



Onondaga County Legislature

HASSINA K. ADAMS
Clerk

NICOLE WATTS
Chairwoman

SPENCER BERG
Deputy Clerk

WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE MINUTES – January 27th, 2026 **MAURICE BROWN, CHAIR**

PRESENT: Mr. Brown, Mr. Burtis, Mr. Bush, Ms. Denton, Mr. May, Mr. Romeo
ALSO PRESENT: Ms. Watts, Mr. Thompson, Ms. Block; also see attached

Chair Brown called the meeting to order at 1:09 p.m. and asked the Deputy Clerk to take the roll. The previous meeting's minutes were approved.

1. **PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT:** (Brian Donnelly, Deputy County Executive; Carl Hummel, Commissioner)
 - a. **INFORMATIONAL:** Civil service overview of the department at large, explains the structure, leadership and divisions
 - Gives an overview of priorities for the upcoming year; new software product to create a new online job application system, onboarding system, and training system

Questions/Comments from the Committee:

- Mr. Romeo asks about overcoming delays and barriers.
 - Commissioner Hummel explains that it has to do with differences in computer programs and the need to navigate different interfaces and computer languages
- Mr. Romeo follows up and asks whether they're doing all departments at once
 - The Commissioner explains that it's for all departments, they just have to create a request for a posting. They will go live just with their department and then go from there
- Mr. Romeo follows up to ask about PeopleSoft, bringing up past concerns about how ownership of Oracle can change PeopleSoft
 - The Commissioner says that Oracle is trying to push their newer product, but for now, PeopleSoft is being supported and they will monitor for changes
- Chairman Brown asks if there are any other questions
- Ms. Hernandez asks about the safety regarding the collection of data for AI
 - The Commissioner asks for clarity, Ms. Hernandez explains the collection of personal info
 - The Commissioner assures it is fully protected

Presentation continued:

- Civil service transformation statewide. The state is no longer giving entry level exams for a number of civil service jobs. Changes to how tests are operated. Unclear how scoring will work. Ongoing discussion

Questions/Comments from the Committee:

- Chairman Brown asks a question about the changes that are coming in regard to civil service and when the changes might come. When will people experience the change?
 - Commissioner Hummel says that he has no clue; it could be six months or another year. When he knows the dates, he will let him know

Presentation continued:

- Working on Payroll consolidation. Recently consolidated with WEP, working on Board of Elections. Getting close to the end of the project
- Working on digitizing records
- Discusses staffing levels and vacancies
- Discusses collective bargaining

Questions/Comments from the Committee:

- Chairman Brown shares his appreciation for the thorough questions
- Chairman Brown says he intended to ask about any changes in payroll modernization but says his question has been answered

Presentation continued:

- Discusses civil service training and professional development
- Commissioner asks a question about compliance and what was being asked, Chairman excuses the topic
- Moves on to discuss needs. The Commissioner says he doesn't believe there are any pressing needs

Questions/Comments from the Committee:

- Chairman Brown asks whether it might be possible over the course of next year where there will be any new funding needs
 - Perhaps something around civil service transformation. We are in a good position
- Mr. Bush asks how many bargaining units they have to work with in the county
 - The Commissioner answers nine
- Mr. Bush asks for a list of all of them
 - The Commissioner says he will send them to the committee
- Mr. May asks about what percent of completion payroll streamlining is
 - The Commissioner answers 70-75%
- Mr. May follows up about human resources and whether that will also be folded in
 - The Commissioner answers that they would rather have that remain in each department. It was tried before and it wasn't successful. HR needs to be responsive
- Mr. May follows up and asks how that function connects to this department
 - HR in each department functions as a liaison with civil service.
- Chairman Brown asks about how the state changes are affecting them and whether he would believe they are effective
 - The Commissioner says that they haven't made most changes yet except for the HELP Program, which is mostly a stop gap measure
 - Chairman Brown comments that it's a Band-Aid

- Commissioner continues and explains that there will be changes to the process. No longer testing, based more on experience, and scoring. Points to some problems and the changes to civil service law would present an opportunity to possible lawsuits
- Ms. Watts asks about tests and the removal of Scantron tests for entry level positions
 - Commissioner answers that they are removing it for entry level positions but keeping it for promotions. Also, they're starting to pilot computer based testing at state level but things will still remain mostly the same
- Ms. Watts asks what will not be changing about the tests and asks to use an example
 - The commissioner uses the example of supervisors and caseworkers and how tests will be required above the entry level position
- Chairman Brown asks about what things need to be addressed
 - The Commissioner says that civil service is a very old system and that a lot needs to change. The big problem is there are fewer people applying and taking civil service tests. Workforce paradigm has shifted, people are typically getting more jobs, lots of turnover. Work from home can't be offered, difficult to recruit people
- Ms. Hernandez makes the point that a lot of people don't want to apply because they have to take that exam
 - The Commissioner concurs and says that's why the scoring is good
- Chairman Brown asks if there are any other questions. Seeing none he thanks the commissioner and moves on

Chairman Brown comments that a correction must be made and minutes must properly be approved.

Chairman Brown asks if there are any objections to the previous minutes, none were raised. Minutes formally approved.

2. DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE:

- a. A Resolution Approving and Directing the Correction of Certain Errors on Tax Bills
(Kathleen Kearney, Director of Real Property Tax Services) *(Sponsored by Mr. Brown)*
 - Director Kearney explains the need for the changes in regards to the resolutions

Chairman Brown makes a point of clarification, checking to ensure the topic being discussed is 2.a. on the agenda, Ms. Kearney clarifies that they are only discussing 2.a. but they are functionally the same.

Chairman Brown ask if there is any more discussion. None.

A motion was made by Mr. Bush, seconded by Mr. Romeo, to approve this item. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.

- b. A Resolution Approving and Directing the Correction of Certain Errors on Tax Bills
(Kathleen Kearney, Director of Real Property Tax Services) *(Sponsored by Mr. Brown)*

Chairman Brown asks if there is any discussion. Seeing none, he asks for a motion

A motion was made by Mr. Hernandez, seconded by Ms. Denton, to approve this item. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.

- c. A Resolution Directing a Public Hearing to Consider Increasing the Income Limitation Relative to Partial Exemption from Real Property Taxes for Persons 65 Years of Age and Older (Kristi Smiley, Chief Financial Officer of Onondaga County) (*Sponsored by Mr. Brown*)
 - Chair Brown invites Ms. Smiley, who explains the context of the bill

A motion was made by Mr. Hernandez, seconded by Mr. Romeo, to approve this item. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.

3. HEALTH DEPARTMENT:

- a. A Local Law Relating to Certain Fees Collected by the Onondaga County Health Department (Dr. Kathryn Anderson, Commissioner) (*Sponsored by Mr. Romeo*)
 - Dr. Anderson explains the local law to the body

Chairman Brown asks if there is any discussion. Seeing none, he asks for a motion.

Mr. May states that local laws don't need to be voted on. Legislator Brown concurs and moves on

4. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT:

- a. A Resolution Authorizing Certain Deputy Sheriffs of the Onondaga County Sheriff's Department to Participate in the Optional Twenty-year Retirement Plan Provided for Under Section 552 of the New York State Retirement and Social Security Law (Maureen Murphy, Chief Deputy Administration) (*Sponsored by Mr. Garland*)
 - Chief Deputy Murphy explains the legislation, handed down from the state. Error in the retirement system at no fault of the sheriffs

Questions/Comments from the Committee:

- Chairman Brown asks whether six is the number of deputies affected
 - Chief Deputy answers in the affirmative
- Chairman Brown asks whether the issue calling this error has been resolved
 - Chief Deputy answers in the affirmative
- Mr. May asks for clarification if this will need to be done again
 - Chief Deputy answers no
- Mr. May shares his confusion about what is occurring because of a conflicting answer he had previously received in public safety
 - Chief deputy explains these individuals transferred stations
- Mr. May clarifies that indeed this only has to be done once per error but new errors might need to be addressed
 - Chief Deputy answers in the affirmative and shares that checks and balances should prevent this issue from ever coming to the floor again
 -

Chairman Brown asks if there is any discussion. Seeing none, he asks for a motion

A motion was made by Mr. Romeo, seconded by Mr. Bush, to approve this item. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.

5. PARKS & RECREATION:

- Commissioner Kelly presents on all five considered resolutions, explaining their necessity.
- a. Amending the 2026 Onondaga County Budget to Accept Grant Funds from New York State Dormitory Authority's Community Resiliency, Economic Sustainability, and Technology Program (\$50,000) (Brian Kelley, Commissioner) (*Sponsored by Mr. Ryan*)

A motion was made by Ms. Hernandez, seconded by Ms. Denton, to approve this item. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.

- b. Amending the 2026 Onondaga County Budget to Accept Grant Funds from the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation Snowmobile Program (Brian Kelley, Commissioner of Parks) (\$46,212) (*Sponsored by Mr. Ryan*)

A motion was made by Ms. Hernandez, seconded by Mr. Bush, to approve this item. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.

- c. Personnel Resolution (Brian Kelley, Commissioner) (*Sponsored by Mr. Ryan*)

A motion was made by Mr. Burtis, seconded by Ms. Hernandez, to approve this item. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.

- d. Resolution Authorizing the Purchase of a Real Property Located in the Towns of Geddes and Onondaga (Brian Kelley, Commissioner) (*Sponsored by Mr. Ryan*)
Ms. Denton Mr. Burtis

Questions/Comments from the Committee:

- Ms. Hernandez asks about the salary of the people in the positions
 - Commissioner Kelly answers \$92,698
- Mr. Burtis clarifies they're creating the position but the person is already there
 - Commissioner answers that the person who was serving as vet had to depart for family reasons but they have a great team already
- Mr. May asks to further explain how the money is there
 - Commissioner says that the money they would have paid in the CALs account
- Mr. May clarifies that he was asking to figure out where to make cuts as well
 - The commissioner laughs and says not there!

A motion was made by Ms. Denton, seconded by Mr. Burtis, to approve this item. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.

6. APPOINTMENT:

- a. Confirming Appointment to the Onondaga County Board of Ethics (Robert A. Durr, Onondaga County Attorney)
- Mr. Durr speaks about the appointment and his long relationship with the candidate

Questions/Comments from the Committee:

- Mr. May comments that he thinks he is a fantastic add to the ethics board
- Ms. Denton asks whether it's an appointment or re-appointment because the second page of the document said re-appointment
 - Mr. Durr confirms that it's an appointment
- Ms. Denton asks whether the board meets regularly and when said meetings are
 - Mr. Durr says there is no scheduled meeting unless they're called on

A motion was made by Mr. May, seconded by Mr. Burtis, to approve this item. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.

Chairman Brown asks for a motion to move into executive session

Prior to entering executive session, Mr. May asserts that he is concerned that the information was not publicly made clear. Chairman Brown appreciates the concern

Ms. Hernandez, made a motion, seconded by Mr. May, to go into executive session for discussing settlement agreements Byrd v Onondaga County, et al. and Rivas v. Onondaga County, et al. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.

7. EXECUTIVE SESSION:

- a. Byrd v. Onondaga County, et al.
b. Rivas v. Onondaga County, et al.

Chair Brown asks for a motion to adjourn

A motion was made by Ms. Denton, seconded by Ms. Hernandez, to adjourn. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



SPENCER BERG, Deputy Clerk
Onondaga County Legislature

ATTENDANCE	
COMMITTEE: WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE	
DATE: JANUARY 27, 2026	
NAME (Please Print)	DEPARTMENT/AGENCY
Robert Petrovich	CE
Debra Danely	CE
Kristi Smiley	CE
Tracy Hall	CE
Sandy Miller	FINOPS
Kathleen Kearney	Finance RPTS
Jeff Tice	OCHD
John Ferguson	Magarelli
Isabelle Harris	CE
Chris Reilly	CE
James Dean	Finance
Donald D. P. Reese	Personnel
Anna Marie Donahoe	Personnel
Kate Adams	OCHD
Chad B.	Leg
Melissa Colombo	Fin OPS
Anthony J.	CE