



Onondaga County Legislature

HASSINA K. ADAMS
Clerk

NICOLE WATTS
Chairwoman

SPENCER BERG
Deputy Clerk

COUNTY FACILITIES COMMITTEE MINUTES – JUNE 16, 2026 CHAD RYAN, CHAIR

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. Ryan, Mr. Thompson, Mr. Bush, Mr. McCarron, Leader Hernandez

ALSO PRESENT: Chairwoman Watts, Mr. Romeo; also see attached list

Chair Ryan called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. and the previous meeting's minutes were approved.

Chair Ryan took the agenda items out of order.

1. **ONONDAGA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION:** Martin Voss, Commissioner
 - a. Amending the 2026 Onondaga County Budget to Accept \$1,871,936 in Additional CHIPS Funding from the New York State Department of Transportation and Authorizing the Execution of Agreements (\$1,871,936)
(Attachment No. 1: DOT 2026 Hot Mix List, Additional CHIPS)
 - Commissioner Voss advised that, as previewed at the May meeting, the State budget included additional funds anticipated for paving projects; the State has since passed its budget, and the County was notified on June 2, 2026 of its actual grants under the various programs
 - Lists breaking out the additional funding by category, approved approximately ninety minutes before the meeting, were being distributed to members
 - The baseline CHIPS amount in the County's work plan has remained relatively consistent for about a decade; amount represents the County's pro-rata share of the State's increase to the overall CHIPS pot, distributed by a formula applied to all municipalities across the state
 - Receiving an additional \$1,871,936
 - Required to have a legislative resolution to accept funds; state comptroller will pay the bill

Questions and Comments:

- Mr. Ryan: How are we doing in comparison to past years?
- Mr. Voss: This is a good year because it's a gubernatorial election year. There's going to be more money in the budget, that's why there's POP and EWR. They all make up these funds, but they're all driven by the same formula, and it's driven by road mileage

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

- b. Amending the 2026 Onondaga County Budget to Accept \$1,167,993 in Extreme Winter Recovery Funding from the New York State Department of Transportation and Authorizing the Execution of Agreements (\$1,167,993)

- The County experienced a difficult winter this year
 - EWR began as a legislative add in Albany years ago and has since become a recurring annual appropriation; allocation amount is \$1,167,993

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

- c. Amending the 2026 Onondaga County Budget to Make Funds Available for Use in Connection with the New York State PAVE-NY Program and Authorizing the Execution of Agreements (\$1,924,970)
 - PAVE-NY, \$1,924,970; All money this year

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

- d. Amending the 2026 Onondaga County Budget to Make Funds Available for Use in Connection with the New York State PAVE-OUR-POTHOLES (POP) Program, and Authorizing the Execution of Agreements (\$1,283,313)
 - Same formula, requirements, and standards as the other three programs
 - Resolutions represent supplemental State funds that will be incorporated into the County's highway work plan
 - The Department will make every effort to complete as many of the resulting projects as possible this calendar year, limited primarily by weather and by the seasonal closure of asphalt plants in the fall

Questions/Comments:

- Mr. Ryan: Is the Extreme Winter Recovery funding the piece where we pave State roads and the State reimburses us?
- Mr. Voss: No, we don't pave State roads. We plow under contract for the State, and some towns and villages plow under contract for us. This is a separate and distinct five-year program that was just renewed with the Legislature last month; some language had to be cleaned up to reflect the correct dollar amounts on the DOT ledger
 - This is purely State budget money coming into the County's existing DOT budget
 - The County's fiscal year is the calendar year, and the County budget is adopted each October, before State budget figures for the following year are available, since the State's fiscal year is supposed to begin April 1st, but rarely does
 - Not held hostage by that timing because the County also funds its program locally through bonding and cash, and it carries some funding over each year since not every project can be completed annually
 - It has been an especially wet spring, and there is a higher level of competition for paving materials than at any point, as asphalt material is being drawn to the I-81 project and subbase material is going out to Clay
- Ms. Watts: When you go to do the paving projects, I know we had an email exchange, but I just wanted to clarify in this setting as well, when does complete streets, the space for pedestrians and others, factor in?
- Mr. Voss: When we do a federal aid project, a bigger project with a federally eligible road, there's a volume metric that trips eligibility for federal funding. So, for example, most of the roads in the western part of the City, the Town of Geddes, which is a rich area with a busy growth area, and Clay and Cicero are federally eligible, because the volume is over 4,000 cars a day

- Elbridge, not so much; Elbridge is very rural, and volumes are below 4,000. Most of the roads that are busier and have higher volumes in an area like Elbridge tend to be State roads
 - We apply the standard, which is a federal requirement that we look at accommodation on every project, and we do that in the context of the State standard and whatever right-of-way we need to acquire; how expensive that is going to be, what utilities are there, how expensive it would be to move the utilities, and what demand there is for that type of infrastructure
 - The Department considers whether the municipality that infrastructure is going to be in is willing to take custody of it once it is built. Because of the way State law works, Onondaga County does not own or maintain sidewalks; it owns and controls the roadway and right-of-way, including utility and sewer access, but the sidewalks themselves must be owned by the municipality
 - Some towns, such as the Town of Camillus and the Village of North Syracuse, are great about maintaining their sidewalks; others absolutely refuse to get involved with sidewalks
 - As an example, the Electronics Parkway project put sidewalks under the thruway bridge by the Byrne Dairy, and they don't get plowed; that's their prerogative
- Mr. Ryan: Can anybody force a town to maintain them?
- Mr. Voss: New York remains a home-rule state, and the County does not hold a gun to a town's head; the County builds the sidewalks, and the towns own them. Some towns are grateful and want the sidewalks there; others are not so much
 - The Department holds multiple public hearings on every project, at both the budget level and the project level, and consistently hears interest in this type of infrastructure
 - We'd like to pursue what's called a "road diet," squeezing the road down and adding a center turn lane instead of four lanes, with complete streets accommodations

Ms. Hernandez joined the meeting at 3:11 p.m.

- Ms. Watts: I think the most important point for people to understand is that this isn't just about creating bicycle infrastructure; it's about making the street safer for everyone, including someone using a motorized wheelchair. Even where a bike lane sees little use, its presence helps calm traffic
- Mr. Voss: That's right, the traffic volume has to be sufficient and the corridor has to be physically constrained for this approach to work
 - Teall Avenue is a good example, since volume is increasing as Shoppingtown grows busier and the corridor is constrained by the surrounding buildings
 - Rather than widen the road by acquiring property, as the State sometimes does, the Department would narrow what already exists, lowering the speed limit and providing one travel lane in each direction with a center turn lane, to allow for reasonable parking that isn't a safety hazard, not only for the people parking there, but also for people trying to walk to the bakery or the deli
- Mr. Thompson: How does this additional funding factor into the revised work plan?
- Mr. Voss: The County budget and the State budget both feed into the work plan, which carries over from year to year, since the County's larger federal aid projects typically take about five years from initial study to completion
 - The County budget, adopted each fall, feeds the work plan first; the presentation given in May reflected the adopted County budget, what the County knew through SMTCC, what the County's federal aid projects were, and a general sense of what to expect from the State budget
 - State budget has passed, the additional State funding is being layered on top of what was presented in May. The work plan includes federal, State, and local money, with local money consisting of both the cash in the County's "960" account and its annual bonding

- Department staff will finalize and consolidate the work plan into a single amended document between now and Labor Day, which will be sent to the County Executive and posted to the Department's website
- Mr. Ryan: Is Pave Our Potholes actually for potholes?
- Mr. Voss: We try not to let it get to that point. Roads are converted to a paving project before potholes become bad enough that people are calling to complain

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

2. **ERIE CANAL MUSEUM:** Natalie Stetson, Executive Director

a. **INFORMATIONAL:** Overview

- County has owned the building since the early 1960s
 - The building is the 1850 Syracuse Weighlock Building, which celebrated its 175th anniversary last year
 - It was built to weigh canal boats on the Erie Canal, which ran where Erie Boulevard now sits, from the 1800s until the mid-1900s
- The building was originally owned and operated by New York State
 - The recording states that the building stopped being used to weigh canal boats in 1883, at which point it became a State Department of Public Works/DOT facility; the facility was used until the mid-1950s, when staff moved across the street to the State office building
- The building was slated for demolition to make way for nearby infrastructure projects, but was saved, with support from the Syracuse Junior League, the Canal Society of New York State, and the Onondaga Historical Association, to become the first museum in the country dedicated to interpreting canal history
- The museum has been open to the public since 1962; Not certain of the exact date the building transferred from the State to the County, but believes it was in the late 1950s or early 1960s
- The museum interprets the history of the Erie Canal and the broader history of the State's transformation, looking at the past, present, and future; it remains an active waterway site and tells the story of how Syracuse and Erie Boulevard have changed over time
- The museum has seven full-time staff; four part-time staffing; although the County owns the facility, museum employees are employed by a private nonprofit, not the County
- The County does not charge the museum for utilities or for most maintenance; the museum's annual budget is approximately \$800,000, the highest in some time, and County support makes its work possible
- Original Erie Canal was constructed from 1817 to 1825; last year marked the end of the bicentennial period, begun in 2017
- Museum leases visitor center building and the building with the mural, all of which are owned by the County
- The museum's lease was last updated by the County in 2018 and now has only a couple of years remaining; a longer-term lease is needed to apply for many grants
- The visitor center building was constructed in the early-to-mid 1990s through a complex State, City, and County project under the Governor's heritage area visitor center initiative; the museum was selected to serve as the visitor center and received a sub-lease through the City, which in turn provided funding to operate it
- That roughly 35-year sub-lease agreement has since expired, though the City still provides some funding to support the museum's seven-day-a-week operation. The sub-lease is still referenced in the museum's current lease, although it does not exist anymore; lease needs a complete review and overhaul to support funding for future, larger projects

Capital Improvement:

- The museum was included in the 2024 Capital Improvement Plan at \$1.3 million; the project was bonded, and the firm referred to in the discussion as Holmes King Kallquist was selected as the contractor after conducting a complete assessment of the building
- Received a grant for a building condition report on the Weighlock Building and hired Randy Crawford; assessed the 175-year-old building and identified needed repairs; the County acknowledged the findings and worked to include the project in the CIP
- HKK's thorough assessment identified approximately \$4 million in potential work; there is roughly \$1 million left
- Work is ongoing daily; largely focused on the building envelope
- The front portion of the museum, which houses a full-size replica boat used for weighing demonstrations, is boarded up; its roughly 40-year-old glass enclosure had allowed water infiltration into the weigh chamber and is being entirely replaced
- Work is being done in the attic to support structural repairs; make it a safe space for storage
- Conversations have begun with Archie and the rest of the County's facilities team regarding a second phase of the project
 - HKK identified roughly \$4 million; about \$1 million left from initial prioritized amount
 - \$700,000 not accounted for to cover internal electrical systems, fire systems, HVAC, brick wall; in needed phase-two work covering internal electrical and fire systems, HVAC, and a retaining brick wall around the museum's garden, needs to be entirely replaced
- Hopes Phase 2 will be included in this year's County budget, to be presented in October; has not yet received confirmation, but reached out a couple of weeks ago and understands Archie and County facilities staff are meeting on the matter

Questions/Comments:

- Ms. Hernandez: Thank you for all the work that you do here. I've visited a couple of times and have really watched the museum change
- Ms. Stetson added that as the canal district is planned as part of the I-81 project, the museum sees itself as a future gateway and "crown jewel" where I-81 meets the business loop into downtown Erie Boulevard, once the Erie Canal itself; the museum hopes much of that exterior gateway vision will be realized by about 2030
- Mr. Bush: How do you coordinate with the Camillus Erie Canal Park or other canal sites throughout the County?
- Ms. Stetson: There is a fair amount of coordination involved. The Old Erie Canal Community Working Group, which includes sites all along the canal corridor from Port Byron to Rome, meets monthly, typically in Chittenango, to discuss ongoing work
 - The museum is especially close with Camillus and has worked for years with the staff who run that site; while the museum considers itself the most encyclopedic of the Erie Canal museums, telling the broader story of the canal's impact on the state and country, it sends visitors to Camillus to experience the water and boat rides the museum itself cannot offer
 - The museum also runs a speaking series that regularly features experts from other canal sites, and museum staff are in turn frequently asked to speak to those other sites' audiences
- Mr. Bush: I don't see much coordination across the County; it's too bad
- Ms. Stetson: I would welcome that conversation, as there is always room to grow and improve
 - When I started at the museum in 2010, I was struck by how much tourist traffic the museum gets; over 50% of our visitors come from outside New York State

- Mr. Bush: We are one of the few counties that does not have a county historian. Onondaga County previously contracted with a private agency to provide some historical information, but as a county government, we do not have an official county historian the way most counties do; someone who coordinates historical groups across the county and serves as a central point person
- Mr. Thompson: What is your budget, and what do you spend it on?
- Ms. Stetson: About 75% of the museum's budget goes toward personnel. Staff includes the Executive Director, an operations manager, a two-person education team, a director of interpretation who functions as a curator, an administrator now being brought on to help coordinate the team, and a part-time collections and archives position
- Mr. Thompson: How much of your revenue is grant funded?
- Ms. Stetson: I don't have that figure offhand, but it is a significant amount. Grant funding largely covers the general operating budget, predominantly staff, while other projects, such as school field trips, capital projects, and exhibits, are typically separately grant funded. Personnel support is the hardest to find grant funding for, so a large share of non-grant funding goes there
 - Non-grant funding sources include general membership support, a donation box at the front desk that generates about \$7,000 a year, a general annual appeal, and earned income; museum speakers gave more than 100 talks across the state last year, for which they are paid
 - Admission to the museum is free, with a suggested donation of \$12; the museum collects an average of about \$7 per person
- The museum's donor-supported speaker series, now in its second or third year of sponsorship, draws strong attendance both in person and virtually, including occasional international viewers, since the museum became adept at hybrid programming during the pandemic; about 90 people have subscribed to the annual pass this year, in addition to those who register for individual programs
- Chair Ryan noted that, because the meeting would formally be over by the time of the building tour, members could ask general questions during the tour but not questions pertaining to business matters such as openings, and asked whether there were any further questions before the tour

3. **COUNTY LEGISLATURE:** Nicole Watts, Chairwoman

a. **INFORMATIONAL:** Discussion of Budget Schedule and Responsibilities

- Chairwoman Watts advised that, looking ahead to this budget season, committees will hold joint meetings at the front end of the process
 - In preparation, each committee member will be asked to pay closer attention to specific departments, without precluding members from separately advocating for items specific to their own district
 - Many community requests do not tie to a particular district or legislator
 - Goal is to ensure these are still raised in the conversation, connected to a legislator willing to champion them, or weighed against historical norms
 - Members with subject-matter familiarity will field department presentations and related questions during this phase
 - Program questions should be raised now, since the formal budget season is not the right time to raise them unless something new arises
- The goal is to streamline the process toward a positive outcome for the County's budget
- The schedule will proceed as follows: a joint Facilities and Ways and Means Committee meeting in week one; a regular Facilities Committee meeting in week two, covering typical business such as resolutions, plus discussion of facilities-related department budgets; and a budget presentation in week three
- Members will be notified by email with further information

4. **ERIE CANAL MUSEUM:** Natalie Stetson, Executive Director
a. Tour

C. Adjournment

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

Meeting adjourned at 3:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



HASSINA K. ADAMS, Clerk
Onondaga County Legislature

ATTENDANCE

COMMITTEE: COUNTY FACILITIES

DATE: JUNE 16, 2026

NAME (Please Print)	DEPT/AGENCY/ORGANIZATION
Natalie Stetson	Erie Canal Museum
Planny Monahan	Lin Ops / DOT
Harry Ross	OCDET