

**MINUTES OF THE COMMON COUNCIL**  
**REGULAR MEETING**  
**NOVEMBER 19, 2024**

A meeting of the Common Council of the City of Oneida, NY was held on the nineteenth day of November 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><b>Attendees</b></u>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Absent</b>	<b>Arrived Late</b>
Mayor Rossi	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Kyle Lovell, CM	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
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 Hitchings	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Councilor Winchell	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Councilor Pagano	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 6:32
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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Brandee Henderson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Michelle Kinville	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**Also Present**

City Attorney Nadine Bell	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Public Safety Comm. Dave Jones	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
City Clerk Sandy LaPera	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Int. Comptroller Lee Ann Wells	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Fire Chief Scott Jones	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Police Chief Steve Lowell	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		

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Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance/Roll Call

**PUBLIC HEARING:**      2025 Mayor's Budget

**OPEN PUBLIC HEARING  
2025 MAYOR'S BUDGET**

**RESOLUTION 24-260**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

**RESOLVED**, that the Public Hearing for the 2025 Mayor's Budget be hereby opened at 6:30p.m.

Ayes: 6

Nays: 0

Absent: 1 (Pagano-arrived at 6:32)

**MOTION CARRIED**

**APPEARANCES**

RALPH KOHLER-ONEIDA

Mr. Kohler has requested updates on two matters:

1. **Kallet Theater:** He has not received a response regarding the current status and seeks information on any developments.
2. **Sidewalk Improvements:** He is seeking clarification on whether the grant for sidewalk improvements requires matching funds. He has encountered differing opinions—some indicating a match is necessary, others suggesting it is not. If a match is required, he would like to know if the City has decided to fund the non-matching portion.

PETER HEDGLON-ONEIDA

Former Mayor Hedglon commended the Council for addressing the Glenmore Dam issues that have persisted for over two decades. He noted that, although he hasn't reviewed the bids, he is certain they are significantly higher than they would have been 10 to 15 years ago.

Mr. Hedglon shared that the City portion of his and his wife's tax bill amounts to \$1,441, which constitutes 50% of their total tax bill. The remaining amount is allocated to the county and the hydrant tax. He broke this down further, noting that for their residence, which houses two people, the cost equates to approximately \$3.97 per day. He emphasized the importance of addressing issues promptly rather than deferring them, even if the temptation to delay exists due to it being an election year.

Mr. Hedglon expressed that the small amount he pays in City taxes is "peanuts" compared to the value he receives living in Oneida. He highlighted the benefits of having a professional police force and a fire department that can respond quickly to emergencies, which he considers invaluable to himself and other

residents. He noted that Oneida has historically been a bedroom community, where people choose to live because of the quality services, lifestyle, and strong sense of community it offers. He urged the Council to keep these factors in mind as they consider limiting a tax increase, emphasizing that important services and long-term benefits should not be sacrificed, even in an election year.

Mr. Hedglon expressed disappointment over the absence of allocations for real property reassessment, noting that it has been over 15 years since the last one. He also pointed out the lack of ward reapportionment, emphasizing that the 2020 census data has been available and that such adjustments are typically conducted every decade following the census.

Note for informational purposes:

Regular property reassessments are crucial for maintaining equitable tax distribution among property owners. Addressing both property reassessment and ward reapportionment is essential for upholding fairness and equity in taxation and representation within the community.

**CLOSE PUBLIC HEARING  
2025 MAYOR'S BUDGET**

**RESOLUTION 24-261**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

**RESOLVED**, that the Public Hearing for the 2025 Mayor's Budget be hereby closed at 6:36p.m.

Ayes: 7

Nays: 0

**MOTION CARRIED**

**PUBLIC HEARING:** Miscellaneous Utility Billing-unpaid service charges, water rents, and sewer taxes and to authorize the charges in the 2024 assessment roll to be re-levied onto the 2025 tax roll

**OPEN PUBLIC HEARING  
MISCELLANEOUS UTILITY BILLING**

**RESOLUTION 24-262**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

**RESOLVED**, that the Public Hearing for Miscellaneous Utility Billing-unpaid service charges, water rents, and sewer taxes and to authorize the charges in the 2024 assessment roll to be re-levied onto the 2025 tax roll be hereby opened at 6:36p.m.

Ayes: 7  
Nays: 0

**MOTION CARRIED**

**APPEARANCES**

None

**CLOSE PUBLIC HEARING  
MISCELLANEOUS UTILITY BILLING**

**RESOLUTION 24-263**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Szczerba

**RESOLVED**, that the Public Hearing for Miscellaneous Utility Billing-unpaid service charges, water rents, and sewer taxes and to authorize the charges in the 2024 assessment roll to be re-levied onto the 2025 tax roll be hereby closed at 6:36p.m.

Ayes: 7  
Nays: 0

**MOTION CARRIED**

**PUBLIC HEARING:** A Local Law authorizing a property tax levy in excess of the limit established in General Municipal Law §3-C

**OPEN PUBLIC HEARING  
A LOCAL LAW AUTHORIZING A PROPERTY TAX LEVY IN EXCESS  
OF THE LIMIT ESTABLISHED IN GENERAL MUNICIPAL LAW §3-C**

**RESOLUTION 24-264**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

**RESOLVED**, that the Public Hearing for a Local Law authorizing a property tax levy in excess of the limit established in General Municipal Law §3-C be hereby opened at 6:37p.m.

Ayes: 7

Nays: 0

**MOTION CARRIED**

**APPEARANCES**

None

**CLOSE PUBLIC HEARING**

**A LOCAL LAW AUTHORIZING A PROPERTY TAX LEVY IN EXCESS  
OF THE LIMIT ESTABLISHED IN GENERAL MUNICIPAL LAW §3-C**

**RESOLUTION 24-265**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Winchell

**RESOLVED**, that the Public Hearing for a Local Law authorizing a property tax levy in excess of the limit established in General Municipal Law §3-C be hereby closed at 6:37p.m.

Ayes: 7

Nays: 0

**MOTION CARRIED**

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** None

**OLD BUSINESS:**

Councilor Szczerba inquired about the status of the Hotel Oneida project, noting constituent interest. City Attorney Bell responded that, according to former Planning Director Chris Henry, the subdivision of parking areas—previously delaying the project's finalization—is currently being processed. She indicated that this process has either just been completed or is scheduled for completion at the next meeting.

The subdivision involves the sale of approximately 23 parking spaces to the Oneida Hotel. A condition of this transfer is that the deed must be recombined, ensuring the parking spaces remain with the hotel property. Additionally, a small portion of property will be sold to All Seasonings to address their parking

needs. Both property owners are undertaking improvements on Cedar Street, which include developing at least 35 parking spaces on city land. These enhancements aim to increase parking availability in the downtown area.

The City plans to transfer ownership of the parking spaces to the Industrial Development Agency (IDA), which will then handle the sale and receive the proceeds. This approach mirrors the previous transaction with the Costello's, where city property was sold for parking purposes through the IDA. An appraisal has been conducted to determine the fair market value, as the City is legally obligated to sell the property at this value. The exact appraised amount is currently unspecified.

Mayor Rossi stated that he believed the Planning Board might have approved the subdivision and parking issue at its last meeting, enabling the project to progress, though confirmation is needed. He remarked that this matter could have been resolved in June, but delays arose when All Seasonings submitted their request, requiring the City to subdivide the lot to accommodate both the Oneida Hotel and All Seasonings. Mayor Rossi further explained that reassessment and re-surveying of the property were necessary, contributing to the delays; however, with these steps now completed, the project is ready to move forward.

City Attorney Bell noted that while progress has been made, she cannot confirm that everything is fully aligned due to the Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) and other factors. She stated that a timeline cannot be provided until further discussions occur with the parties involved.

Councilor Winchell inquired about the status of the Kallet Civic Center. Mayor Rossi acknowledged having discussions regarding its potential sale but emphasized the importance of keeping it operational for the community's benefit. He expressed concern that selling it might lead to its closure if acquired by someone using it primarily for tax benefits. He also noted that the city currently lacks the staff to manage the Kallet, necessitating either contracting its operations to an external party or making alternative decisions.

Councilor Laureti inquired about the feasibility of including terms in a potential sale contract that would permit the city to continue using the Kallet Civic Center. City Attorney Bell explained that while certain terms and deed restrictions could be added, they might impact the fair market value, and the prospective buyer would need to agree to them. The Council requested the City Manager to explore the option of engaging an entertainment management company, noting that other municipalities have experienced success under such arrangements and engaging a professional theater management company could provide the expertise needed to operate the Kallet Civic Center effectively, ensuring it remains a valuable asset to the community.

There was further discussion about pay per event vs leasing and what options are available.

#### **REPORTS:**

- **Mayor's Report:** None
- **City Manager's Report:**  
City Manager Lovell expressed his gratitude to everyone involved in the budget process. He acknowledged that, having joined the process later, he greatly appreciated the assistance he received and commended the hard work and dedication of all the employees who contributed.
- **Supervisor's Report:**

Supervisor Brandee Henderson reported that sales tax revenue is approximately 1% higher than last year's figures. She noted that they are currently in their annual session, with the next meeting scheduled for Thursday, November 21st.

#### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

**RESOLVED**, that the minutes of the regular meeting of November 6, 2024, are hereby approved as presented.

Ayes: 7  
Nays: 0

**MOTION CARRIED**

#### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Winchell

**RESOLVED**, that the minutes of the special meeting of November 7, 2024, are hereby approved as presented.

Ayes: 7  
Nays: 0

**MOTION CARRIED**

#### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Winchell

**RESOLVED**, that the minutes of the special meeting of November 12, 2024, are hereby approved as presented.

Ayes: 7  
Nays: 0

**MOTION CARRIED**

## **APPROVAL OF WARRANT**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

**RESOLVED**, that Warrant No. 23, checks and ACH payments in the amount of \$148,817.98 as audited by the Voucher Committee are hereby approved for payment in the usual manner at the discretion of the Comptroller or a third party duly retained by the City of Oneida to perform such services.

Ayes: 7  
Nays: 0

**MOTION CARRIED**

## **MONTHLY REPORTS**

### **RESOLUTION 24-266**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

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

Ayes: 7  
Nays: 0

**MOTION CARRIED**

## **ADOPT A LOCAL LAW AMENDING CHAPTER 116 OF THE ONEIDA CITY CODE REGARDING PEDDLING AND SOLICITATION**

### **RESOLUTION 24-267**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Szczerba

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to the provisions of the Municipal Home Rule Law, an amended proposed Local Law, titled "A Local Law Amending Chapter 116 of the Code of the Oneida City Regarding Peddling and Solicitation," was presented and re-introduced at a Regular Meeting of the Common Council of the City of Oneida held on October 22, 2024; and

**WHEREAS**, public hearings were held on such proposed Local Law on October 1, 2024, and November 6,



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 an Type II action and will have no significant effect on the environment, thus concluding the environmental 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 Local Law of 2024 as follows:

“LOCAL LAW 2024

A LOCAL LAW AMENDING CHAPTER 116 OF THE CODE OF THE CITY OF ONEIDA REGARDING PEDDLING  
AND SOLICITATION

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

**Section 1. AUTHORITY.**

This local law is enacted pursuant to New York State Constitution and New York Municipal Home Rule Law § 10.

**Section 2.**

So that Section 116-1, titled “Definitions,” is hereby amended to add or amend the following terms, which shall read in their entirety as follows:

“PUBLIC PLACE - All publicly owned property between the property lines on a street as such property lines are shown on City records which shall include, but not be limited to, a park, plaza, street, roadway, highway, shoulder, tree space, sidewalk, parking space or parking lot, between such property lines, as well as publicly owned lands.

PRIVATE PLACE – All privately owned or leased property where use of the property for commercial purposes, including mobile food vending, is restricted to persons who have the written permission of the owner or lessee of the property.”

**Section 3.**

So that Subsection A of Section 116-5, titled “Issuance and fees,” is hereby amended to read in its entirety as follows:

“A. Upon the filing of a complete application and payment of the applicable application fees, as determined from time to time by resolution of the Common Council, and upon receipt of an

approved local background check from the City Police Department and an approved Operational Permit from the Fire Department, the City Clerk shall, upon the approval of such application, issue to the applicant a license.”

#### **Section 4.**

So that Section 116-7, titled “Additional regulations for mobile food vendor licenses,” is hereby amended to read in its entirety as follows:

“All of the provisions of Article I of this chapter shall apply to all mobile food vendors conducting business within the City, whether on a daily (one-time) or annual basis, in any Public Place. The following additional requirements shall also apply to mobile food vendors:

- A. All mobile food vendors must obtain a daily (one-time) or annual mobile food vendor's license for each vehicle, pushcart, or stand. Such licenses shall be issued by the City Clerk in accordance with the provisions of this article and chapter.
- B. In the case of Private Places, permits are required per the provisions of this local law, but the City shall not have authority over the approval of the location of the mobile food vendor.
- C. Locations available to licensed mobile food vendors, whether a daily or annual license, shall be specifically designated and approved from time to time by resolution of the Common Council following review and recommendation by the Chief of Police, the Director of Parks and Recreation and the City Engineer with respect to potential risk to public safety. In no event shall any such authorized location be less than 20 feet from a street intersection. The list containing the approved locations shall be provided to vendors upon approval of the annual or daily license. Vendors are free to choose the location to conduct business from but must adhere to the approved list when selecting a Public Place location.
- D. Annual licenses shall be renewable annually and shall be valid from January 1 to December 31 of each calendar year. The City Clerk shall publish a notice in the City's official newspaper between November 1 and November 15 of the preceding calendar year stating that, for annual mobile food vendor licenses, applications shall be submitted to the City Clerk by the following 10th day of December and shall be acted upon by the City Clerk in accordance with these regulations within three business days thereafter.
- E. All mobile food vendors shall agree to defend and indemnify the City of Oneida from all claims, losses and liabilities the City may incur as a consequence of the operations of the mobile food vendor. In addition, each mobile food vendor must submit to the City Clerk proof of the following required insurance coverage: general liability insurance with personal injury coverage limits per occurrence of not less than \$1,000,000 naming the City of Oneida as additional insured, as well as worker's compensation and disability insurance as statutorily required under New York State Law.”
- F. Prior to commencement of business activities under a mobile vendor's license, the applicant shall provide to the City Clerk proof of the issuance of a valid permit from the Madison County

Health Department for such business operations and a valid New York State sales tax certificate.

- G. Upon the approval of a mobile food vendor's license, the City shall provide the licensee with a license document signifying his or her status as a licensed mobile food vendor. It shall be unlawful for a mobile food vendor to not conspicuously display the license on his or her vehicle, pushcart or stand during business operations. Preservation of the integrity of the license document from the elements while displayed shall be the responsibility of the vendor.
- H. Food vendors shall provide suitable disposal receptacles for use by patrons and shall be responsible for all cleanup and removal of all debris and trash resulting from the operation of their individual sites.
- I. No food vendor shall place his vehicle, pushcart or stand on lawn areas of parks or other public places, or otherwise operate his or her business in such manner as to cause damage to any such green areas.
- J. Food vendors shall be responsible for the repair of any damage whatsoever to any public grounds or other public property caused by, or in association with, their business. The City shall have the right, at any time and without prior notice to the license holder, to repair any such damage and invoice the license holder for all such costs. Failure to pay any such invoice within 10 days shall be grounds for immediate revocation of the mobile food vendor's license.
- K. No alcoholic beverage may be sold or offered for sale by a mobile food vendor.
- L. Hours of operation shall be limited to 8 a.m. until 11 p.m.
- M. All mobile food vendor licenses shall be subject to the condition that all licensees agree to comply with the direction of any police officer, or any City employee or representative acting within the scope of his or her employment, directing the licensee to temporarily suspend or alter operations, or temporarily relocate to another location for such period of time as may be determined by the City in order to accommodate a parade, funeral or other activity of a community nature. Failure to obey any such directive shall be grounds for the immediate revocation of the license."

## **Section 5.      VALIDITY & SEVERABILITY**

If a court determines that any clause, sentence, paragraph, subdivision, or part of this local law or application thereof to any person, firm or corporation, or circumstance is invalid or unconstitutional, the court's order or judgment shall not affect, impair, or invalidate the remainder of this local law, but shall be confined in its operation to the clause, sentence, paragraph, subdivision, or part of this local law or in its application to the person, individual, firm or corporation or circumstance, directly involved in the controversy in which such judgment or order shall be rendered.

**Section 6. EFFECTIVE DATE**

This local law shall be effective upon filing with the office of the Secretary of State.”

Mayor Rossi	YES
Councilor Szczerba	YES
Councilor Laureti	YES
Councilor Hitchings	YES
Councilor Winchell	YES
Councilor Pagano	YES
Councilor Simchik	YES

**MOTION CARRIED**

**ADOPT A LOCAL LAW OVERRIDING THE TAX LEVY LIMIT ESTABLISHED  
IN GENERAL MUNICIPAL LAW §3-C IN THE CITY OF ONEIDA**

**RESOLUTION 24-268**

Moved to Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to the provisions of the Municipal Home Rule Law, a proposed local law titled Local Law of 2024, “A Local Law Overriding the Tax Levy Limit Established in General Municipal Law §3-c in the City of Oneida,” was presented and introduced at a regular meeting of the Common Council of the City of Oneida held on November 6, 2024; and

**WHEREAS**, a public hearing was held on such proposed local law on the 19th day of November, 2024, by the Common Council of the City of Oneida and proof of publication of notice of such public hearing, 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 proposed Local Law of 2024 has previously been determined to be an unlisted action and will have no significant effect on the environment, thus concluding the environmental review process; and

**WHEREAS**, it is in the public interest to enact said proposed Local Law of 2024.

**NOW, THEREFORE**, it is

**RESOLVED** that the Common Council of the City of Oneida, Madison County, New York, does hereby enact a proposed Local Law of 2024 as follows:

**"CITY OF ONEIDA  
LOCAL LAW 2024**

**A LOCAL LAW OVERRIDING THE TAX LEVY LIMIT ESTABLISHED IN GENERAL MUNICIPAL LAW  
§3-C IN THE CITY OF ONEIDA**

**Section 1. Legislative Intent**

It is the intent of this local law to allow the City of Oneida to adopt a budget for the fiscal year commencing January 1, 2025, that requires a real property tax levy in excess of the "tax levy limit" as defined by General Municipal Law § 3-c.

**Section 2. Authority**

This local law is adopted pursuant to subdivision 5 of General Municipal Law §3-c, which expressly authorizes a local government's governing body to override the property tax cap for the coming fiscal year by the adoption of a local law approved by a vote of sixty percent (60%) of said governing body.

**Section 3. Tax Levy Limit Override**

The Common Council of the City of Oneida, County of Madison, is hereby authorized to adopt a budget for the fiscal year commencing January 1, 2025, that requires a real property tax levy in excess of the amount otherwise prescribed in General Municipal Law §3-c.

**Section 4. Severability**

If a court determines that any clause, sentence, paragraph, subdivision, or part of this local law or the application thereof to any person, firm or corporation, or circumstance is invalid or unconstitutional, the court's order or judgment shall not affect, impair, or invalidate the remainder of this local law, but shall be confined in its operation to the clause, sentence, paragraph, subdivision, or part of this local law or in its application to the person, individual, firm or corporation or circumstance, directly involved in the controversy in which such judgment or order shall be rendered.

**Section 5. Effective date**

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

Mayor Rossi	YES
Councilor Szczerba	NO
Councilor Laureti	NO
Councilor Hitchings	YES
Councilor Winchell	NO
Councilor Pagano	YES
Councilor Simchik	YES

**MOTION CARRIED**

**BUDGET TRANSFERS/AMENDMENTS**

**RESOLUTION 24-269**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

**RESOLVED**, to approve the budget transfers and amendments as outlined by the Comptroller, or a third party duly retained by the City of Oneida to perform such services.

		<u>To</u>		<u>From</u>	
<b>2024 Budget Adjustments</b>					
\$	3,500.00	001.3120.0403.0000		001.3120.0101.0000	
		Police Contracts		Police Salary	
<b>To re-allocate funds to cover payroll services</b>					
\$	975.00	001.9010.0806.0000		001.9011.0807.0000	
		ERS Retirement		Police & Fire Retirement	
<b>To re-allocate funds to cover annual ERS retirement invoice</b>					

Ayes: 7

Nays: 0

**MOTION CARRIED**

**RELEASE/DISCHARGE, OR COMMUTE CITY/COUNTY TAXES**

**RESOLUTION 24-270**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

**RESOLVED**, pursuant to Section 5.44 of the Oneida City Charter, the Common Council does hereby exercise its discretion to release, discharge, or commute City/County taxes for real property according to attached Exhibit A, for the years 2015-2016, in the amount of \$166,286.64, which includes the taxes owed and interest incurred.

Ayes: 7

Nays: 0

**MOTION CARRIED**

**AGREEMENTS-EXCELLUS**

**RESOLUTION 24-271**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Winchell

**RESOLVED**, to authorize the City Manager to sign the Excellus Health and Dental Plan renewal agreements for 2025.

Ayes: 7

Nays: 0

**MOTION CARRIED**

**ADVERTISE FOR BIDS-TREE REMOVAL AND TRIMMING SERVICES**

**RESOLUTION 24-272**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Winchell

**RESOLVED**, authorize the Purchasing Agent, or a third party duly retained by the City of Oneida to perform such services, to advertise for bids for Tree Removal and Trimming Services.

Ayes: 7

Nays: 0

**MOTION CARRIED**

**RETIREE HEALTH INSURANCE RENEWAL (2025)**

**RESOLUTION 24-273**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Pagano

**RESOLVED**, that the Mayor be authorized to sign the Retiree Health Insurance Renewal Plan for 2025 with Humana Group Medicare.

Ayes: 7

Nays: 0

**MOTION CARRIED**

**ADVERTISE FOR BIDS-WATER DEPARTMENT**

**RESOLUTION 24-274**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Winchell

**RESOLVED**, authorize the Purchasing Agent, or a third party duly retained by the City of Oneida to perform such services, to advertise for bids for Liquid Chlorine & Sodium Hypochlorite and Liquid Zinc Orthophosphate & Liquid Polyphosphate for the Water Department.

Ayes: 7

Nays: 0

**MOTION CARRIED**

**EXTEND CONTRACT-SURPASS CHEMICAL (LIQUID CAUSTIC SODA)**

**RESOLUTION 24-275**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

**RESOLVED**, to approve a contract extension for Liquid Caustic Soda to Surpass Chemical Company Inc., 1254 Broadway, Albany, NY 12204 for the first half of 2025 (January to June).

Ayes: 7

Nays: 0

**MOTION CARRIED**

**EXTEND CONTRACT-HOLLAND COMPANY (LIQUID ALUMINUM SULFATE)**

**RESOLUTION 24-276**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

**RESOLVED**, to approve a one-year contract extension (2025) for Liquid Aluminum Sulfate to Holland Co. Inc., 153 Howland Ave., Adams, MA 01220.

Ayes: 7

Nays: 0

**MOTION CARRIED**



**INTRODUCE A LOCAL LAW FOR IMPOSING A THREE (3) MONTH MORATORIUM ON WIND ENERGY  
CONVERSION SYSTEM (WECS) USES WITHIN THE CITY OF ONEIDA  
SCHEDULE PUBLIC HEARING**

**RESOLUTION 24-277**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

**WHEREAS**, the City of Oneida recognizes the importance of renewable energy sources in mitigating climate change and promoting sustainability; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Oneida acknowledges the potential benefits of Wind Energy Conversion Systems (WECS) in contributing to renewable energy goals; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Oneida is committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of its residents, including considering potential impacts on national security and public safety; and

**Whereas**, communications with the U.S. Department of Defense and the Air Force Research Laboratory (AFRL) in Rome have raised concerns regarding potential impacts of WECS installations on existing communication systems and military operations; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Oneida seeks to review and amend existing laws and regulations pertaining to WECS to address the concerns raised by the U.S. Department of Defense and AFRL;

**WHEREAS**, the City of Oneida has been working to develop amendments to existing local laws and regulations pertaining to WECS and related permitting, but recognizes that additional time is needed to do so effectively; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Oneida, while working to develop such amendments, has encountered administrative problems, namely the resignation of the City of Oneida Director of Planning and Economic Development and the resignation of the Director's assistant, resulting in the lack of necessary professional guidance in this process; and

**WHEREAS**, the proposed local law has been introduced and will be considered for enactment pursuant to the provisions of the Municipal Home Rule Law and General City Law; and

**WHEREAS**, the Common Council has deemed this moratorium urgent and immediately necessary in order to preserve status quo while this issue is examined by the City; and

**WHEREAS**, no other agency has the legal authority or jurisdiction to approve or directly undertake the enactment of local laws in the City of Oneida, such that there are no other involved agencies within the meaning of the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) with respect to the proposed enactment of said local law.

**NOW, THEREFORE**, it is

**RESOLVED AND DETERMINED** that there are no other involved agencies, the Common Council shall act as lead agency, and that the enactment of this proposed local law is a Type II action under SEQRA, thus concluding the environmental review process; and be it further

**RESOLVED** that the Common Council shall conduct a public hearing as to the enactment of proposed local law at the Oneida City Hall located at 109 North Main Street, in the City of Oneida on December 3, 2024, at 6:30 p.m., or as soon thereafter as the matter can be heard, at which time all persons interested in the subject shall be heard; and it is further

**RESOLVED** that notice of said public hearing shall be provided at least five (5) days prior to the date of said public hearing in a newspaper of general circulation within the City of Oneida; and be it further

**RESOLVED** that pending action on this local law, the City shall neither accept nor process any application pertaining to Wind Energy Conversion Systems (WECS).

Ayes: 7

Nays: 0

**MOTION CARRIED**

**CITY OF ONEIDA  
PROPOSED LOCAL LAW OF 2024**

**A LOCAL LAW IMPOSING A THREE (3) 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.

The City has been working to develop amendments to existing laws and regulations governing WECS installations and recognizes that additional time is needed to effectively do so.

### **Section 3. Moratorium on Wind Energy Conversion Systems**

A. 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.

1. This moratorium shall be in effect for a period of three (3) months from the effective date of this local law and shall expire on the earlier of: (i) the date three (3) 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.
2. This moratorium shall apply to all zoning districts and all real property within the City.
3. 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.

**AGREEMENT-ONEIDA CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**RESOLUTION 24-278**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Winchell

**RESOLVED**, authorize the Police Chief to sign an agreement with the Oneida City School District to provide for the assignment of crossing guards employed by the City to serve as crossing guards at certain intersections within the School District.

Ayes: 7  
Nays: 0

**MOTION CARRIED**

**AGREEMENTS-HYDRANT AGREEMENTS**

**RESOLUTION 24-279**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Winchell

**RESOLVED**, to authorize the City Manager to sign the following 2025-2029 Hydrant Agreements.

- Oneida Health Care Hydrant Agreement
- NYS Troop D Hydrant Agreement
- Oneida Towers Hydrant Agreement

Ayes: 7  
Nays: 0

**MOTION CARRIED**

**WATER BOARD RECOMMENDATION-REFUND (ST. PAUL'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH)**

**RESOLUTION 24-280**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings  
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

**RESOLVED**, to approve a refund of \$300 for Account No. 20-077001-00 (St. Paul's United Methodist Church), 551 Sayles Street, due to a water meter not being installed in time for the garden that gives back to the community per the Water Board Recommendation.

Ayes: 7

Nays: 0

**MOTION CARRIED**

**BOARD APPOINTMENT-PLANNING COMMISSION/ZBA**

**RESOLUTION 24-281**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings

Seconded by Councilor Szczerba

**RESOLVED**, to approve the Mayor's appointment of David Scholl to the Planning Commission/ZBA for a 7-year term.

Ayes: 7

Nays: 0

**MOTION CARRIED**

**AGREEMENT-HYDRANT AGREEMENT**

**RESOLUTION 24-282**

Moved by Councilor Hitchings

Seconded by Councilor Winchell

**RESOLVED**, to authorize the City Manager to sign the following 2025-2034 Hydrant Agreement.

- Oneida Castle Hydrant Agreement

Ayes: 7

Nays: 0

**MOTION CARRIED**

**NEW BUSINESS:**       None

Council took a break at 6:58p.m. and returned at 7:05p.m. before starting the final budget discussion.

**BUDGET WORK SESSION  
FINAL WRAP-UP MEETING**

Deputy Mayor Laureti reported that, as of November 4, 2024, his research indicated that the average salary for an Assessor was \$59,400. Despite the current Assessor's request for a \$15,000 raise, he proposed setting the salary at \$60,000, which received unanimous approval. City Manager Lovell deemed this a fair compromise. It was noted that while the Assessor had taken on additional duties in the absence of an Aide, she does not oversee any employees.

The City Manager approved adding \$38,525 to the Police Traffic Revenue line to account for crossing guard services provided to the Oneida City School District by the City Police Department. For transparency, Chief Lowell clarified that while he anticipates this being an annual payment, it is not guaranteed.

Originally, the City Engineer requested \$100,000 for gas and electric; however, the Mayor lowered it to \$70,000. Council agreed to increase it back to \$100,000 during the DPW Budget session, but ultimately opted to leave it alone after discussion with former Comptroller Lee Ann Wells who explained the reasoning for lowering it based on Wastewater Treatment Plant credits, which have increased substantially, because they are using so much energy.

Council agreed to keep the Police Vehicle Repairs at \$15,000 based on the cost of tires, batteries and oil changes for the entire fleet, which are expensive. It was noted that the department has already spent \$23,000 so far this year. Although council approved for 6 new vehicles and most of the expense associated with those would be covered under warranty, the warranty does not cover the batteries and other expenses noted.

Discussion took place regarding the Sidewalk Reserve Account, which currently holds \$45,000. The conversation focused on whether to replace all sidewalks or only those in the worst condition. Councilor Hitchings emphasized the importance of preserving the reserve account and recommended utilizing the full \$150,000 grant, which is 100% reimbursable. She also mentioned a second grant that requires a matching contribution.

Mayor Rossi expressed a preference to replace all sidewalks, not just the worst, and suggested the possibility of implementing a sidewalk tax to help offset the cost. Councilor Szczerba questioned whether residents in the Outside District, who do not have sidewalks, should be required to pay such a tax. Mayor Rossi responded by pointing out that many residents without children in school still pay school taxes, emphasizing that the city cannot selectively determine who contributes to public funding and all residents use the City sidewalks. Former Comptroller Wells explained the accounting method used for this, noting that Council does not have to budget for a fully reimbursable grant and can just approve to move forward. Council agreed to do the \$150,000 grant next year, before risking losing it, and the partially reimbursable grant can be done over 5 years, as suggested by resident Ralph Kohler.

In response to a question from Mayor Rossi, former Comptroller Wells explained that with the adjustments made thus far, \$747,710 would need to be taken from the General Fund to balance the budget, leaving the fund at 20.34%. Ms. Wells emphasized that, according to the resolution, the General Fund balance must remain above 20% throughout the year, which will significantly limit the City's ability to make budget transfers or adjustments in the coming year, if at all. Councilor Simchik strongly opposed withdrawing any funds from the Fund Balance, while Mayor Rossi highlighted the importance of

developing a strategic plan to secure the City's financial future.

Deputy Mayor Laureti proposed options to replenish the Fund Balance, including eliminating the HR Admin stipends, as the City Manager was willing to assume these duties. Former Comptroller Wells clarified that the HR stipends were not included in the budget, only Civil Service stipends, as there was no one assigned to those responsibilities.

Further discussion ensued regarding the Civil Service function. Ms. Wells informed the group that \$26,000 had been added to the Civil Service salary line. Councilor Hitchings emphasized the importance of filling this position and recommended leaving the funds in place. However, Deputy Mayor Laureti proposed reallocating the duties of this position under the "all other duties as assigned" provision, potentially saving the \$26,000. In response, Councilors Hitchings and Simchik questioned this suggestion, asking Deputy Mayor Laureti if he expected the individual to take on Civil Service responsibilities without additional compensation, highlighting that such an arrangement would be unfair.

City Manager Lovell highlighted logistical issues, noting that the role requires weekend availability for exams and testing, which is a significant concern. The discussion also explored the number of hours needed to perform the job and the possibility of outsourcing to the county. However, several challenges were identified, including potential costs, the need for someone local to manage tasks such as pink sheets, and other logistical hurdles, making outsourcing less viable.

Councilor Hitchings recommended appointing someone specifically to handle Civil Service duties, keeping the role separate from that of the Deputy Comptroller. Mayor Rossi agreed, stating that assigning additional responsibilities without compensation would be unfair. He suggested that if these duties were to be consolidated, a new title and job description would need to be created under existing Civil Service guidelines.

City Manager Lovell expressed concern that the Civil Service Commission might resist approving such changes and emphasized the need for a professional individual with expertise in Civil Service Law to support the City's organizational growth. He noted that this role touches on many facets of operations and highlighted that real efficiencies could be achieved by merging this position with an HR function, which the City currently lacks.

Deputy Mayor Laureti outlined the procedure used by the county for handling Civil Service responsibilities. In response, Councilor Hitchings pointed out that comparing the portion of the Civil Service workload handled by an account clerk at the county to the full scope of work performed by a dedicated Civil Service Department was not fair or accurate. She also expressed skepticism that the county would provide these services without cost. City Manager Lovell agreed to contact the county for further information.

Deputy Mayor Laureti proposed eliminating the Planning Aide position and hiring a Planner/Economic Developer (or a similar role) at a reduced salary of \$60,000. This new role would replace the current Director position, which has stricter education and experience requirements. The proposed Planner/Economic Developer could take on responsibilities such as marketing the city and serving as secretary to the Planning Board.

Mayor Rossi highlighted the complexity of the proposed Planner role, emphasizing that the Codes Department had previously attempted to oversee Planning duties but had to relinquish them due to the



substantial time and effort involved. Despite these challenges, there was consensus that the proposal was feasible and could benefit the City. It was agreed to set the salary at \$70,000, instead of Deputy Mayor Laureti's recommendation of \$60,000, to allow for flexibility. It was noted that if the City were to find a candidate for less, that would be a bonus, but they would rather have the budgeted amount higher until the titles and descriptions are correct.

The inclusion of grant writing experience in the Planner role was deemed essential. Deputy Mayor Laureti expressed that he would be willing to keep the tax rate at 2.5% and put \$64,000 back into Fund Balance based on the adjustments discussed above. While it was acknowledged that these changes would affect the Fund Balance, the impact would be relatively minor compared to the City's overall financial needs.

Mayor Rossi emphasized the need for ongoing discussions regarding the tax rate to address broader financial challenges. Councilors Simchik and Hitchings shared their concerns, emphasizing the importance of thorough deliberation. Councilor Hitchings expressed deep concern about the current state of the Fund Balance, while Councilor Simchik posed a critical question about the future, asking how they would handle the 2026 budget if the Fund Balance were entirely depleted, leaving no resources to draw upon. Their comments highlighted the urgency of addressing these financial issues with foresight and careful planning.

Mayor Rossi advised they cannot continue to cut positions, as the City is already operating at a minimum. Mayor Rossi asked Deputy Mayor Laureti to advise of his plan for the future, to which the Deputy Mayor suggested more restructuring. Deputy Mayor Laureti inquired about the need to take the \$750,000 from Fund Balance and asked the Mayor why he did it this way. Councilor Simchik responded that this is what it costs to run the City, with City Manager Lovell stating that this reflects the City's operational expenses.

Mayor Rossi reiterated the importance of continued discussions regarding the tax rate and the need to raise the taxes, so they do not have to take this much from the Fund Balance. He explained that when he submitted the proposed budget, he had to remain within the tax cap, which required a significant draw from the Fund Balance to balance the budget. At that time, the council had not yet voted to authorize a property tax levy exceeding the established limit. Now that this authorization has been approved, Mayor Rossi emphasized the need for a serious discussion about the prudent use of the Fund Balance and the necessity of addressing a potential tax increase.

Mayor Rossi reiterated that the tax rate increase was a necessity, stating that while everyone would prefer to avoid raising taxes, there is no alternative. Councilor Laureti underscored the importance of further discussion and finding a compromise to address the situation. This resulted in further discussion about the Planning position(s) and the requests from Department Heads to change the titles and salaries of current Account Clerks.

Councilor Winchell expressed his support for allowing the City Manager to evaluate all positions and proceed accordingly. He noted that the City Manager was hired in part, to conduct performance reviews and establish a precedent for the next budget. He clarified that they were not outright rejecting proposals but ensuring that their actions align with their stated intentions. Councilor Simchik added that this will allow for the City Manager to make sure that the titles and job descriptions are correct, as the City has made mistakes in the past when last minute changes have been made.

Councilor Hitchings remarked that the concern was not about whether the individuals deserved the proposed increases but rather the need for a structured plan. She recommended putting the matter on hold until the City Manager could assess the situation and develop a plan moving forward. She also raised

a concern about whether Department Heads were aware that, if a test is required for certain positions, individuals could potentially be bumped out of their roles or lose their positions entirely. City Manager Lovell advised that he will work on this and can start as early as next week implementing a training class and forms to be used for evaluations.

Mayor Rossi emphasized the importance of bringing employees' salaries up to appropriate levels before proceeding with performance evaluations and grade adjustments, ensuring they are compensated fairly for the work they are currently doing. Councilor Szczerba, however, argued that performance evaluations should be conducted first, with any salary adjustments made based on the results of those evaluations. Councilor Winchell agreed that the employees are probably underpaid; however, he feels it is important that the City Manager be allowed the opportunity to look into this first.

Councilor Hitchings expressed her trust in the Department Heads' assessment of the employees' performance but emphasized the need to ensure that the process moves forward appropriately. She highlighted the importance of Department Heads and employees understanding the potential ramifications of job title changes, noting that such changes could result in the loss of a position if someone else bids on it or if an external candidate scores higher on a required test. She stressed the importance of ensuring that everyone is aligned and informed as they proceed. All agreed to hold off on these changes for now.

Councilor Hitchings expressed her interest in discussing the City Clerk's request for a 4% salary increase, rather than the 3% allocated in the budget. She cited the Clerk's significant workload and added responsibilities, including managing tasks in the absence of a Planning Department, administering the City Website and Newsletter, completing a grant for the Records Retention Project, and consistently performing her duties at a high standard. She also supported the issuance of the \$2,500 stipend, to which Mayor Rossi and Councilor Simchik agreed.

Deputy Mayor Laureti expressed his support for the stipend but raised concerns that other Department Heads might take issue with awarding a higher percentage to one individual and not others. He suggested keeping the increase at 3%. In response, Councilor Hitchings emphasized that the City Clerk has gone above and beyond in her role. Mayor Rossi added that Council members have previously advocated for performance reviews to reward employees who exceed expectations, pointing out the inconsistency in recognizing such efforts without following through with appropriate compensation.

The City Clerk highlighted that, unlike other Department Heads, she is required to work from home on weekends and holidays, remain on call, and take on the responsibilities of other departments without additional compensation. She noted that her department has been assisting with Planning for the past three months. Furthermore, she pointed out that the Newsletter, which was implemented this year without a budget allocation, has been managed by her without compensation, and she even covered the \$200 cost for the necessary program out of pocket. She clarified that the requested additional 1% increase amounts to \$700. Councilor Hitchings further suggested that if other Department Heads feel they have taken on additional responsibilities, they also could come to council for discussion and consideration.

Mayor Rossi drew a comparison to the Assessor's salary increase, which was raised arbitrarily. The City Clerk suggested that the Council review the responsibilities of other City Clerks compared to hers and challenged them to find anyone, even with minimal education, willing to serve as a Website Administrator for \$1,000 a year. She detailed the tasks involved in this role, including posting agendas, meeting minutes, legal notices, email notifications, and alerts, as well as updating individual pages with significant content,

such as Planning materials. She also highlighted the time and effort required for managing both the City Website and the Newsletter, which she emphasized as substantial undertakings in addition to the added responsibilities already undertaken by her and her department. She cited examples of Door Security, the Community Gardens, substantial Foil requests, and other things that have been added, advising that this is a significant amount of extra work that has been growing for the last three years.

She explained that her department also provides coverage for the City Chamberlain and City Assessor's offices during their absence, emphasizing that there is no one else available to step in when they are off. She noted that the City Assessor is the sole employee in her department, and while the Senior Account Clerk is budgeted to cover for the Chamberlain, she is currently the only staff member in the Finance Department on a daily basis and cannot currently be in both places. Councilor Hitchings advised that 9 times out of 10, it is the City Clerk's office that picks up the slack, in addition to being a main point of contact for all customers.

Councilor Hitchings stated that, despite the matter being voted down a couple of times, she believes the idea of making the Chamberlain's position an appointed rather than an elected one is necessary. Mayor Rossi agreed. It was noted, however, that this change is not urgent, as it would not take effect until 2028. This timeline allows the individual elected next year to serve their full term of office before any adjustments are made.

The City Clerk stressed that the discussion is not about the individual holding the position but about the position itself. Issues related to timing and coverage, such as summer hours and the need to manage vacations, meetings, and appointments were discussed. It was noted that if the position were appointed, it would adhere to set hours and time off in accordance with the employee handbook, unlike an elected official who is not bound by these restrictions. Mayor Rossi added that if the clerk (and others) decided to stop performing tasks outside of their job title, the City would face significant challenges, stating that the City would "be screwed."

Councilor Hitchings presented a calculation showing that the proposed increase for the City Clerk would total \$2,898.12, plus a \$2,500 stipend. Acting Comptroller Wells clarified that the \$2,500 stipend was already included in the salary line and not an additional amount, making the actual increase \$709 above the proposed 3%. Mayor Rossi suggested reallocating \$1,000 from the Planning Salary line to the Clerk's salary if the Council wished to avoid additional spending, and it was agreed to lower the Planning Salary line from \$70,000 to \$69,000.

During further discussion, Mayor Rossi questioned why the Assessor had been evaluated while other positions were not. Councilor Hitchings explained that the evaluation was done to align the Assessor's position with Department Head status. Mayor Rossi expressed that this approach should be applied uniformly across all job titles. He also noted that while Deputy Mayor Laureti had conducted research on the Assessor's position, similar evaluations should have been performed for all positions requesting adjustments, including the Account Clerks.

Mayor Rossi questioned why there was concern about criticism for approving an increase for the Clerk but no similar concern for the Assessor's raise, highlighting a perceived inconsistency. Mayor Rossi stated that Councilor Laureti is ok raising for one, noting that it would not affect anything; however, everyone would be upset if it would be done for another, suggesting that this does not make sense.

Councilor Hitchings confirmed that the intention was to evaluate other positions but emphasized the

importance of having a clear plan in place first. Police Chief Lowell sought clarification on the performance appraisal process, asking if it would be tied to a specific dollar amount. City Manager Lovell explained that the details would be discussed internally and could be implemented through a tiered system, but that he was not “married” to any particular method at this time. Acting Comptroller Wells then addressed Civil Service guidelines, title changes, and contractual requirements, noting their impact on the evaluation and adjustment process. Chief Lowell asked what the harm would be in budgeting for these changes now for 2025 which gives the ability to move forward with the title changes after the audits are performed. Councilor Simchik suggested that a budget amendment could hopefully be done next year based on the City Manager’s evaluation and recommendation.

Councilor Szczerba asked Councilor Simchik when the last raise for Councilors had been approved, as he has been a Councilor for a long period of time. Councilor Simchik responded that, to his knowledge, the Council had received only one raise in over 20 years. Mayor Rossi then questioned how performance evaluations for Councilors would be conducted. In response, Councilor Hitchings emphasized that Councilors are public servants and stated that she would be willing to perform her role without compensation. Councilor Szczerba shared examples of compensation for council members in other municipalities, which in some cases included benefits, offering a comparison to highlight differences in pay structures and to provide context for the discussion about Council salaries.

Councilor Hitchings further clarified that there would be no title changes at this time for the Account Clerks; however, they would still get their contractual increases at 3% until the performance evaluation process is in place.

Councilor Hitchings reported that she, Councilor Simchik, former Water Superintendent John Monaghan, and City Manager Lovell met to address concerns that the water rate proposed by Mr. Monaghan would be insufficient to meet the city's financial needs. As a result, a rate increase was deemed necessary. She advised that the rates will increase to \$6.05 and \$4.53 per cubic foot, with the monthly base contract rates rising by \$2.90, and the rate for Prospect Street increasing by \$2.93.

Ms. Wells noted that she has not been involved with setting rates in the past and requested a full revenue line for review. Councilor Hitchings suggested providing the spreadsheet prepared by Mr. Monaghan. Councilor Simchik highlighted that the city will lose Verona as a revenue source in 2025, which accounts for approximately \$700,000 annually, while expenses are unlikely to decrease. He further mentioned the existing bonding for the Glenmore Dam and the likelihood of additional bonding in the future, potentially doubling payment obligations. Simchik emphasized that by adjusting the rates now, in line with how sewer rates were managed in recent years, the city will have the necessary funds available when financial challenges arise.

During the meeting, the possibility of transitioning from a water producer to a customer of the Onondaga County Water Authority (OCWA) was discussed. Mr. Monaghan, drawing on his experience in Syracuse and prior dealings with OCWA, noted that OCWA's current infrastructure might not be able to meet the city's water needs. He also pointed out that even if OCWA were to assume control of the city's water operations, challenges could remain.

City Manager Lovell stated he would contact OCWA to explore potential options, including a lease-buyback agreement if OCWA were to undertake a total takeover, which could provide the city with a source of income. Manager Lovell expressed a preference for becoming a consumer rather than remaining

a producer, considering the city's size and growth rate. He emphasized that it would be worthwhile to investigate whether such a transition is feasible.

Councilor Simchik discussed the city's ability to grow within the area with big players on all sides.

Motion to adjourn by Councilor Hitchings

Seconded by Councilor Pagano

Ayes: 7

Nays: 0

**MOTION CARRIED**

The regular meeting is hereby adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

**CITY OF ONEIDA**

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Sandra LaPera, City Clerk