CITY OF ONEIDA
COMMON COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Date:	July 21, 2026	Presiding:	Rick Rossi, Mayor
Time:	6:30pm	Clerk:	Sandy LaPera, City Clerk
Location:	Common Council Chambers	Meeting Type:	Regular ☒ Special ☐

CALL TO ORDER
The meeting was called to order by Mayor Rick Rossi, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and roll call.

Attendees	**Present**	**Absent**	**Arrived Late**
Mayor Rossi	☒	☐	☐:____________
City Manager Lovell	☒	☐	☐:____________
Councilor McHugh	☒	☐	☐:____________
Councilor Cimpi	☒	☐	☐:____________
Councilor Smith	☐	☒	☐:____________
Councilor Jones	☒	☐	☐:____________
Councilor Pagano	☒	☐	☐:____________
Councilor Simchik	☒	☐	☐:____________

Also Present

City Attorney Bell	☒	Supervisor Matt Roberts	☒
Attorney (Other)	☐	Supervisor:__________________	☐
Fire Chief Jones	☒	Other:______________________	☐
Police Chief Lowell	☒	Other:______________________	☐

PRESENTATION: Property Accountability & Occupancy Compliance Initiative — Presentation and Policy Discussion

Steve Vonderweidt, MBA, Director of Planning, Development and Codes, presented a policy framework for discussion regarding a proposed Property Accountability & Occupancy Compliance Initiative. He emphasized that this was an introductory presentation only and was not a request for final program adoption or implementation. The purpose was to familiarize the Common

Council with the issues the initiative seeks to address, outline the proposed framework, and provide an overview of the initial legal review. Mr. Vonderweidt requested Council's feedback, including questions, concerns, and areas of interest, to determine whether staff should continue developing the initiative in phases.

He acknowledged that the initiative would require time, legal review, staffing, technology, funding, and coordination, but stated that it could improve ownership information, recordkeeping, communication, early identification of problem properties, accountability, housing safety, and overall code enforcement. He emphasized that the goal was not to punish responsible landlords, but to create a clear and fair system focused on properties with recurring issues. Mr. Vonderweidt concluded by stating that he believed the initiative could be transformative for the City.

Please see the attached links for related information pertaining to this presentation:

Property Accountability & Occupancy Compliance Initiative Slide Show Presentation

Property Accountability & Occupancy Compliance Policy Brief

Property Accountability & Occupancy Compliance Legal Matrix

Council Discussion Summary

General Support

- Council expressed mixed opinions on the proposal. Councilor Jones questioned whether the initiative should be a current priority given that only a relatively small number of properties create recurring issues, while others supported continuing its development, noting that more than half of the City's housing stock consists of rental properties. There was general agreement that any program should be developed incrementally and return to Council for future consideration before implementation.

Rental Property Accountability

- Discussion focused on improving owner accountability, obtaining accurate ownership and occupancy information, and addressing the challenges of properties owned through LLCs. Members supported exploring requirements for local contacts and other measures that would improve communication with property owners and assist with enforcement.

Implementation and Administration

- Council discussed staffing, technology, and administrative needs. Director Vonderweidt indicated that software and artificial intelligence could improve efficiency but would not eliminate the need for personnel to process registrations, verify information, and administer the program. Members also discussed inspection schedules, focusing increased oversight on properties with recurring violations while maintaining standard inspection intervals for compliant properties.

Incentives and Enforcement

- Director Vonderweidt discussed encouraging voluntary compliance through incentives, including recognizing well-maintained rental properties and exploring fee structures for landlords with multiple properties. Vacant property registration programs and enforcement practices in other municipalities were also reviewed, with legal counsel noting that any future fees would need to be reasonable and legally supportable.

Next Steps

- Council agreed that additional information is needed regarding legal requirements, staffing, technology, costs, potential revenues, and implementation options. Several members supported continuing to develop the concept and bringing individual components back to Council for further discussion before any final decisions are made.

Mayor Rossi stated that one of Council's ongoing challenges is balancing investments that move the City forward with the cost to taxpayers. He expressed appreciation for the presentation and indicated he was supportive of continuing to develop the proposal, including identifying potential costs and revenue sources, before making any decisions on implementation.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

OLD BUSINESS

Council Discussion – Sewer Referendum

- Councilor McHugh asked who would be eligible to vote on the previously approved referendum authorizing financing for the sewer project.
- The City Attorney explained that the referendum will appear on the ballot for all City of Oneida voters, not just those located within the sewer district, because the financing exceeds $1 million and affects the City's overall debt capacity.
- It was clarified that residents outside the City, including those who may receive sewer service in neighboring municipalities, will not vote on the referendum because it is a City of Oneida referendum, not a district-wide referendum.
- Council briefly noted that this differs from entities such as the library district, where voting extends beyond the City boundaries because the district includes multiple municipalities.

SUPERVISOR'S REPORT – SUPERVISOR MATT ROBERTS

Supervisor Matt Roberts provided an update on Madison County planning and Industrial Development Agency (IDA) initiatives, highlighting the significant economic opportunities expected from Micron's investment in Central New York. He noted that the project is anticipated to create tens of thousands of direct and indirect jobs and emphasized that the resulting economic growth could benefit communities throughout the region.

Supervisor Roberts encouraged the City to position itself to capitalize on this opportunity by supporting long-term planning, economic development, and housing initiatives. He stated that the City should actively participate in regional planning discussions and collaborate with the County IDA and other economic development partners to attract new residents, businesses, and investment.

He observed that geographic and housing constraints in areas closer to the Micron facility could create opportunities for communities east of Syracuse, including Oneida, to accommodate workforce housing and supporting businesses. Supervisor Roberts encouraged City officials to continue investing in planning efforts that promote responsible growth, strengthen the community, and improve quality of life, emphasizing that decisions made today could positively shape the City's future for generations.

MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Rossi stated that he had no formal report and deferred his time to City Manager Kyle Lovell to provide additional updates.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

City Manager Kyle Lovell thanked Planning Director Steve Vonderweidt for serving as Acting City Manager during his absence and expressed his appreciation to the department heads who assisted throughout that time.

City Manager Lovell clarified that the proposed local law authorizing a property tax levy in excess of the limit established in General Municipal Law §3-c is a procedural measure required to preserve the Council's legal authority to adopt a budget exceeding the statutory tax levy limit, if necessary. He emphasized that introducing the local law does not increase taxes or adopt the City's budget but allows the Council to retain flexibility during the 2027 budget development process. He noted that many municipalities adopt the local law annually as a prudent budgeting practice.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Councilor Cimpi
Seconded by Councilor McHugh

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the meeting held on July 7, 2026, are approved as presented.

Ayes: 6
Nays: 0
Absent: 1 (Smith)
MOTION RESULT: ☒Passed ☐Failed

APPROVAL OF WARRANT

Motion by Councilor Jones
Seconded by Councilor Pagano

RESOLVED, that Warrant No. 14, including checks and ACH payments totaling $2,297,043.74, as audited by the Voucher Committee, is hereby approved for payment in the usual manner at the discretion of the Comptroller.

Ayes: 6
Nays: 0
Absent: 1 (Smith)
MOTION RESULT: ☒Passed ☐Failed

Warrant Discussion

Councilor Tom Simchik noted that two significant items included in the warrant were approximately $1.5 million related to Glenmore Dam and approximately $300,000 for the City's annual insurance premium.

During the discussion, City Manager Kyle Lovell provided an update on the City's insurance renewal process in response to a question from Councilor Jones, advising that he has met with the City's insurance representatives to review the City's property, liability, and cybersecurity coverage. He stated that preliminary renewal figures have been received and negotiations are ongoing with the goal of reducing costs where possible through a detailed review of coverage options. Mr. Lovell indicated that the finalized insurance renewal figures would be presented to Council once negotiations are complete.

RECEIVE/FILE MONTHLY REPORTS

RESOLUTION 26-104

Motion by Councilor Pagano
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

RESOLVED, to receive and place on file the Monthly Reports from the City Department Heads.

Ayes: 6
Nays: 0
Absent: 1 (Smith)
MOTION RESULT: ☒Passed ☐Failed

DISCUSSION: Councilor Lynne McHugh asked for clarification regarding the difference between the original total budget and the current total budget reflected in the monthly financial reports, noting that the current budget showed a larger general fund deficit than the original budget. City Manager Lovell indicated that the differences may reflect budget amendments and transfers made throughout the year and advised that the Comptroller would provide a more detailed explanation. City Manager Lovell encouraged Council to submit specific financial questions in advance of meetings so staff could research and provide complete responses.

AGREEMENT-BONADIO &CO., LLP

RESOLUTION 26-105

Motion by Councilor Jones
Seconded by Councilor Lynne

RESOLVED, to authorize the City Manager to sign an agreement with Bonadio & Co., LLP, 432 Franklin St. #60, Syracuse, NY 13204 for professional consulting services for assistance with the accounting and reporting of GASB 87, Leases and GASB 96, and Subscription Based Information Technology Arrangements for Fiscal Year 2025 for the City of Oneida.

Ayes: 6
Nays: 0
Absent: 1 (Smith)
MOTION RESULT: ☒Passed ☐Failed

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

RESOLUTION 26-106

Moved by Councilor Simchik
Seconded by Councilor Jones

WHEREAS, no other agency has the legal authority or jurisdiction to approve or directly undertake the enactment of a local law 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 (SEQR) with respect to the proposed enactment of said Local Law, with the result that the Common Council shall act as lead agency in this matter; and

WHEREAS, the proposed Local Law relates to the ability of the City of Oneida to override the limit on the amount of real property taxes that may be levied by the City of Oneida pursuant to General Municipal Law §3-c, and to allow the City of Oneida to adopt a City budget for the fiscal year 2027 in excess of the "tax levy limit," if necessary; and

WHEREAS, the adoption to said Local Law is an unlisted action for purposes of environmental review under SEQR; and

WHEREAS, the Common Council has determined that a short environmental assessment form (EAF) shall be required in connection with this matter; and

WHEREAS, the said EAF has been prepared and has been reviewed by the Common Council; and

WHEREAS, the Common Council has considered the adoption of said Local Law, has considered the criteria contained in 6 N.Y.C.R.R. Part 617.7 and has compared the impacts which may be reasonably expected to result from the adoption of said Local Law against said criteria.

NOW, THEREFORE, it is

RESOLVED AND DETERMINED that the enactment of proposed Local Law is an unlisted action, there are no other involved agencies, and this Council shall act as lead agency in this matter for purposes of SEQR review; and it is further

RESOLVED AND DETERMINED the Common Council has determined this action shall have no significant adverse impact on the environment; that, accordingly, an environmental impact statement (EIS) shall not be required; and that this resolution shall constitute a negative declaration under SEQR; and it is further

RESOLVED, that a proposed Local Law authorizing a property tax levy in excess of the limit established in General Municipal Law §3-C be hereby received and placed on file as follows:

CITY OF ONEIDA
PROPOSED LOCAL LAW

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, 2027, 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, 2027, 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.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a Public Hearing on the proposed Local Law authorizing a property tax levy in excess of the limit established in General Municipal Law §3-C be scheduled for Tuesday, August 4, 2026, at 6:30 pm.

Ayes: 6
Nays: 0
Absent: 1 (Smith)
MOTION RESULT: ☒Passed ☐Failed

AGREEMENT-ENTERPRISE FLEET MANAGEMENT

RESOLUTION 26-107

Moved by Councilor Simchik
Seconded by Councilor Pagano

WHEREAS, on February 18, 2026, the City of Oneida Fire Department's rescue truck was involved in an accident and was subsequently removed from service; and

WHEREAS, the replacement of the rescue truck is necessary to maintain the Fire Department's emergency response capabilities and ensure the continued delivery of essential public safety services; and

WHEREAS, Enterprise Fleet Management has submitted a proposal for the lease of a replacement vehicle under its Master Open-End (Equity) Lease Agreement, providing for a 48-month lease with an estimated monthly rental payment of $1,860.46**,** exclusive of any additional services elected by the City; and

WHEREAS, in order to secure a 2026 model year vehicle, the order must be placed no later than July 24, 2026, with an estimated delivery timeframe of 22 to 24 weeks; and

WHEREAS, the Common Council has determined that entering into the proposed lease agreement with Enterprise Fleet Management is in the best interest of the City and will facilitate the timely replacement of the rescue truck; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Common Council of the City of Oneida hereby authorizes the City Manager to execute the Master Open-End (Equity) Lease Agreement with Enterprise Fleet Management, together with any related documents necessary to lease the replacement rescue vehicle, in substantially the form presented to the Council; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the City Manager is further authorized to execute any additional documents and take such actions as may be necessary to carry out the intent of this resolution, subject to review and approval by the City Attorney as to form and legal sufficiency.

Ayes: 5
Nays: 1 (Jones)
Absent: 1 (Smith)
MOTION RESULT: ☒Passed ☐Failed

DISCUSSION: Council discussed the proposed agreement with Enterprise Fleet Management for the lease of a fire rescue truck. Councilor Cimpi inquired about the approximately $44,000 received through the City's insurance claim for the previously damaged vehicle. City Manager Lovell explained that the insurance proceeds were deposited into the Vehicle Reserve Fund and will be used to offset the cost of the lease.

Council also discussed the need for the replacement vehicle and whether the Fire Department's existing pickup truck could temporarily serve as the rescue vehicle. Fire Chief Scott Jones explained that the current pickup truck is configured for day-to-day operations and wildland firefighting and lacks the specialized compartments and equipment storage required for a rescue vehicle. He noted that, since the loss of the previous rescue truck, the department has temporarily relied on the Chief's vehicle while a former Codes pickup truck is being used for routine transportation, though it is not equipped for emergency response.

BUDGET TRANSFERS/AMENDMENTS

RESOLUTION 26-108

Moved by Councilor Jones
Seconded by Councilor Pagano

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.

		To		From
2026 Budget Adjustments				
$ 50,000.00		003.8110.0308.0000		003.0003.0912.0000
		Sewer Chlorine		Sewer Fund Balance
To allocate funds to cover chemical expenses for the remainder of 2026				
$ 30,500.00		001.9050.0803.0000		001.0001.0912.0000
		Unemployment Insurance		General Fund Balance
To allocate funds to cover unemployment insurance provided to a former employee that resigned				
The City did dispute the case but the determination was in favor of the previous employee				

Ayes: 6
Nays: 0
Absent: 1 (Smith)
MOTION RESULT: ☒Passed ☐Failed

DISCUSSION: City Manager Kyle Lovell highlighted a $30,000 budget transfer for unemployment insurance. He explained that transfer was necessary after the City was required to pay an unemployment claim filed by a former employee who had resigned. Mr. Lovell noted that both he and the City's labor attorney challenged the claim, but the State ruled in favor of the claimant. He further explained that the transfer covers the City's unemployment insurance obligation, which is paid from the General Fund, and was not anticipated in the original budget.

NEW BUSINESS:

Councilor Tom Simchik reminded residents that green waste collection schedules may be temporarily affected during the paving season as Department of Public Works staff are reassigned to road work. He noted that pickups may be delayed by a day or two during this period.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn by Councilor McHugh
Seconded by Councilor Simchik

Ayes: 6
Nays: 0
Absent: 1 (Smith)
MOTION RESULT: ☒Passed ☐Failed

The meeting adjourned at 7:20 p.m.

CITY OF ONEIDA

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Sandra LaPera, City Clerk