



Onondaga County Legislature

HASSINA K. ADAMS
Clerk

NICOLE WATTS
Chairwoman

SPENCER BERG
Deputy Clerk

WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE MINUTES – MARCH 24, 2026

MAURICE BROWN, CHAIR

REVISED

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

Mr. Brown called the meeting to order at 1:03 p.m., and the previous meeting's minutes were approved.

1. **COUNTY CLERK:** Hon. Emily Bersani, County Clerk

a. Personnel Resolution (*Sponsored by Mr. Brown*)

- Requesting to abolish a recording clerk position and replace it with a Clerk 3
- Office has seven deputies doing essential work daily; need a career ladder for CSEA staff to appropriately grow into deputy positions
- Currently only two Clerk 3 positions and 13 recording clerks; recording clerk is the entry-level position
 - Recording clerk salary range tops out at just over \$48,000 at step four
- Financial impact this year will be minimal:
 - A recording clerk vacancy currently open
 - A recording clerk who was out for one month unpaid
 - A records preservation assistant position vacant for one month
- Estimated unplanned savings this year, a little over \$12,000
- Difference needed to cover the salary change from recording clerk to Clerk 3: a little over \$8,000 for the whole year
- Position will not be filled for approximately another month, so it will not be the entire \$8,300
- Figures include calculations of fringe and the difference in salary; numbers are not exact and are based on what is currently available to the office; Finance Department will break it down

Questions/Comments:

- Mr. Brown: What will be the impact going forward?
- Ms. Bersani: Recording clerks are the entry-level position; the work is very nuanced and complex for someone coming in without prior experience in the office
 - Clerk 3 allows more cross-training; cross-training for CSEA staff must be handled carefully as it may not be in their job description
 - Clerk 3 is more supervisory and begins preparing staff to become a deputy

- Attempted to hire deputies from outside the office but the learning curve is very steep; most beneficial to promote from within
- Want people to have a long-term career with the county; a career ladder is important for retention
- Recording clerks will often seek higher clerk positions in other departments; trying to retain staff
- Mr. Brown: What will the financial impact be going forward?
- Ms. Bersani: No additional funds needed this year; everything is already allocated in the budget and over \$12,000 has been saved from vacancies
 - Next year: approximately \$8,300 increase from current year allocations
- Ms. Hernandez: What is the salary for Clerk 3?
- Ms. Bersani: Clerk 3, step one to step four, is a grade seven with a range of \$49,850 to \$54,842; recording clerk and Clerk 2 are the two entry-level titles at grade five
- Mr. May noted these kinds of changes are typically preferred during the budget process in the context of everything the county is doing; career ladders are good
- Ms. Bersani: Acting now because there is a vacancy; you mentioned at one of our sessions that these promotions should be position-based and not tied to one specific person; wanted to jump on the opportunity while there is a vacancy
- Mr. Bush: Regarding current staff, how many funded positions are vacant?
- Ms. Bersani: Just one recording clerk
- Mr. Bush: So you are in good shape as far as staffing
- Ms. Bersani: We are, but last year, five employees left to other departments within the same month
 - Office work is very specific; staff must know the difference between court documents, recording documents for real property, and mortgage tax collection, it is not simply receiving and entering documents
 - The court system is very complex; staff have to actually understand the documents they are looking at
 - Institutional knowledge is incredible and difficult to replace; wants to retain staff and provide opportunities for people to grow into these roles
- Mr. Burtis: Going back, you are abolishing one recording clerk at grade five, and you said you have many of them, is that right?
- Ms. Bersani: We have 13 recording clerks or Clerk 2, same title
- Mr. Burtis: How many clerk 3s do you have?
- Ms. Bersani: Two
- Mr. Burtis: There is no budget impact because of the savings
- Ms. Bersani: Correct

A motion was made by Ms. Hernandez, seconded by Mr. Bush, to approve this item. Ayes: 5 (Brown, Hernandez, Romeo, Denton, Bush) Noes: 2 (May, Burtis); MOTION CARRIED.

- b. Authorizing New York State Reimbursement for 2026 Expenses of the Recording Officer for the County of Onondaga for Administration of Mortgage Taxes (\$579,465) (*Sponsored by Mr. Brown*)
- Annual reimbursement from New York State for salaries tied to mortgage tax collection
 - Every year, five positions reimbursed by New York State because the county collects mortgage tax on behalf of the state

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

2. PERSONNEL: Carl Hummel, Commissioner

- a. Personnel Resolution (*Sponsored by Mr. Brown*)

- Another HELP program resolution; previously explained the program to this committee
- Significant number of HELP positions looking to create as a result of hiring over the past few months
- People have been put into provisional positions where there are no HELP titles at that time; as people leave the county, they are hired into provisionals
- Bundled together and brought to the legislature every few months to be moved into HELP titles
- At the end of a year, they move back into the equivalent competitive position

Questions/Comments:

- Mr. Romeo: When an employee is put into the permanent position after the year, does that position also go away or does it need to be renewed?
- Mr. Hummel: As we get more information about when the HELP position is about to expire, rather than abolish them and have to come back to create them again, they are left unfilled
 - Funding is one funding for two positions
- Mr. May: Is there any hope that the program doesn't expire?
- Mr. Hummel: No, the county actually hopes it does expire, because that will mean the state's civil service transformation project to completely reform civil service in New York State will be finished
- Mr. May: So, in other words, a better civil service program will be game on this whole thing?
- Mr. Hummel: Exactly, a better program will replace it; the concern is that there is no gap between the two
- Ms. Watts: HELP positions don't often appear on the county website. Are they being listed?
- Mr. Hummel: The HELP position is not generally advertised; the regular position is advertised
 - People are hired provisionally because there is no list right now; the state is not giving exams for entry-level positions
 - People are hired into the regular position and bundled together; the county comes every few months with a larger list rather than coming every month
 - Move people once there are enough provisionals to justify putting together a resolution
- Ms. Watts: So, individuals should apply for entry-level positions even if they are not taking the civil service exam?
- Mr. Hummel: There won't be any civil service exams for entry-levels

b. Accepting and Approving the Contract Between the County of Onondaga and the Central and Northern New York Building and Construction Trades Council (\$2,468,370) *(Sponsored by Mr. Brown)*

- Tentative agreement reached with the Central and Northern New York Building Trades Council
- Contract covers January 1, 2026 through December 31, 2029, a four-year contract
- Wage market adjustment prior to annual increases:
 - Electricians, plumbers, and steam fitters, \$4 on base
 - \$1 adjustment for all other trades, carpenters, masons, painters, to align more with market rates for trades type positions in the general public
- Each year, 4% wage increase
- Added PTO to this contract, 5 days use it or lose it in the first year; working through all contracts adding that; trades accepted that
- Minor language revisions to a few provisions
- Total cost for the four years is slightly under \$2.5 million

Questions/Comments:

- Mr. Brown noted it is very exciting to see these contracts done and our people taken care of in this climate; union negotiations are tough and getting them done is worth celebrating
- Ms. Hernandez: Did you say the five days is use it or lose it?
- Mr. Hummel: Yes; in the first year employees are accruing toward their 11 days of vacation leave and personal leave which they receive at their one-year anniversary; rather than having to borrow, the five days of PTO can

be used in the first year so they don't have to borrow against their second year's allotment; it expires at the end of the first year

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

- c. Accepting and Approving the Contract Between the County of Onondaga and the Onondaga Corrections Captain's Association (\$9,100) (*Sponsored by Mr. Garland*)
 - Tentative agreement with the Onondaga Correction Captain Association; spoke about it at the Public Safety Committee
 - One-year contract covering 2025; one-year term is to bring it into alignment with the larger captain's unit; when the next captain's unit settles, this one can be brought up to speed right on its heels
 - 3% wage increase for the year
 - Increase to the officer of the day compensation from two hours to three hours of compensatory time for each week served
 - Equity stipend to keep the position properly spaced above the lieutenants in the CSEA correction unit and to provide equity with the larger captain's unit
 - Solo captain stipend increased from \$300 to \$400 per pay period
 - Currently only one captain, so that captain receives the solo stipend at all times
 - Two positions exist; if the sheriff determines he wants to fill the second position, it will be if one serving solo; if it goes back down to one, the stipend goes back on

Questions/Comments:

- Mr. Brown: We are tracking \$9,100?
- Mr. Hummel: Yes
- Mr. Brown noted the item was covered comprehensively at Public Safety and questions were already answered there

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

3. **SHERIFF:** Maureen Murphy, Chief Staff Services Deputy; Tobias Shelley, Sheriff

a. Personnel Resolution (Sponsored by Mr. Garland)

- Presenting a personnel resolution to add a position to the roster
- Clarified a misunderstanding based on questions Legislator McCarron raised at Public Safety
- Requesting this position to enhance the current records management division
- This position already exists on the roster; requesting an additional position due to an anticipated uptick in FOILs, discovery requests, and records management needs based upon adding body cameras to the corrections and custody division
- Discovery has changed vastly; have two police deputies helping out in the records division trying to keep up
 - Very short window to get discovery documents to the judges, DA's office, opposing counsel or cases get thrown out or watered down
- Need deputies doing deputy work out on the street; there is a nationwide shortage of sworn peace and police officers and the sheriff's office is not immune
- Trying to keep peace and police officers in their lane and civilian employees in their lane
- Bringing new cameras online and know they will not be able to keep up without another body

Questions/Comments:

- Mr. Brown: Will this have an impact on this year's budget?
- Ms. Murphy: It should not; salary savings from unfilled positions and funds from the discovery grant already approved by this body will offset the cost
- Mr. Burtis noted budget neutrality is good but raised the idea of creating a position without a corresponding abolishment given the salary savings; expressed support for the sheriff's office but noted it would be great to have an abolish as there are a lot of positions there
- Ms. Murphy: We do not have a lot of civilian positions; the budget roster is concentrated mostly on sworn positions; abolishing any civilian positions would vastly upset operations; could abolish sworn positions but the goal is to get them filled
- Mr. May: Comment or clarification; you're bringing twice as many cameras; good for the public, for everyone they serve, and for the deputies; supports and wants to fund it; noted he would be abstaining but would like to either have a conversation or receive information maybe to this committee that explains more specifically:
 - When doing a global budget for the county, the legislature does not often work with independently elected officials on their rosters; focused on global issues
 - Asked whether there are vacant, unfunded positions that are no longer viable or usable; what Legislator Burtis was getting at was not abolishing a viable position, but something old, unfilled, unfunded, tighten and clean the roster
 - The legislature almost never gets out to independently elected officials to ask them to tighten up their roster
- Ms. Murphy: Would be happy to meet with this body and show how many positions were funded when Sheriff Shelley took office in 2023 and the reduction of even funded positions since then; funded position lost, through no fault of their own
 - Every year at budget season the question comes from Jason Dean asking what positions can be given up; have given up positions every year; down to bare bones with nothing else to give
- Mr. May noted that is a great answer; asked Ms. Murphy to send a memo to the legislature committee to that effect
- Ms. Murphy: Absolutely
- Mr. May noted that when talking to Jason Dean, the office is not talking to the legislature; the legislature does not have visibility into that because they do not get out to Sheriff Shelley with those kinds of questions; the legislature is focused on the whole county government
- Sheriff Shelley noted the true cost savings is beyond the budget; referenced the Ozelle Stanley incident in January 2024, currently being litigated in federal court over alleged federal rights violations; had body cameras been in service, his side of the story would be on video and the lawsuit would not be an issue
 - Bringing cameras in to prevent these lawsuits will ultimately save money; creating extra work
 - Four people working on redactions, two of whom are sworn members; want those sworn members doing police work, not being pulled aside on overtime to do redactions
 - The biggest savings is the savings in these lawsuits
- Mr. May noted full agreement; the legislature authorized body cameras and has supported it; wants to dot an "i" because the legislature does not have these conversations and this is where they can; anticipates full support
 - Asked Ms. Murphy to send a memo explaining what was just presented, that positions have been lost and the process with the administration has been undergone; these are things the legislature does not know because this is a separate branch of government
 - It is a reasonable request; we support what you are doing
- Mr. Brown thanked the sheriff's office for being proactive; transparency costs and the legislature takes it seriously; this is a net neutral; we're investing in what we know is coming
 - Proactive and taken steps to keep it budget neutral to ensure transparency
- Ms. Denton thanked the sheriff's office for filling these roles with civilian positions and keeping officers available to do the work they need to do is really important

A motion was made by Mr. Romeo, seconded by Ms. Hernandez, to approve this item. Ayes: 6 (Brown, Hernandez, Burtis, Bush, Romeo, Denton) Abstentions: 1 (May); MOTION CARRIED.

4. **DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE:** Kristy Smiley, CFO

a. Approving and Directing the Correction of Certain Errors on Tax Bills (*Sponsored by Mr. Brown*)

- Two resolutions; first is the tax corrections:
 - Eight tax corrections for consideration:
 - Town of Clay: Belmont Village Management cleanup fee was incorrectly put on the wrong tax parcel; town required a correction
 - Town of DeWitt: related to assessed value of a newly constructed home; photos provided after the fact showed the inside was not complete; town has filed for a change in assessment which will ultimately impact the tax correction as well
 - Remaining six, sewer unit charges that needed corrections

Questions/Comments:

- Mr. Brown: It just seems that these happen all the time
- Ms. Smiley: They do in the first few months; there has been some sewer units that we've identified a few problems in the system; this does happen periodically
 - The towns file these with us primarily county
 - County has the legal authority to make the corrections; very common in January, February, and March and then it usually tails off
- Mr. Romeo: Is January 1st of the year before when the rolls are cut off?
- Ms. Smiley: It depends; the taxable status date is March 1st, which is when people can apply for exemptions such as senior exemptions; actual tax assessment rolls vary by municipality
 - City of Syracuse has a January 1 and February 1 date; don't quote on me that right now
 - Towns and villages are often May 1st through July for final assessment values; it depends on the municipalities
- Mr. Romeo: A correction wouldn't be if somebody was exempt and got on the rolls the day after?
- Ms. Smiley: There are several different processes; assessments can be grieved at that point and may never make it onto the tax rolls depending on which procedure it goes through; whether it goes through the towns and then the certiorari court ordered ones; these are ones that were not grieved at that time and were brought to us by the towns; there are multiple avenues in terms of corrections

A motion was made by Mr. Burtis, seconded by Mr. Romeo, to approve this item; MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

b. **BOND** – A Resolution Authorizing the Issuance Pursuant to Section 90.10 of the Local Finance Law of Refunding Bonds of the County of Onondaga, New York, to be Designated Substantially “Public Improvement Refunding (Serial) Bonds,” and Providing for Other Matters in Relation Thereto and the Payment of the Bonds to be Refunded Thereby (*Sponsored by Mr. Brown*)

- Bond refunding resolution; good timing given last month's discussion on the debt service process
- Continually working with fiscal advisers, looking at the market to reduce debt service and provide savings to taxpayers
- Look for roughly 3% net present value savings to do any refunding; this one presents that opportunity at about 3.9%, saving the county about \$4.2 million
- Back up on page three lays that out; will not extend any debt service; will reduce total debt interest paid and provide savings over the next several years in what needs to be budgeted to cover debt service
- All regulatory compliance issues are done through this; only moves forward if it continues to be profitable; this gives me the authority to go through the refunding process and save taxpayers money

Questions/Comments:

- Mr. May thanked Ms. Smiley for coming in; noted this is probably one of the most important resolutions the committee passes; the essence of the county's financial standing; being a large county, we use debt to accomplish everything; the CFO having authority to make sure debt issued is yielding the best returns or costing the least is vitally important; urged everyone to support it
- Ms. Denton: For my understanding, we are taking five years of debt and refinancing that
- Ms. Smiley: Yes; it will into an escrow account that will also earn interest; there are rules about what it can and cannot earn; it lowers total interest paid over the remaining years but does not extend the debt terms at all
- Ms. Denton: This goes up through 2019, but then 2020 and 2021
- Ms. Smiley: So right now, those did not make sense; always looking at those yields but right now there are better or lower interest rates on some of those so financially it does not make sense to refund them
- Ms. Denton: So those will remain the same?
- Ms. Smiley: Correct; they will remain the same and as we have different opportunities, I will bring those back over here as we look into places we'll yield savings
- Mr. Brown noted appreciation for the comprehensiveness; knowing stuff like that does make me feel better, knowing we are being smart with money; it is complicated

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

See Item 7.a. for a related question raised during this item regarding how the county can bond for something that is not a fixed asset

5. LAND BANK:

a. 2026 Transfer Resolution (\$250,000) *(Sponsored by Ms. Denton)*

- Mr. Brown noted for the record that this item was discussed thoroughly at the Planning Committee

A motion was made by Mr. May, seconded by Mr. Romeo, to approve this item; MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

6. COUNTY LEGISLATURE: Nicole Watts, Chairwoman

a. Authorizing and Establishing Procedures for Public Hearings Held by Standing Committees of the Onondaga County Legislature *(Sponsored by Mr. Brown)*

- Thanked Ryan and the county law for working on this issue
- All of us are appearing at community meetings, neighborhood meetings, and doors; sometimes folks don't know when particular topics are on the table or who to go to about conversations that are important to our decision-making process
- Hosting public hearings as an entire legislature is an arduous process
- This resolution is just for the rest of 2026, trying it on for size
- Allows each committee to hold up to two public hearings on topics pertinent to that committee; only requires a quorum of that committee
- Requirement written into the resolution; a report within 10 days to the entirety of the legislature on anything that came in from that public hearing; can be in the form of minutes
- Committees will vote on their own public hearings by majority vote; will not come to session for a vote
- Smooth way for us to ensure that we have public participation and oversight in the matters that come before us as the legislature

Questions/Comments:

- Mr. May noted that not saying it is a good idea or a bad idea; this is the first time the committee is hearing about this
 - Seems like a significant departure from what public hearings are customarily used; public hearings are most commonly used in support of certain types of legislation, certain types of issues that could be significant in nature to the community; those are rare but happen once in a while
 - All that sits within the chair's prerogative
 - Program committees are a subset of the legislature to get work done within our process and have a mechanism to achieve consensus or at least majority opinion on what we are dealing with; what we are talking about here is something separate from the legislative process, not integral to the legislative process, technically; more an opportunity to solicit, enlist and receive feedback on issues a committee may deem relevant
 - The chair already has the ability to call a hearing if an issue is significant enough; questioned why the committee process is being changed
 - The committee process has become more involved than in the past but what is accomplished has become less; that is not a criticism, that's an assessment of where we are at today
 - When I turned around and glanced behind me earlier, I saw \$2 million in county salary sitting in the room behind us; introducing public hearings not connected to this will bring those salaries back into the room; there is a duty to be there
 - There are advertising requirements; these will be separate meetings, additional time for those millions of dollars of salaries coming in
 - This is the first time we are hearing about it today
 - Respectfully, we need to have a little more conversation before we make this decision to understand it better
 - Up until right before walking into the room, did not understand what two public hearings a year meant; read it as two public hearings per matter that the committee wants to take up
 - Asked to slow roll this, have offline dialogue, figure out what is being accomplished, whether it is already possible, and if it isn't, make sure the boundaries are more clear than what was written and presented today
- Ms. Watts: I appreciate that, that is how we landed here
 - No public comment in committees; adding would make committee meetings more arduous; depending on the topic at hand
 - Law conferred that there was no option to add it to some and not to all; if added it would need to be added consistently across the board; did not seem like the right use of time and energy
 - Want to hear from the public about the decisions being made; legislators are representing their people and want to ensure there is a space for their voices to be heard
 - Doing it as a whole legislature would require more time; if it is a topic of interest to a constituency people will come; otherwise, there will be detailed minutes so folks don't have to be there in person for every single one
 - The limit of two was set so it does not get out of hand; trying it on for size to prioritize time and energy
 - County employees will not be compelled to attend; can come if they would like and will receive the publicly posted minutes
 - A way to ensure the public knows when, where, and how their voices can be heard on important decisions
 - This is a five-week month so there is an extra week before session to discuss; some folks already have public hearings they want to do, whether it's the entire legislature or committee level; moving the agenda item will be difficult; happy to discuss with anyone and can pull county law in to explore other opportunities
- Mr. May noted he cannot argue with giving the public an opportunity to weigh in on issues; uncomfortable with what is being proposed, how it is being proposed, the venue, and the authority given to program chairs to make that determination and not you; a no vote today but could change after two weeks of discussion
- Mr. Burtis noted his questions were answered
- Ms. Denton noted that in her experience in government, public hearings come at the end when decisions have really been through a very long process; using public hearings in this way to hear from the public on matters committees are really discussing is important; this is giving tools to committees to expand their purview so they can do more;

committees are where the work happens; not just making decisions but hearing from the public before coming to a conclusion; excited to do this

- Mr. Brown noted appreciation for being proactive; referenced a session earlier this year where there was a debate on the floor about a public hearing because folks wanted to get heard, the committee was considering tabling and was going to mess up a whole timeline; being able to do this beforehand allows the committee to hear feedback from the public without doing it in a rushed manner and jeopardizing hundred million dollar projects; I'm in favor; looking forward to using these two weeks to talk about it
- Mr. Bush: I might have missed some of the details, but as far as the public hearing, it will be called by the chair of the committee?
- Ms. Watts: It will go to vote at the committee level; a majority would have to vote to call the public hearing for it to be compelled
- Mr. Bush: We would define the topic of why we're having the public hearing?
- Ms. Watts: Right, yes
- Mr. Bush: Once the public hearing is called it will be advertised, are we going to limit the number of speakers and how long they get to speak as in general session?
- Ms. Watts: Yes; will operate by all the same rules and regulations as a regular public hearing but chaired by the committee chair instead of myself like when it's the entire legislature
- Mr. Bush: I don't think that was explained
- Ms. Watts: That is correct. We could make that revision if that needs to be clarified within the resolution
- Mr. Bush: I may be getting ahead of the curve, but's nice to know how the rules are going to be implemented
- Ms. Watts: We can put that clarifying statement in before it moves to session
- Mr. Bush: The time and the day will be voted on by the committee that's considering it, right?
- Ms. Watts: Yes; exactly like session; there's a resolution calling for it that names the date and time and location; that will come before the committee next month if this passes in session for this round
 - A resolution naming the topic, time, date, and place will come to vote; majority would have to vote for it to move forward
- Mr. Bush: So hypothetically, the facilities committee could vote to have a public hearing in Clay at 6:00 p.m. on a Saturday?
- Ms. Watts: Correct

A motion was made by Ms. Hernandez, seconded by Ms. Denton, to approve this item. Ayes: 5 (Brown, Hernandez, Bush, Romeo, Denton) Noes: 1 (May) Abstentions: 1 (Burtis); MOTION CARRIED.

7. OFFICE OF THE ENVIRONMENT: Elizabeth Bough Martin, Director, Office of Environment

- a. **BOND** – A Resolution Authorizing Ash Tree Management in and for the County of Onondaga, New York, at a Maximum Estimated Cost of \$750,000, and Authorizing the Issuance of \$750,000 Bonds of Said County to Pay Costs Thereof (\$750,000) (*Sponsored by Mr. Eriksen*)
 - Bond resolution is for another year of the ash tree management program
 - Part of a 15-year continuous project to manage impacts to ash trees on Onondaga County lands, begun in 2014
 - Bond resolution authorizes funds for one year of the 15-year program to proactively address the impacts of the emerald ash borer on ash trees on Onondaga County properties to protect county property and prevent accidents to users of county property
 - Implementation is administered by the Office of Environment and based on the ash tree management plan; carried out in partnership with the Soil and Water Conservation District
 - Arborist lead at Soil and Water is Teresa Link; she selects which ash trees will be removed, which are treated, and where replacement plantings of new trees will occur on county properties each year
 - Proactive approach has been successful; in the past 11 years there have been no damage, no accidents, no one harmed because the most hazardous ash trees are always prioritized
 - Not all ash trees have been lost; treatment protects them and lengthens their lifespan; able to maintain the same amount of ash trees that have been treated over the last 11 years

- New trees are germinating and growing and become part of the group that gets treated each year, allowing ash trees to grow, germinate, and create more
- There is an ongoing effort in New York State to identify ash trees that may be resistant to the emerald ash borer; very arduous and not part of it yet; mostly focused on the Hudson Valley but offers hope
- Rather than devastation, the county's proactive approach has given hope and has been able to protect the people on county properties and the properties themselves
- Requested support on the bond resolution to continue the successful work of the last 11 years

Questions/Comments:

- Mr. Romeo: The description talks about removing 25,600 trees over 10 years, is the \$750,000 going to be spent all in one year?
- Ms. Martin: Each year it is about \$750,000; over the course of the program so far over 46,000 trees have been removed; taking out 95% of the trees, proactively going after the most hazardous; once infected by the emerald ash borer and beyond saving, trees shredded and become a hazard; March is a good month to be thinking about this because of windstorms; currently at a little over 46,000, working over the 15 years to identify 5% that can be saved but removing pretty much everything; nothing resistant has been identified in this county or on county lands
- Mr. Romeo: Trying to find out what the \$750,000 is getting us because the numbers in the materials cover over 10 years and the \$750,000 is for one year
- Ms. Martin: Once the resolution passes it goes into program funds; the bulk of the money goes toward actual removal of the trees; there is a series to it:
 - First, arborist Teresa Link over at the Soil and Water Conservation District, goes out and tags everything that will come down that year based on a site assessment; all trees were inventoried
 - Then the treatment phase in late summer; also part of the \$750,000
 - When the snow comes and it's cold, teams go out and remove the trees; takes multiple operations
 - Small component of the \$750,000 is used to plant trees on county properties; sizable trees planted along the trail at Jamesville Beach would have been part of that
- Mr. Romeo: If this says 25,600 trees over 10 years, can we assume about 2,500 a year that we're taking down?
- Ms. Martin: I can get you that; I don't exactly know; that's part of the report; I don't have it off the top of my head
- Mr. Romeo: I also want to get into replacement. This says replacement of 3,270 trees with no time frame, there is a difference of about 22,000 trees; are we replacing about 12% of what we are taking down or are there other funds supplementing the replacement of the other 22,000?
- Ms. Martin: What has been taken down, treated, and replaced are all numbers that we have; I can get you those; to the question of supplemental money, yes, the Soil and Water Conservation District goes after other money to help with tree plantings; it is the \$750,000 plus additional money that has brought us to where we are with tree planting
- Mr. Romeo: Is the overall tree planting roughly a 12% replacement rate or are we closer to 50%; are we able to get to a significantly higher number with the extra funding?
- Ms. Martin: Getting to the point where all the trees committed to in the plan have been replaced; that does not mean there are not other tree plantings going on but specifically to this program; has been through a combination of the \$750,000 from bonds each year plus outside state money for planting

During Item 4.b., Mr. Romeo asked Ms. Smiley how the county can bond for something that is not a fixed asset given the five-year useful life; Ms. Smiley acknowledged there is a legality to it and committed to follow up with an answer. The following is a continuation of that discussion:

- Mr. Romeo: Kristy, my question about the bonding
- Ms. Smiley: Knew it was a five-year PPU and wanted to go back to confirm; the reason it is considered capital is because it is a more systematic, holistic approach and not regular maintenance or taking down a tree here or there; as a 15-year plan that considers removal, treatment, and replacement it is considered a capital project; each type, replacement, treatment, or removal, has different PPU's; brought down to a useful life of five-year PPU

- Mr. Romeo: I don't know what a PPU is
- Ms. Smiley: Useful probable life; replacing a tree is obviously much longer; taking it down is shorter; that is how it is blended in at the lower end
- Mr. May: We have been taking trees for about 10 years, give or take
- Ms. Martin: 11 years
- Mr. May: I recall at the beginning of this process that there was a prioritization, there were that jeopardized assets including county roads where they are in the easement and could cause road damage or harm to folks driving through; after 11 years the assets have been saved. Where are we finding trees now; it runs out in the CIP to 2028. Are we going to be done in 2028 or this year, and whether there is a light at the end of the tunnel?
- Ms. Martin: There is a light at the end of the tunnel; laid out as a 15-year plan; as part of the inventory they identified what was hazardous at the time; annual going out and tagging has both a focus toward townships and a prioritization based on which town should be prioritized based on where county lands were, the state of the trees, and where the emerald ash borer was at the time; this year will be in the Town of Spafford and the Town of Skaneateles
 - Depends on where you are, some trees were absolutely wiped out and became hazardous immediately; other forests and county properties came out differently
 - Treated trees to keep ash trees viable; new trees have grown up and now those are being treated; now in a position where ash trees that had been treated have to come down; it is dynamic
 - Teresa goes out, looks at where everything was inventoried, makes an assessment, and reprioritizes based on hazard
- Mr. May: Are we targeting the ash borer itself by doing tree removal or are we just going to remove the food source and that is history?
- Ms. Martin: The best thing that can be done right now and the most hope is finding emerald ash resistant trees; the emerald ash borer just comes in; nothing the county or state can do; it is part of the system now
- Mr. May: Of the \$750,000 for 2026, how much is toward inoculation and is it working?
- Ms. Martin: It is working; can I come back with the actual breakdown; does not have the number; the bulk of the money goes to tree removals; part of the cost is based on where the trees are located; right of way trees are easily accessible but parks require decisions about accessibility, where are the trails, where are other assets being protected; at the end of this there will probably still be ash trees out there but because they are nowhere near assets, buildings, or trails they will just go to nature
- Mr. May: A tree that falls in the middle of Beaver Lake Nature Center will just rot into the ground
- Ms. Martin: I can say with certainty that Mark Burger is trying to get the absolute most value out of every dime of the \$750,000
- Mr. Burtis noted he has been dealing with emerald ash borer the whole time he has been here; the inventory was done in 2012 and ended in 2014; ash trees grow very quickly; cutting trees is very expensive; supportive of it but it has been quite a bit
- Mr. May offered a motion to move 7.a. through 8.f. as a single vote given items 8.a.through 8.f. have been run through committees, voted on, and have been around for two months; acknowledged not knowing if that is possible
- Mr. Brown declined to recognize the motion as chair; preferred to take 7.a. separately and then move through the eight

A motion was made by Mr. Romeo, seconded by Ms. Denton, to approve this item; MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

A motion was made by Ms. Hernandez, seconded by Ms. Denton, to recess until 2:17 p.m.; MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

The meeting recessed at approximately 2:12 p.m. and resumed at 2:17 p.m.

By unanimous consent, items 8.a. through 8.f. were considered as a block; members were asked to bring all questions at once; presenter was asked to give a brief synopsis given the items were discussed at length at the Facilities Committee the prior month.

8. FACILITIES MANAGEMENT: Dan Mulvihill, Administrative Officer, Financial Operations

- Six bond resolutions for consideration regarding facilities management; all were in the CIP last year
- a. **BOND** – A Resolution Authorizing the Issuance of \$1,450,000 Bonds of the County of Onondaga, New York, to Pay Costs Related to Improvements to Various County Buildings and Facilities in and for Said County (\$1,450,000) *(Sponsored by Mr. Ryan)*
- Annual request for facilities; typically a baseline amount of \$500,000 plus anything more specific
 - Includes \$750,000 for baseline improvements primarily at the downtown complex
 - Includes \$700,000 for a 1.5 megawatt emergency backup generator as requested by multiple departments
- b. **BOND** – A Resolution Authorizing DH&C Plant Upgrades in and for the County of Onondaga, New York, at a Maximum Estimated Cost of \$500,000, and Authorizing the Issuance of \$500,000 Bonds of Said County to Pay Costs Thereof (\$500,000) *(Sponsored by Mr. Ryan)*
- \$700,000 was previously authorized for this project
 - DH&C is the steam plant just across the street; the heart of the downtown complex heating and cooling system
 - \$500,000 request is primarily to fund the purchase and installation of a 14,000-gallon above ground fuel oil station for alternative fuel sourcing and heating of the water that goes through all these buildings
- c. **BOND** – A Resolution Authorizing the Rehabilitation of Court Facilities in and for the County of Onondaga, New York, at a Maximum Estimated Cost of \$500,000, and Authorizing the Issuance of \$500,000 Bonds of Said County to Pay Costs Thereof (\$500,000) *(Sponsored by Mr. Ryan)*
- Funding source is state aid but asking for a bond resolution to jumpstart the budget authorization and create the project under the capital fund
 - Items requested by New York State Courts: furnishings, restroom renovations, lighting fixtures, anything beyond general maintenance under the scope of facilities
 - Anticipate one year after expenses, a claim is filed and the state reimburses for any expenses; net zero local dollars; this is just an authorization to jumpstart the work
- d. **BOND** – A Resolution Authorizing Improvements to Exterior Lighting at Various County Facilities in and for the County of Onondaga, New York, at a Maximum Estimated Cost of \$500,000, and Authorizing the Issuance of \$500,000 Bonds of Said County to Pay Costs Thereof (\$500,000) *(Sponsored by Mr. Ryan)*
- Last comprehensive upgrading of the lighting system was done in 2009 for the downtown complex
 - Timeline will vary by vendor and fixture type; after authorization will engage with a consultant
 - Anticipate no more than \$500,000 for expenses; will only issue bonds for whatever is actually spent
- e. **BOND** – A Resolution Authorizing Rehabilitation/Construction of Improvements at the OnCenter Facility in and for the County of Onondaga, New York, at a Maximum Estimated Cost of \$750,000, and Authorizing the Issuance of \$750,000 Bonds of Said County to Pay Costs Thereof (\$750,000) *(Sponsored by Mr. Ryan)*
- Similar to facilities various; covers anything above the \$250,000 request for OnCenter
 - Includes the three civic center theaters, the convention center, and the war memorial
 - A lot of work was done previously with addition of meeting rooms and rewiring the entire facility; this work is to continue that

- Potential replacement or upgrades to the elevator system and convention center garage; additional work on electrical pumps, HVAC, doors, locks, signage, design, engineering, and occasional emergency repair for sewer pipes, water, etc
 - \$750,000 baseline; approximately \$670,000-\$700,000 was spent in 2025
- f. **BOND** – A Resolution Authorizing Remediation of Hazardous Materials at Various County Facilities in and for the County of Onondaga, New York, at a Maximum Estimated Cost of \$500,000, and Authorizing the Issuance of \$500,000 Bonds of Said County to Pay Costs Thereof (\$500,000) *(Sponsored by Mr. Ryan)*
- Annual request over at least the next six years, starting this year
 - Testing and investigations of buildings for concerning items
 - Came up because renovations and rehab work can uncover old sealants or coatings with asbestos, petroleum based or other hazardous materials, which can slow or delay rehab or make it more expensive
 - Less reactive, more proactive, working on identifying and remediating any issues found

Questions/Comments:

- Mr. Brown: On item 8.d., are there any other facilities noted for lighting, or just the downtown complex?
- Mr. Mulvihill: Primarily just the downtown complex, this facility, the public safety building, the courthouse, and the Carnegie Library; upgrading fixtures and replacing any incandescent bulbs on the roof with LED
- Mr. Brown: On item 8.f., are there any buildings of particular concern, or is this more so that we have the remediation of hazardous materials?
- Mr. Mulvihill: Primarily remediation; not aware of any specifics or current existing liabilities or concerns; more of a proactive approach

A motion was made by Mr. Romeo, seconded by Ms. Hernandez, to approve items 8.a. through 8.f; MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

9. PARKS & RECREATION: Brian Kelley, Commissioner

At the request of Commissioner Kelly and with the agreement of the chair, the bond resolutions items 9.e. and 9.f. were presented prior to the seeker requests, items 9.a. through 9.d.; votes were taken in agenda order

- Items 9.a. through 9.d. are seeker requests pertaining to the projects in the parks various bond being presented; part of that project
 - Two projects seeking bonding
- a. Approving the Classification of an Unlisted Action Under the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act, Accepting the Short Environmental Assessment Form, and Accepting and Adopting the Negative Declaration in Connection with a Paving Project at Beaver Lake Nature Center *(Sponsored by Mr. Ryan)*
- b. Approving the Classification of an Unlisted Action Under the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act, Accepting the Short Environmental Assessment Form, and Accepting and Adopting the Negative Declaration in Connection with Installation of a Splash Pad at Jamesville Beach Park *(Sponsored by Mr. Ryan)*
- c. Approving the Classification of an Unlisted Action Under the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act, Accepting the Short Environmental Assessment Form, and Accepting and Adopting the Negative Declaration in Connection with Relocation of a Volleyball Court at Jamesville Beach Park *(Sponsored by Mr. Ryan)*

- d. Approving the Classification of an Unlisted Action Under the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act, Accepting the Short Environmental Assessment Form, and Accepting and Adopting the Negative Declaration in Connection with Construction and Redesign of the Willow Bay Parking Lot at Onondaga Lake Park (*Sponsored by Mr. Ryan*)

A motion was made by Ms. Hernandez, seconded by Mr. Romeo, to approve items 9.a. through 9.d.; MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

- e. **BOND** – A Resolution Authorizing Improvements to Various Parks in and for the County of Onondaga, New York, at a Maximum Estimated Cost of \$3,460,000, and Authorizing the Issuance of \$3,460,000 Bonds of Said County to Pay Costs Thereof (\$3,460,000) (*Sponsored by Mr. Ryan*)
- Most important yearly CIP; project aims to systematically replace aging and obsolete infrastructure across various parks facilities including equipment, building systems, and site elements
 - Work includes upgrades to outdated buildings, resurfacing of parking lots, upgrades to playgrounds, and ongoing repairs to roads and trails to improve safety and condition
 - Not only allows for much needed preventative maintenance but also gives the ability to handle emergencies that come up throughout the year; the preventative maintenance account
 - Planned work in 2026:
 - Beaver Lake Nature Center: pave two rows of overflow lot; engineering design to reconfigure visitor center restrooms and classrooms; gift shop roof and ceiling repairs
 - Highland Forest: replace roof on the sawmill
 - Jamesville Beach: install a splash pad; relocate volleyball courts; hire an engineer to do research on blue-green algae mitigation in the Jamesville Reservoir; beach has to close often, hence the splash pad
 - Pratts Falls: re-roof Camp Rockway
 - NBT Stadium: concrete repair and replacement
 - Onondaga Lake Park, construct a new parking lot at Willow Bay; redesign and engineering done this year; construction next year; will allow more parking and solve drainage issues
 - Southern district, Highland Forest, Pratts Falls, and Jamesville Beach: land surveys needed; boundaries have been lost in some areas; neighbors are encroaching, particularly at Highland Forest
 - Parkwide emergency repairs: standing line specific to lodges, Skyland Lodge at Highland Forest and Camp Rockway at Pratts Falls; folks are paying to have events there; allows the department to pivot and fix things in real time

Questions/Comments:

- Mr. Brown sought clarification that seeker items 9.a. through 9.d. pertain to bond item 9.e.
- Mr. Kelly: Confirmed
- Mr. Brown: This is annual. What did the department do last year with this?
- Mr. Kelly: Same; last year's ask was probably in the \$4-\$4.5 million range; fixed roofs at certain facilities, trails at others
- Mr. Brown: Did you spend all of the money last year?
- Mr. Kelly: Absolutely; Mark handles the CIP and does a good job moving forward with all of those; this is really preventative maintenance and infrastructure; only as good as the infrastructure so try to get these done quickly

A motion was made by Mr. Romeo, seconded by Ms. Denton, to approve this item; MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

- f. **BOND** – A Resolution Authorizing Improvements to Carpenter’s Brook Fish Hatchery Building in and for the County of Onondaga, New York, at a Maximum Estimated Cost of \$120,000, and Authorizing the Issuance of \$120,000 Bonds of Said County to Pay Costs Thereof (\$120,000) (*Sponsored by Mr. Ryan*)
- Would like to hire an architect and engineering firm to design a new hatchery building at Carpenters Brook Fish Hatchery
 - Existing buildings are inefficient and deteriorating to the point of near failure
 - To improve efficiency, reduce risk, and increase the overall desirability of the park, a unified building will house all operations currently done by the existing structures
 - Existing restroom facility will receive a renovation
 - Hatchery, diet room, oil storage, and office will be in one building; project also includes necessary repairs and upgrades to related fish rearing facilities
 - Buildings are original since the 1930s
 - Goal is to combine everything into one building, modernize it, modernize fish rearing, and introduce an educational component; green design will be important in a project like this especially at Carpenters Brook

A motion was made by Mr. Romeo, seconded by Ms. Denton, to approve this item; MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

10. DISCUSSION OF CORRESPONDING OUTSIDE BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS: Nicole Watts, Chairwoman

- a. Review and Discussion of Vacancies and Prospective Candidates for Outside Boards and Commissions
- Looking to appoint all vacant positions for all boards and commissions that the legislature is entrusted with by next legislative set; as well as be prepared for forthcoming ones
 - Collecting resumes and/or names and contact information; legislators are asked to do the following to be prepared for next month’s review:
 - An online form is available now for folks to share their interest and upload resumes; legislators will receive the link via email today or tomorrow; asked to share on any platform to cast the net as wide as possible
 - If you have someone you would like the committee to consider, share their name and contact information with me; if you have already spoken with them, please mention that
 - Boards and commissions have been matched with a committee; Ways and Means will be discussing the ones matched with Ways and Means next month that have current vacancies, of which there are several
 - There are nuances in terms of who can be on what board
 - Resources for questions: Deputy Clerk Spencer Berg, former chair Mr. Burtis, myself, and the Clerk Hassina Adams; when all else fails, the attorney
 - Asking that information be submitted in the next couple of weeks so resumes can be brought forward for consideration at the next Ways and Means Committee meeting

C. Adjournment

A motion was made by Mr. Burtis, seconded by Ms. Hernandez, to adjourn the meeting; MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Hassina K. Adams, Clerk
Onondaga County Legislature

ATTENDANCE

COMMITTEE: WAYS & MEANS
DATE: MARCH 24, 2026

NAME (Please Print)	DEPARTMENT/AGENCY
Emily Bergani	Clerk
Jill Haskell	County Clerk
Carl Hummel	Personnel
Kristi Smier	Finance
Brian Dinnelly	CE OFF.
Donna Busece	PERSONNEL
Ann Lejean	Personnel
Dr. Kelly	DCCS
Kathleen Gurney	Real Property
Annie Wickert	Real Prop.
Maurice Murphy	OCSO
J. P. S. No	OCSO
Crystal Doerfe	OCSO
Toby Shelly	OCSO
Tom Newton	OCSO
Dan Mulvihill	Finance
Sara Jean	Finance
Thomret Robinson	CE OFF.
KYLE MADDEN	COUNTY LEGISLATURES