year expenses not billed until 2024</i>			
\$ 13,111.92		002.8300.0403.0000	002.0002.0912.0000
		Water Contracts	Water Fund Balance
<i>To allocate funds to the Glenmore Clearwell project to submit WIIA application, preliminary engineering for the project was closed in Feb 2024 and added back to water fund balance (\$31,176.92).</i>			
\$ 1,000.00		001.3650.0400.0001	001.0001.0912.0000
		Demolition	General Fund Balance
<i>To allocate funds for the fencing at Oneida St. This is billed to property owner</i>			
\$ 62,000.00		005.8110.0401.0024	003.0003.0912.0000
		Maple Drive Sanitary Sewer Repair	Sewer Fund Balance
<i>To allocate funds for the sanitary sewer repair on Maple Drive</i>			

Ayes: 5
Nays: 0
Absent: 2 (Szczerba/Hitchings)
MOTION CARRIED

WAIVE RULE TO ACCEPT AGENDA ITEMS

RESOLUTION 24- 130

Moved by Councilor Simchik
Seconded by Councilor Winchell

RESOLVED, that per Resolution 08-180 adopted by the Common Council on August 19, 2008, the provisions of the procedure to accept agenda items is hereby waived.

Ayes: 5
Nays: 0
Absent: 2 (Szczerba/Hitchings)
MOTION CARRIED

**A LOCAL LAW IMPOSING A SIX (6) MONTH MORATORIUM ON WIND ENERGY CONVERSION
SYSTEM (WECS) USES WITHIN THE CITY OF ONEIDA**

RESOLUTION 24-131

Moved by Councilor Winchell
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

WHEREAS, pursuant to the provisions of the Municipal Home Rule Law, a proposed local law titled “A Local Law Imposing a Six (6) Month Moratorium on Wind Energy Conversion Systems (WECS) Uses Within the City of Oneida,” was presented and introduced at a regular meeting of the Common Council of the City of Oneida held on May 7, 2024; and

WHEREAS, a public hearing was held on such proposed local law on May 21, 2024, by the Common Council of the City of Oneida and proofs of publication of notices of such public hearings, as required by law, having been submitted and filed, and all persons desiring to be heard in connection with said proposed local law having been heard, and said proposed local law having been in the possession of the members of the Common Council of the City of Oneida in its final form in the manner required by Section 20 of the Municipal Home Rule of the State of New York; and

WHEREAS, the enactment of the Proposed Local Law has previously been determined to be a Type II action for purposes of environmental review pursuant to the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) and that this action will have no significant effect on the environment, thus concluding the SEQR review process; and

WHEREAS, it is in the public interest to enact said Proposed Local Law.

NOW, THEREFORE, it is

RESOLVED that the Common Council of the City of Oneida, Madison County, New York, does hereby enact a Local Law as follows:

**A LOCAL LAW IMPOSING A SIX (6) MONTH MORATORIUM ON
WIND ENERGY CONVERSION SYSTEM (WECS) USES WITHIN
THE CITY OF ONEIDA**

Be it enacted by the Common Council of the City of Oneida, as follows:

Section 1. Title

This local law shall be known as the "Wind Energy Conversion Systems Moratorium Law of the City of Oneida."

Section 2. Findings and Purpose

The City Council of the City of Oneida finds that the proliferation of Wind Energy Conversion Systems (WECS) within the City has raised concerns regarding potential impacts on national security and public safety, particularly as communicated by the U.S. Department of Defense and the Air Force Research Laboratory (AFRL) in Rome. Therefore, the purpose of this local law is to enact a temporary moratorium on the issuance of permits for the permitting, construction, and installation of new WECS and the processing of existing applications while the City Council conducts a review and proposes amendments to existing laws and regulations governing WECS installations.

Section 3. Moratorium on Wind Energy Conversion Systems

Unless permitted pursuant to Section 5 hereafter, from and after the date of this local law, no application for a permit, zoning permit, zoning variance, building permit, operating permit, site plan approval, subdivision approval, certificate of occupancy, certificate of compliance, temporary certificate, or other City-level approval of any nature shall be accepted, processed, entertained, approved, approved conditionally, or issued by any board, employee, official agent of the City of Oneida, for the placement, construction, erection, or installation of a new Wind Energy Conversion System (WECS) within the City of Oneida.

- A. This moratorium shall be in effect for a period of six (6) months from the effective date of this local law and shall expire on the earlier of: (i) the date six (6) months from said effective date of this local law, unless renewed; or (ii) the enactment by the City Common Council of a resolution indicating the City Common Council is satisfied that the need for the moratorium no longer exists.
- B. This moratorium shall apply to all zoning districts and all real property within the City.
- C. Wind Energy Conversion Systems (WECS) which have previously been approved or are located on City-owned property are hereby expressly excluded from this moratorium.

Section 4. Review and Amendments

During the moratorium period, the City Council shall conduct a comprehensive review of existing laws and regulations pertaining to WECS installations within the City of Oneida.

The City Council shall engage in dialogue and consultation with the U.S. Department of Defense, the Air Force Research Laboratory (AFRL), and other relevant stakeholders to address concerns regarding national security and public safety.

Based on the findings of the review and consultations, the City Council shall propose amendments to existing laws and regulations governing WECS installations within the City of Oneida.

Section 5. Relief from Provisions of this Local Law

- A. The City Common Council reserves to itself the power to vary or adapt the strict

application of the requirements of this local law in the case of unusual hardship which would deprive the owner of all reasonable use of the lands involved.

B. Application for relief shall be filed in triplicate with the Planning Department together with a filing fee of \$250.00. The application shall specifically identify the property involved, recite the circumstances pursuant to which the relief is sought and the reasons for which the relief is claimed. Any costs, including expert consulting fees or attorney's fees, incurred by the City, shall be reimbursed to the City by the Applicant. The Common Council shall apply Use Variance criteria as set forth in the New York State General City Law, Section 81-b in reviewing any application for relief.

C. The Common Council may refer any applications for relief herein to the Planning Commission/Zoning Board of Appeals for its advice and recommendations, but all decisions on granting or denying such relief shall be made solely by the Common Council after determining whether or not the requested relief is compatible with any contemplated amendments to the City Zoning Law. Unless completely satisfied that the proposed relief is compatible, the Common Council shall deny the application.

D. The Common Council shall conduct a public hearing on any request for relief within forty-five (45) days of receipt by the Planning Department and shall issue its final decision on requests for relief within thirty (30) days from the date of the public hearing.

Section 6. Penalties

Any person, who shall construct, reconstruct, relocate, enlarge or modify any site to be used for a WECS installation in violation of the provisions of this local law, shall be subject to:

A. A fine not to exceed One Thousand and 00/100 Dollars (\$1,000.00) or imprisonment for a term not to exceed fifteen (15) days, or both. Each day a violation continues shall be considered a new violation.

B. A civil action inclusive of injunctive relief in favor of the City to cease any and all such actions which conflict with this local law and, if necessary, to remove any constructions, improvements, or related items or byproducts which may have taken place in violation of this local law.

Section 7. Enforcement

This local law shall be enforced by the Code Enforcement Office of the City of Oneida or such other zoning enforcement individual(s) as designated by the Common Council. It shall be the duty of the enforcement individual(s) to advise the Common Council of all matters pertaining to the enforcement of this local law.

Section 8. Severability

If any provision of this local law is found to be invalid or unenforceable for any reason, the remaining provisions shall remain in full force and effect.

Section 9. Repeal of Inconsistent Laws

All laws, ordinances, rules, and regulations, or parts thereof, inconsistent with the provisions of

this local law are hereby repealed to the extent of such inconsistency.

Section 10. Effective Date

This local law shall take effect immediately upon filing with the Secretary of State.”

Mayor Rossi	<u>YES</u>
Councilor Szczerba	<u>ABSENT</u>
Councilor Laureti	<u>YES</u>
Councilor Hitchings	<u>ABSENT</u>
Councilor Winchell	<u>YES</u>
Councilor Pagano	<u>YES</u>
Councilor Simchik	<u>YES</u>

MOTION CARRIED

DISCUSSION: Mayor Rossi noted that the Council usually waits until the next meeting after a Public Hearing to make decisions on Local Laws. However, they decided to bypass that procedure and vote on this matter the same night.

NEW BUSINESS

Police Chief Steve Lowell informed the Council about the Police Department's Grant project, the Rural Violent Crime Reduction Initiative (RVCRI), which started in fiscal 2021. This initiative is funded by the Bureau of New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services and focuses on crime prevention strategies based on data-driven approaches to maximize department resources. The Project Management Team includes Chief Lowell, Sergeant Mike Burgess, who also oversees the Criminal Investigation Division, and Account Clerk Melissa Luck. Chief Lowell highlighted that Sergeant Burgess has been instrumental in the operational aspects of the project. He also referenced earlier resolutions related to this project and emphasized that the Oneida Police Department is leading these crime prevention strategies in the Central New York Region. He thanked everyone for allowing the presentation.

Sergeant Mike Burgess’ presentation to Council-RVCRI Project

“Hello everyone, my name is Mike Burgess, and I am the Sgt of the Criminal Investigations Division (CID) at the Oneida City Police Department. I am here today to give you an overview of a crime reduction initiative that the Oneida City Police have been working on for some time now, which has become a bit of a passion project for me as well.

In the nearly 19 years that I have worked for the Oneida City Police Department, I have seen the same areas within the City of Oneida having pretty much the same habitual crime and quality of life problems. Despite the many organized attempts at strict law enforcement, and countless arrests, these issues have persisted. The fact is, we cannot simply arrest our way out of crime problems and expect they will just go away.

It has been evident that we needed to really step back and look at these problems from a different angle and take a different approach to address crime problems by reducing the opportunities for crime, as well as taking steps to improve the quality of life.

With that said, I am here to provide you with a brief overview of an initiative that the Oneida City Police have undertaken, which is already making real and positive impacts on the community.

In 2021 the Oneida City Police was one of less than 20 agencies nationwide which were awarded a grant from the federal government aimed at reducing violent crime in rural communities. In 2023, the Oneida City Police was again awarded another grant to continue our initiative. Each of these monetary awards are being used towards implementing and expanding crime reduction strategies, improving investigations, improving services to victims, enhancing collaboration between local stakeholders, training, deployment of personnel and technology, environmental and technological improvements, and expansion of community-based crime prevention programs and partnerships with victim services providers. The goal is to ensure that our efforts to reduce crime and improve quality of life provide a long-term impact for the community well-being.

We began our initiative by using data analysis to identify crime locations and trends. To do this, our department clerks spent a considerable amount of time digging through 6 years' worth of cases to compile crime incident information. This included assault, burglary, robbery, weapons offenses, and homicide related crimes.

We then partnered with the CNY Crime Analysis Center in Syracuse, who took all the data, analyzed it, and provided us with hot spot mapping for violent crimes. We used this analysis and mapping to identify the specific areas of the City which we have been concentrating our efforts.

We also took steps to ensure that specific members were given applicable training in various crime prevention concepts and techniques. In addition to police personnel, we also included the Fire Marshall and the Parks & Rec Department Director when we attended training for Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED). With this training, members were deployed to identify environmental issues which may contribute to crimes, and crime opportunities.

We know that there are simply some issues which the police cannot address. Therefore, based on the information collected, we met with other City department heads we provided them with a comprehensive list of issues which they could address. Some examples of the work being done include:

- working with the Parks & Rec Department to address issues at Higginbotham Park.
- working with the DPW to address environmental issues, including weeds, trash, grimy sidewalks, trimming trees, clearing debris, etc.
- working with the Codes Department and the Fire Marshal to address codes issues at certain properties.
- working with the Sign Department to install new signs, re-paint parking spots, and even repaint faded utility poles.
- We have also used grant funding to purchase new trash cans to help address the litter/trash issues.

- We bought new bicycle racks to address bicycle thefts and unsightly conditions/
- We bought and installed new LED lights in areas that were dark at night.
- We purchased and are installing new surveillance cameras.
- We purchased and installed new trees to replace old dead trees that have been removed.

We also used our social media to inform the public about the initiative and that citizens could expect to see increased police presence and interactions. We deployed trained Officers into the identified areas, with the purpose of both being a deterrent for crime, but to also speak with citizens, property owners, residents, businesses, etc. Through these proactive encounters, Officers were able to identify a number of concerns and issues, as well as many suggestions for how these issues could be addressed. These interactions also serve as methods to build trust and foster positive relationships, while addressing community needs.

While Officers were being deployed, we knew that we wanted to expand our community engagement further. Therefore, we also sought the assistance of Syracuse University's public relations classes, who provided us with research, evaluations, and suggestions on how we could improve our public outreach and communication with the community. With their recommendations, we created an Instagram page, and we rebranded our PD logo. We are also in the process of creating a mobile app which we plan to release in the near future.

We also listened to concerns regarding specific properties and individuals being involved in criminal activity, and we increased targeted investigation and enforcement activities. An example of this can be seen in the 2 search warrants executed at a local deli smoke shop where products were being illegally possessed and sold. It was through the assistance of the citizens that we were able to conduct successful investigations like this, and others.

But our efforts haven't stopped there. Being that we want our efforts to have long-term and sustainable effects, we sought to determine the underlying causes of crimes, other than just enforcement and environmental factors. Based on feedback from Officers and from the community, we again compiled incident data and worked with the CNY Crime Analysis Center to analyze it further. What we found was that drug abuse and mental health were both common underlying issues associated with criminal activity and occurring in the same areas as criminal activity.

With that information, we met with local mental health and substance abuse professionals and agreed to share information and collaborate on addressing these underlying problems. This new partnership has led to the regular sharing of applicable information so that the local providers can follow-up with people who are experiencing mental health and/or substance use crisis situations. We also created a pamphlet which provides information for local outpatients as well as crisis services. We are also including these mental health and substance abuse providers on our deployments, essentially as a co-deployment for outreach purposes. We use these co-deployments as opportunities to bring the resources and information to the people in the identified areas, and to take the time to provide the new pamphlet, as well as other educational and crime reporting materials to citizens.

In order to continue to assess and analyze our initiative and any progress, we are working with a professor from the St. John Fisher University, who is assisting us with research and the creation of follow-up surveys. We intend to use these community surveys to determine if the community members are seeing any

progress.

I'm sure you want to know if all of this work has made any difference. Well, based on the feedback from the citizens and businesses within the identified areas, the answer is yes. During 2023, Officers were deployed for a total of approximately 440 hours, making over 700 proactive contacts in the identified areas of Oneida. These proactive contacts have been very well received. We have also seen violent criminal incidents within the hot spots dropping consistently starting in the 3rd quarter of 2023, and continuing to drop to this day, while drug seizures drastically increased. These can be attributed to our efforts to not only address violent crimes, but to the increased proactive drug enforcement efforts by our members.

At the suggestion of our professional partners, we are working on creating a local taskforce comprised of department heads and community stakeholders, to ensure that everyone has a voice at the table while also being guided and pushed to prioritize their attention and efforts to continue making long-term sustainable progress.

I'd also like to add that our efforts have caught the attention of other departments and agencies throughout the state. Some agencies which are much larger and are looking at establishing similar initiatives and are looking at how we are doing it. We are also consulting with agencies outside of NYS which have embraced other aspects, such as the mental health co-response, and we are consulting with them to gain more knowledge of what worked and what hasn't so we can expand on that locally. We have also been selected to present our initiative at a statewide law enforcement symposium in Albany later this year. Clearly, our efforts here are being noticed by many others, and we intend to continue making positive these impacts.

With all of that said, and with a relatively brief explanation of a very in-depth crime prevention initiative, this is where we turn to you, the common council and city leadership. The Oneida City Police are all in and have taken the lead on something that can truly have great and positive impacts on our city for many years to come. But we cannot do it alone.

We implore the city to take the initiative to invest in this city of ours. We cannot continue to ask the residents and property owners to invest in their properties if the city doesn't take the proactive initiative to do the same. We understand that there are other tasks that need to be done, and that not everyone is going to consider this initiative as a priority. But, if we as a city want this to succeed, we must have a strong leadership from the top to make sure that tasks are being completed timely and proficiently.

Finally, I'd like to thank the citizens of Oneida who have taken the time to talk with our Officers, provide valuable insight and suggestions. We are listening, and we will continue to listen and do whatever we can do to continue to deter and prevent crime and improve the overall quality of life for everyone.

Thank you."

Mayor Rossi thanked the project team for all they have done so far, noting that he has sat in on a couple of meetings and has walked the streets with them. He advised that although many do not always see the arrests, they do see the tangible things, such as the bike racks, trash cans and tree trimming, and advised

that he is “all in” with this initiative as well.

Supervisor Mary Cavanagh mentioned that she had just learned about the program today, following a conversation with the Director of Mental Health at the County. The Director had informed her that one of the crisis workers had participated and spoke very highly of its success. She inquired about the program's continuity. Chief Lowell responded that they are collaborating with Madison County Mental Health and are piloting a program that involves pairing a crisis mental health worker with an officer in a soft uniform. The goal is to encourage people to seek help and treatment for mental health issues, thereby reducing the associated stigma. He added that they have developed a pamphlet for distribution, which will soon be available on the mobile app and website.

Sergeant Burgess elaborated that the pamphlet contains outpatient resources for mental health and substance abuse, along with crisis resources for these situations. They also provide information on Crime Stoppers and the New York State "See Something, Say Something" campaign. Additionally, they offer drug test kits to individuals using drugs, ensuring they are not using substances that could lead to a fatal overdose. He emphasized that while they do not encourage drug use, they also do not want to see individuals overdose. Sgt. Burgess advised that they are planning a large community event in the near future with the Police and other resources with services available which will be beneficial to the community. Sgt. Burgess stated that the goal is to have a crisis worker accompany them on the streets at least once a week, possible twice a week, noting that if the program continues to be successful, they can hopefully there will be funding to have someone in house on a daily basis.

PUBLIC COMMENT

ROBERT EATON-407 WEST ELM STREET

Robert Eaton spoke to the Council about an appearance ticket he received from the Codes Department regarding stacks of pallets next to his shed, located behind his house. He mentioned that while his four neighbors do not have an issue with this, it appears that one does. Mr. Eaton explained that he cannot afford to have a fence erected around his house and intends to use the repurposed wood he has to build it himself.

Mr. Eaton clarified that the items in question are not junk; rather, he was waiting for the Hen Law to be passed. This would determine the type of fence required and the structure he might need to build for his hens, should keeping them be allowed. He reiterated that the items were behind his house, and he cannot afford to spend the money when he has perfectly good wood that he can use, noting that he does not understand the purpose of this citation.

JIM COULTHART-544 BROADWAY

Mr. Coulthart expressed his opposition to the harboring of hens in the City of Oneida. While he appreciates the Committee's efforts to organize matters in a reasonable manner, he believes that any passage in their legislative findings and intent relates to what he is present to discuss.

Mr. Coulthart quoted the conditions imposed from the Local Law: “The conditions imposed by this Local Law are intended to facilitate the harboring of hens in a manner that is consistent with

the residential character of the City and so as to not cause or contribute to nuisances, pollution or otherwise adversely impact neighboring property owners in any way.”

He addressed nuisance factors such as smell that have been dealt with in the past. He advised that those trying to get this done are the ones who would follow through; however, his concern is with those who don't follow the rules as put forth. He has concerns as to how the Community Service officer will be able to enforce any of the penalties.

Mr. Coulthart also commented on the Wind Energy Systems Moratorium, suggesting that if and when such projects are approved, a clause should be included requiring the company to remediate the land once they are done. He noted that this was missing from the solar panel experience that occurred previously.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

RESOLUTION 24-132

Motioned by Councilor Winchell
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

RESOLVED, that the meeting is hereby adjourned to Executive Session at 7:23p.m. to

☒ Seek advice of Counsel ☐ Discuss a personnel matter

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

Absent: 2 (Szczerba/Hitchings)

MOTION CARRIED

PRESENT: ☒ Mayor ☒ Acting City Manager ☒ Council ☒ Other

- Fire Chief Scott Jones
- Public Safety Commission Dave Jones
- Attorney Stacy Marris

ABSENT: Councilor Szczerba/Councilor Hitchings

1. Discussion was held to: ☒ Seek advice of Counsel
☐ Discuss a personnel matter

Motioned by Councilor Winchell
Seconded by Councilor Pagano

RESOLVED, that Executive Session is hereby adjourned to the regular meeting at 8:24 p.m.

Ayes: 5
Nays: 0
Absent: 2 (Szczerba/Hitchings)
MOTION CARRIED

Motion to adjourn by Councilor Simchik
Seconded by Councilor Winchell

Ayes: 5
Nays: 0
Absent: 2 (Szczerba/Hitchings)
MOTION CARRIED

The regular meeting is hereby adjourned at 8:24 p.m.

CITY OF ONEIDA

Sandra LaPera, City Clerk