

ATTACHMENT A
City Manager
Comments

Good evening, Mayor Rossi and members of the Common Council.

I would first like to recognize tonight's Purple Heart Day proclamation. As a veteran, I *Sincerely* appreciate the City honoring those who were wounded or gave their lives in service to our country.

I also want to briefly explain several items on tonight's agenda.

The monthly departmental reports provide the Council and the public with a regular account of the work being performed across City government.

The Council will also consider a local law overriding the State property tax levy limit for 2027. To be clear, adopting this local law does not raise taxes, establish a tax rate, or commit the Council to exceeding the tax cap. It simply preserves the City's legal ability to do so if necessary.

The final tax levy will only be determined after the 2027 budget is developed, reviewed during budget workshops, presented to the public, and adopted by the Council. If the final budget remains within the tax cap, the override authority will not be needed.

The Gotta Do Contracting agreement has been pulled from tonight's agenda following concerns about whether it sufficiently protects the City when accepting high-strength organic waste at the Wastewater Treatment Plant.

These concerns were raised by Madison County Board Chairman Jim Cunningham and ~~Mark Scimone~~. The City is now working with Madison County, City Engineer Jeff Rowe, legal counsel, and other appropriate professionals to review testing, waste manifests, source identification, prohibited materials, emerging contaminants, ~~indemnification~~, and the City's authority to reject loads. We must ensure that any agreement protects the treatment plant, the City's discharge permit, and Oneida Lake before it returns to the Council.

The Water Board recommendation updates the enforcement process for required annual testing of backflow prevention devices. The proposed policy establishes a clear series of notices and penalties for continued noncompliance while giving property owners multiple opportunities to correct the violation.

Tonight's budget amendments include \$50,000 for projected Water Department utility costs, \$27,000 for a high-pressure-zone study, and a \$7,500 internal Parks and Recreation transfer to cover pool staffing expenses.

I also want to provide a brief update regarding homelessness.

The City has begun discussions with Madison County about creating a coordinated homelessness task force. Because the County administers many of the social-service,

public-health, mental-health, housing, and human-service programs involved, Madison County would serve as the lead agency, with the City as an active partner.

The proposed task force would bring together representatives from the County, municipalities, law enforcement, emergency services, healthcare and behavioral-health providers, housing and shelter organizations, veterans' services, nonprofit and faith-based organizations, and individuals with relevant lived experience. The goal is to improve coordination, identify service gaps, and develop practical strategies for outreach, emergency shelter, housing, treatment, and prevention. These conversations are still in the early stages, but the process has begun.

Finally, I want to address the City's financial condition.

Our ongoing review has identified significant current-year budget pressures and several accounts that may experience shortfalls before the end of 2026.

Effective immediately, I have instituted a temporary pause on filling vacant positions and adding new employees. No position will be posted or filled without my prior review and written approval. Essential public-safety, legally required, and operationally critical positions will be considered individually, but the general expectation is that vacancies will be held while this financial review is underway.

I have also directed every department head to submit a year-end budget projection and mitigation plan by Friday, August 21. Each department must identify projected shortfalls, including overtime and personnel accounts, explain their causes, and provide immediate measures to reduce or offset them. Department heads are expected to actively manage these issues now while corrective action is still possible.

Once those plans have been reviewed with the Comptroller, I will provide the Council with a consolidated assessment and any additional recommendations.

The City's fuel-use restrictions will also remain in effect for the foreseeable future. The additional fuel funding approved by the Council was necessary to maintain essential services, but it was not a return to unrestricted usage. Departments must continue limiting unnecessary travel, consolidating trips, prioritizing essential vehicles, and deferring nonessential activities when appropriate.

These measures are necessary to protect essential services, control spending, and responsibly manage the remainder of the 2026 budget.

Thank you.