



Onondaga County Legislature

HASSINA K. ADAMS
Clerk

NICOLE WATTS
Chairwoman

SPENCER BERG
Deputy Clerk

WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE MINUTES – MAY 26, 2026

MAURICE BROWN, CHAIR

PRESENT: Mr. Brown, Ms. Hernandez, Mr. May, Mr. Burtis, Mr. Bush, Mr. Romeo, Ms. Denton

ALSO PRESENT: Chairwoman Watts, Mr. Meaker, Mr. Ryan, Mr. Eriksen, Ms. Block, Mr. Thompson; also see attached list

Chairman Brown called the meeting to order at 1:04 p.m., and the previous meeting's minutes were approved.

1. DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY: Kevin J. Sexton, Chief Information Officer

a. INFORMATIONAL: Overview

(Attachment No. 1: Onondaga County IT Operations 2026)

- Mission Statement: to provide cost-effective, innovative technology-based services which promote efficiencies and business value to departments, employees, and citizens of Onondaga County
- Vision Statement: to be highly proficient in the delivery of technology-based solutions and services which reduce cost, maximize employee productivity, and support citizen engagement
- Focused on customer service
- IT teams:
 - Help Desk: receives work through calls to the 4750 number, email, or self-service portal – TeamDynamics, which is the helpdesk portal; most work comes through help desk in the form of a problem ticket, enhancement, and project requests
 - Helpdesk helps to field requests and log ticket; assigns ticket to the appropriate staff
 - Focused on first call resolution; tickets that exceed help desk expertise are triaged to Tier 2 support; the help desk also provides desktop support, account access support, software support, computer imaging and deployment, and basic audiovisual support as needed
 - Client Server Systems: Windows server and virtual machine support, database support, Windows patching of all the servers and VMs, Active Directory for authentication into network and files, and email system
 - Infrastructure Services: Linux server and virtual machine support, database support, Linux patching, and storage environments including backups and restores
 - Data Communications: network and internet services, VOIP phone system, general network and cybersecurity, and Wi-Fi support
 - PeopleSoft Financials Application Support: enhancements and solutions for purchasing, accounts payable, accounts receivable, and contracts; processes financial reports and queries
 - PeopleSoft HCM (Human Capital Management): support and enhancements for HR, payroll, and benefit systems; handles reports and queries supporting all pay groups
 - CHAIRS 2 Application Support: in-house-developed application that handles the law enforcement records management system, supporting arrest logging, police reports, warrants, and incident processing; also provides law enforcement reports and queries
 - Print Operations and Print Shop: high-volume printing including paychecks, pay statements, tax bills, and mailers; specialty printing including books, posters, brochures, business cards, flyers, and postcards

- Web Design: supports over 50 county websites; recently went live with a brand-new website, onondaga.gov; trains department content managers so each department can post most of their content; provides basic graphics design support
- Current projects include:
 - Rolling out mobile device management solution, Intune, to support most county-issued cell phones, provide better security, and incorporate policies to help protect the phone and county data
 - Migrating onondaga.gov to the new website; working with the legislature and departments on ADA compliance for documents submitted to the legislature and posted on the website
 - Enhancements to the help desk ticketing system, including service level agreement support, knowledge base, and task management features
 - Annual review and testing of business resumption and disaster recovery plans
 - Quarterly phishing training distributed to most email users; monthly security advisory board meetings to review priorities and improve the county's cybersecurity posture
 - Working with the fiscal operations team to migrate Hyperion, budgeting system, to the cloud; providing integration support with the PeopleSoft financial environment
 - CIP approved to replace aging computers across the county
 - Segregation project for WEP and their SCADA environment, which controls their wastewater treatment facilities
 - Phone implementation at WEPs metro site and other sites; building a new network for the aquarium
 - Maximo integration project for WEP's purchasing and supply chain; Kronos timekeeping system update, both starting this year

Questions/Comments

- Mr. Brown: The transition to onondaga.gov of our emails, is that complete? What is the status, there was confusion as to what email folks should be sending to?
- Mr. Sexton: The project is pretty much complete. There are some subdomains that we're working on getting over to onondaga.gov; you may still see a couple of ongo.net sites, that is the last piece. Going forward the work is on ADA compliance and a plan to get older PDFs into compliant form. We also implemented a solution called DocAccess, which gives website visitors the ability to view PDFs in an HTML ADA-compliant format, and that is working pretty well
- Ms. Denton: Do you have any partnerships with other municipalities? I know in the past PeopleSoft was offered to different municipalities
- Mr. Sexton: We do. We provide PeopleSoft support for the City of Syracuse, and purchasing support for the Syracuse City School District, Otsego County and Oswego County. Those are the main municipalities we are working with
- Mr. Brown: I promise I am not fishing, but I am curious, we are working on the IT network for the aquarium. Is there a timeline that we expect our end to be done? I know we do not know the whole thing, but the portion we are working on the aquarium network, is there a deadline we are trying to hit?
- Mr. Sexton: There is. We ordered the fiber circuit for that site many months ago and it is now getting scheduled, they had to wait for permits to access the conduit and run the fiber into the building. Once that happens, we should be able to get the network stood up pretty quickly. If we do not see anything in the next couple of weeks, we have a backup plan
- Mr. Bush, what about your interactions with the towns in the county? Do you help them at all with their technical issues?
- Mr. Sexton: We do, occasionally. It does not happen often, but for the broadband project approved by the legislature several years ago, Elbridge and Jordan were reaching out quite a bit about when broadband would be available. Every once in a while a municipality like the Town of Clay will put out an RFP for IT services and we will give input. We also work with assessors at the clerk's office. Anytime a municipality reaches out, we try to help

2. ONONDAGA COUNTY/SYRACUSE COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS: Monica Williams, Chief Diversity Officer

- a. Confirming appointment and reappointment by the County Executive to the Onondaga County/Syracuse Commission on Human Rights (*Sponsored by Mr. Brown*)
 - Monica Williams, Chief Diversity Officer, presented an appointment to the Commission on Human Rights of Ahmeed H. Turner, who comes with a great wealth of knowledge to the commission, and a reappointment of Duane L. Reese, II

Questions/Comments

- Mr. May: The resolution says Duane Reese, II; I just want to make sure we are appointing the right person. You said Duane Elders
- Ms. Williams: I am sorry, Duane Reese, II
- Mr. Brown: It looks like there is an appointment of Ahmeed and a reappointment of Mr. Reese
- Ms. Williams: Yes, that is correct
- Mr. Brown: I actually know both of these gentlemen and speak very highly of them. Ahmeed and I serve together with Building Men; we are both on a board. I am happy to see him being appointed. Do we know who Ahmeed is replacing?
- Ms. Williams: He is replacing Roosevelt Baums, whose term expired December 31, 2025
- Ms. Hernandez: How are your meetings going? Are you having quorum?
- Ms. Williams: The meetings are going well. I will be quite frank, we do struggle with getting quorum, but we are getting better, working with the commission to find out what really works for them
- Ms. Hernandez: I will say I echo Maurice; I do know both of these people and I am sure they attend a lot of meetings

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

3. **ONONDAGA COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES**: Cydney Johnson, Deputy County Executive for Physical Services
 - a. Confirming appointment by the County Executive to the Onondaga County Public Library Board of Trustees (*Sponsored by Mr. Brown*)
 - Cydney Johnson, Deputy County Executive for Physical Services, presented the appointment of John F. Reidy to the library board of trustees; he is replacing Esteban Gonzalez

Questions/Comments

- Mr. Brown: What criteria was used in choosing Mr. Rey for this appointment? Why was he the one chosen as opposed to other people that could have been put forward?
- Ms. Johnson: The library board, which is a robust group, tries to be pretty broad in the skill set that board members bring. John actually brings similar skill sets to what Esteban had in terms of a law enforcement background
- Mr. Brown: Got it. And just having someone with a law enforcement background, that is the priority for this?
- Ms. Johnson: It helps in terms of a broad view, especially as they look at both their urban locations and county partners.
- Mr. Brown: I am a big libraries person, so I will ask one more question relating to this appointment. Are there any projects, or is the point just to have a broad view on the board? Is there something where it would be particularly beneficial to have a law enforcement perspective on the library board? For me that seems out of place, why is that?
- Ms. Johnson: It is a pretty broad skill set. Communications is important, marketing is important, talking to the different constituent groups the library serves. Law enforcement is one as we think about the security of our libraries, our employees, and making sure patrons feel safe
- Mr. Brown: How many librarians are there on the libraries board?

- Ms. Johnson: I could not tell you. The executive director sits on the board ex officio, but I could not tell you that; I would have to check and get back to you.
- Mr. Brown: I do have a broader libraries question, and if you cannot answer this that is okay, there has been a lot of misinformation going around about the Petit Branch expansion. Are you able to clarify what the status of that is right now?
- Ms. Johnson: I could not give you all the specifics right now. What we are trying to do is make sure we have the right scope, part of the design contract expired, so we have asked them to go back and rescope the entire project. The county executive and I feel very positive about it; this is my childhood library so I am very protective of it. We all still have a very positive position on it
- Ms. Hernandez: I want to say thank you for keeping us updated on what has been going on. I know we have some conversations ahead to keep us updated going forward
- Ms. Johnson: Happy to do that
- Mr. Brown: While I would like to see us add more librarians to the libraries board, I do respect the attempt to keep the broad scope and concept

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

4. DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE: Kristi Smiley, Chief Finance Officer

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

- Three smaller tax corrections were presented: the first, in the Town of Geddes, is a correction of a misapplied payment, the town reached out to ask that it be fixed; the second two are related to a sewer unit charge

Questions/Comments

- Mr. Romeo: This is a broader question in terms of going back on the tax rolls. I saw that these ones went back a number of years. Is there a timeframe for how far back we go?
- Ms. Smiley: Six, I knew one was four and one was six
- Mr. Romeo: So, in general, WEP can go back six years?
- Ms. Smiley: Yes

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

5. ONONDAGA COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE: Maurice Brown, Chairman of Ways and Means

a. Adoption of Annual Budget for Onondaga Community College for the Fiscal Year September 1, 2026 to August 31, 2027, and Authorizing the County Executive to Enter into Contracts with Other Governmental Units in Which Appropriations and Revenues Are Approved by the Adoption of the 2027 Budget (*Sponsored by Mr. Brown*)

2026-2027 Onondaga Community College Annual Budget on File with the Clerk

- The budget presentation was held the prior week with an opportunity to ask questions; Mr. Brown thanked Sue and the OCC folks for being there and for hosting, noting they were very gracious hosts; the committee got to eat at Stonewalls, which Mr. Brown noted is a rare occurrence and recommended taking advantage of

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

b. Amending the 2026 County Budget to Pay in the First Instance Costs Associated with Replacing the Artificial Turf Baseball and Softball Fields at Onondaga Community College (*Sponsored by Mr. Brown*)

- Dr. Hilton explained this item in length at the prior week’s presentation

Questions/Comments

- Mr. Burtis: Is replacing the turf for baseball and softball only limited to that?
- Mr. Brown: I think it is just the field, the field is just named that, but the fields get used for many, many purposes throughout the community
- Mr. Brown: There are two, it is a baseball and a softball field
- Mr. May: I received some information earlier. I just want to double-clarify, is it just the baseball and softball field or does it include SRC Field? Not SRC Field; that is consistent with the resolution. That is what I thought
- Mr. Brown: Yes

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

- Mr. May noted, given all the history with OCC, that authorizing the foundation to take the expense is an extraordinary piece of evidence of the progress with the county’s relationship with OCC and its commitment to past promises; it is a great thing that the school through that avenue is stepping up to maintain those fields because it is long overdue
- Mr. Bown noted this is the continuance of a plan, this is not a brand new cost that just emerged; thanked OCC for sticking with the plan

6. ONONDAGA COUNTY WATER ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION: Odean Dyer, Commissioner

a. A Resolution Approving Improvements for the Onondaga County Sanitary District in and for the County of Onondaga, New York (*Sponsored by Mr. Eriksen*)

- Item shows all of WEP’s projects for the 2026 construction year, all capital improvements throughout each of their facilities; Item B through I goes through them in full detail

Questions/Comments:

- Ms. Denton: With these 2026 improvements, has this already been factored into the sewer rate from last year? How does that work?
- Mr. Dyer: These improvements are all on the original CIP from last year, everything is already factored in
- Mr. Brown: This group of bond requests represents some of the last items from the CIP, but two notable items remain, the sewer consolidation and the White Pine pump station. What is the status of those and can we anticipate them being brought before us?
- Mr. Dyer: Those were already brought. White Pine is already under construction and already bonded, and the sewer consolidation was already brought to this body as well

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

b. **BOND** – A Resolution Authorizing the Issuance of \$12,500,000 Bonds of the County of Onondaga, New York, to Pay Costs of Certain Improvements for the Onondaga County Sanitary District in and for Said County (\$12,500,000) (*Sponsored by Mr. Eriksen*)

- Bond of \$12,500,000 for a capital improvement project at the Baldwinsville Seneca Knolls plant - oxygen system replacement project

Questions/Comments:

- Mr. May: Is this oxygen system going to be something that helps odor control out there or is this separate?

- Mr. Dyer: No, this has nothing to do with odor control. It is all efficiency
- Mr. May: I am guessing, just haven't been around for a while, that some of the odor issues out there, is that storm related? A lot of water in the ground, bad winds, same old same old?
- Mr. Dyer: Yes

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

- c. **BOND** – A Resolution Authorizing the Issuance of \$1,430,000 Bonds of the County of Onondaga, New York, to Pay Costs of Certain Improvements for the Onondaga County Sanitary District in and for Said County (\$1,430,000) *(Sponsored by Mr. Eriksen)*
- Bond of \$1,430,000 for WEP's department-wide building and site improvement projects
 - Mr. Brown noted these were discussed at the Environmental Protection Committee and appreciated having two bites at the apple to ask follow-up questions; he noted he got most of his answers except for item 6I, which he will bring up

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

- d. **BOND** – A Resolution Authorizing the Issuance of \$675,000 Bonds of the County of Onondaga, New York, to Pay Costs of Certain Improvements for the Onondaga County Sanitary District in and for Said County (\$675,000) *(Sponsored by Mr. Eriksen)*
- Bond of \$675,000 for WEP department-wide mechanical, electrical, and plumbing projects

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

- e. **BOND** – A Resolution Authorizing the Issuance of \$2,000,000 Bonds of the County of Onondaga, New York, to Pay Costs of Certain Improvements for the Onondaga County Sanitary District in and for Said County (\$2,000,000) *(Sponsored by Mr. Eriksen)*
- Bond of \$2,000,000 for the Metro Wastewater Treatment Plant 1978 plant annex - asset renewal project

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

- f. **BOND** – A Resolution Authorizing the Issuance of \$2,500,000 Bonds of the County of Onondaga, New York, to Pay Costs of Certain Improvements for the Onondaga County Sanitary District in and for Said County (\$2,500,000) *(Sponsored by Mr. Eriksen)*
- Bond of \$2,500,000 for another project at Metro - UV disinfection system

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

- g. **BOND** – A Resolution Authorizing the Issuance of \$16,500,000 Bonds of the County of Onondaga, New York, to Pay Costs of Certain Improvements for the Onondaga County Sanitary District in and for Said County (\$16,500,000) *(Sponsored by Mr. Eriksen)*
- Bond of \$16,500,000 for the Metrobrook Limestone and Brewerton rotary drum thickener project

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

h. **BOND** – A Resolution Authorizing the Issuance of \$13,700,000 Bonds of the County of Onondaga, New York, to Pay Costs of Certain Improvements for the Onondaga County Sanitary District in and for Said County (\$13,700,000) (*Sponsored by Mr. Eriksen*)

- Bond of \$13,700,000 for wastewater transportation system improvements - taking care of pipes

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

i. **BOND** – A Resolution Authorizing the Issuance of \$400,000 Bonds of the County of Onondaga, New York, to Pay Costs of Certain Improvements for the Onondaga County Sanitary District in and for Said County (\$400,000) (*Sponsored by Mr. Eriksen*)

- Bond of \$400,000 for the Wetzel Road comprehensive asset renewal project

Questions/Comments:

- Mr. Brown: In the CIP this is for \$320,000, so now it is for \$400,000. Did something change since the CIP? What does the extra \$80,000 account for?
- Mr. Dyer: For this project we are looking at \$400,000 in total, \$320,000 in bonds and \$80,000 in cash
- Mr. Brown: So, we are bonding for \$400,000 today, that is my reading of this. What is the extra \$80,000 for?
- Mr. Dyer: Honestly, looking at this, it looks like we may have a typo. We are only asking for \$400,000 for engineering services, and according to the Master Plan report we are using \$80,000 in cash and \$320,000 in bonds, so we would not be asking for \$400,000 in bonds
- Mr. Brown: So, do we have to amend? I am going to need help
- Mr. May: I recommend we table this to Session. Let bond counsel take a quick peek and make sure it is okay, any change we make here is going to have to be approved by them. If we can clean it up and bring it back that should not be a problem. That is my suggestion
- Mr. Brown: That is a good suggestion. We can correct this probably in the next hour and vote on it at full Session, which will matter the most

A motion was made by Mr. May, seconded by Ms. Hernandez, to table Item 6.I. to Session; MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Mr. Brown: Please get the corrected version of item 6I to our clerks as soon as possible so we can have it by Session on Tuesday. I do not expect it to be controversial

7. COUNTY LEGISLATURE:

a. A Local Law to Ensure the Safety of Vulnerable Road Users in Onondaga County (*Sponsored by Mr. Brown*) – Alex Lawson, Moving People Transportation Coalition

- Alex Lawson, Moving People Transportation Coalition, a local organization and member of the New York Safe Streets Coalition, presented the local law; noted it is a good, easy way to improve road safety, particularly in areas of the county that do not have dedicated bike infrastructure or sidewalks

Questions/Comments:

- Mr. May: Thank you, Alex. It is one thing to get the local law here and take it under consideration. Where are you, or where is this effort, in terms of collaborating and getting commitments from local law enforcement? If I read the local law correctly, it extends to every law enforcement agency in the county as far as penalties and

enforcement. What kind of response have you received from them? What kind of dialogue have you had as far as a commitment to enforce?

- Mr. Lawson: What this is is clarifying an existing law that says you have to leave a safe amount of space. This is already on the books and being enforced, this is a way to clarify it so it is not a he said/she said situation about what safe was. The sheriff's office is on board and supports this effort. Does that answer the question?
- Mr. May: Not really. What about the other agencies in the area, other police departments? Have you had conversations with them, or is this going to be the beginning of that conversation?
- Mr. Lawson: This will be the beginning of the conversation
- Mr. May: Okay, fair. You said this clarifies state Vehicle and Traffic Law. Does this trump vehicle and traffic law or is it underneath that?
- Mr. Lawson: I will preface by saying I am not a lawyer. There is some subtlety there, but my understanding is that it clarifies; there is an existing state law that you have to have a safe distance, and the county is saying that distance is three feet.
- Ms. Denton: I have definitely heard from many residents about not feeling safe biking and walking, as many of our communities do not yet have the infrastructure needed for shared roadways. While we need to build better infrastructure for all users of our road, this local law is something we can do to provide a definition of what safe distance is for those using the road that are not in a car, helping drivers and law enforcement know what a safe distance is. I am happy to support this
- Mr. Brown: We are in trying times and people move about our community in very different ways and we need to acknowledge that. As those transitions change, we need to make sure we are keeping people safe. I appreciate that this law codifies three feet, it is a lot easier for someone to judge three feet than it is to judge safe passage as the state says. I think this is a good step in the right direction and I am excited we are moving forward with this
- Mr. Meaker: Is this overriding New York State law?
- Mr. Lawson: No, it is not overriding New York State law
- Mr. Meaker: New York State has a law on the books that kind of covers this, but upon reading this seems to be a different law than what is in place already. Can you explain that to me?
- Mr. Lawson: I will preface again by saying I am not a lawyer, but when it has been explained to me by municipal lawyers because this has come up in other counties that have already passed this, which include Suffolk, Ulster, Albany, Cortland, and Monroe, there is a way of talking about it that it is a clarification, not an override. It is not a situation where you would be preempting state law
- Mr. Brown: In my conversation with the sheriff's office, their understanding is that it does not necessarily change how they are going to enforce New York State's law, it just clarifies that three feet is safe passage. There is no expectation the sheriff is going to be out there with a measuring tape, just like there is no expectation they are doing that right now. It does not change anything about how they operate. It just makes it clear to drivers and vulnerable road users that if you are passing a vulnerable road user you have to give them three feet. My understanding is that it works in conjunction, it does not take the place of the state law
- Mr. Bush: If the state has a law on the books, explain to me what this is going to do to enhance what the state already has
- Mr. Lawson: The real target is driver education, particularly people who are learning to drive. I am 35 now but I used to be 16 and had a much higher risk tolerance then. If you told me at 16 to give someone a safe space to pass, I would have thought no space at all. But if you say it is three feet, okay, that is what I need to do. It is really about driver education, particularly for people learning to drive for the first time
- Mr. Bush: You mentioned some counties that have already implemented this, could you go over those again quickly?
- Mr. Lawson: We would be the sixth. Going east to west: Suffolk, Ulster, Albany, Cortland, and Monroe. We would be the third in the I-90 corridor. Our immediate neighbors to the south have also passed it
- Mr. Bush: The district I represent has a lot of rural roads where the shoulders are almost nonexistent. I am a little concerned about what this three feet does for the county's liability, measuring being so exact, three feet versus safety, it is a nebulous area in my view. I just want to be sure we are not exposing the county to additional liability with this three-foot distance, particularly on town roads

- Mr. Lawson: I understand. In my mind it is similar to speed limits, we do not say drive at a safe speed, we say here is the limit. When reconstructing a traffic incident, no one was there with a radar gun the whole time, so you have to say was it an unsafe speed, that is how enforcement actually happens, when something bad occurs. That is why it really should not change enforcement much, it is not supposed to be police officers out there with yardsticks. It is more that if something happens, it would come into effect, clearly there was not enough space, that kind of thing
- Mr. Meaker: What was the last county you said?
- Mr. Lawson: Either Cortland or Monroe, I forget which I said last. They both have passed it
- Mr. Meaker: In my district, same as Legislator Bush, we have several rural roads where there is really no shoulder. I would not compare this to a speed limit because the speed limit is the speed limit; you can only go so fast. On the rural roads throughout the county these lines vary, and you could be requiring someone to move over three feet and cross a center line in certain parts of the county very easily. How do you solve that issue?
- Mr. Brown: I can actually speak to this. Courtland passing it, this was a big part of the discussion. Courtland is more rural than Clay, and more rural than even Elbridge. In Courtland, a horse and buggy is a vulnerable road user; someone in a wheelchair device is a vulnerable road user. They actually fought for this and were excited for it because it is going to keep those people safe. Safe passing of a vulnerable road user is a lot easier to define when it is three feet versus just what you feel is safe, because not every driver has the same idea of what safe means. The legislation covers a person walking, an individual in a wheelchair, an individual with a service animal including the animal, an individual on a bicycle, any rider of a horse or other animal including the animal. These vulnerable road users still have a right to the road. We are not asking you to do anything different, just if you see them and you are going to pass them, you should provide safe passage. New York State does allow counties to provide a minimum safe passing distance and we are allowed to do three feet, which is what the other places went with
- Mr. Lawson: I grew up in your district, my parents still live there. When my dad retired he started biking more for recreation and he stopped because he does not bike out in your district anymore, it feels dangerous on the roads. This is just giving a little bit more space, a little bit more comfort for people who are biking on those roads
- Mr. Meaker: The safety of all people matters greatly to me in all districts throughout Onondaga County. But I am also concerned with the safety of the driver, especially as you mentioned young drivers. I have two recently permitted young daughters. You have to teach new drivers to look out for distractions, people, safety; it could be someone on a skateboard. But if they are literally thinking in their brain they have to move over three feet, I am worried they cross that center line and cause another accident coming towards them. The current law already in place may already be enough because it leaves a broader view, the vulnerable person has the right of way, but to put a measurement on it is concerning to me
- Mr. Brown: I also just wanted a point of clarification on these local laws; we are not going to be voting on them today. These are informational and will go to Session. You are allowed to ask questions today and we can continue this conversation throughout the week
- Mr. Meaker: I am aware we are not voting today, but I am here to get questions answered and to hear what we can do to make this safe for everyone. Is the current New York State law sufficient?
- Mr. Lawson: New York is sort of an outlier; not many states in the country have this more nebulous definition. Most go with a defined number, and the vast majority are three feet. I think it is 40 states at least three feet, many go further. It seems to have an effect on driver education and road user safety, that is the national idea behind this, that it is correlated with better outcomes
- Mr. Bush: That is a very good piece of information, that this is a national approach and that New York appears, from what you say, a little bit behind the curve. It makes me feel a lot more comfortable knowing this is happening throughout the country and that it is something that needs to be addressed. Thank you for that
- Mr. Meaker: That is why this dialogue is so important, I was not aware that 40 states across the country have some sort of actual measurement in place in law at this moment.
- Mr. Lawson: Yes

This item was considered and will be referred to Session.

b. A Local Law Amending Section 205 of the Onondaga County Charter Regarding Vacancies in the Onondaga County Legislature (*Sponsored by Mr. Eriksen*)

- This is a local law that would change the way legislative vacancies are appointed and place that appointment power with the legislature by majority vote, as opposed to the county executive where it currently resides
- This is about acknowledging the independence of this body; the county legislature is here to be a check on the county executive, and in that spirit, it does not make much sense for the county executive to be able to appoint their own checks; this creates a level of accountability and independence, and a higher likelihood that those appointed to this body by the legislature would have a higher degree of independence
- This cuts down on the likelihood that games can be played with the appointment of legislators to vacancies; it takes it away from being a one-on-one transaction
- Where a single person is responsible for elevating and appointing a legislator include:
 - Creating undue loyalty toward the county executive; the county exec would have influence over the appointed legislator because they owe their appointment to the exec
 - Legislator Erikson noted that he is not saying these have happened, will happen, or are happening, but the way the system is set up, this could happen
 - A legislative appointment could be used to create favor with a donor or influential connected person through the appointment of relatives or friends, it creates a network
- Instead of an appointed legislator feeling a sense of undue loyalty to one person, that power is given to 17 people; it is a lot harder for 17 people to influence the voice of that one appointed legislator; the appointed legislator is better able to exercise an independent voice; they would in no way beholden to a county exec who would have appointed them
- This also cuts down on the appointment of a legislator to a district that is inappropriate for their values, flipping a district from red to blue or blue to red; if the appointment power goes to the legislature, it is a much tougher individual vote; legislators go to the grocery store, see their voters, their neighbors, there is far more pressure to make appointments consistent with the values of voters in each district and what those voters have voted for in the past
- Bringing the appointment power closer to the people in this body, legislators are closer to the people, see and hear from voters more often; it makes it a lot tougher for this body to make an appointment that could be used to curry influence, flip a district, or something seen as untoward
- This applies to executives of both parties and legislatures of both parties; the control of this chamber may change, the control of the executive may change; this creates a system that incentivizes the appointment of qualified legislators whose beliefs are consistent with the district they would represent

Questions/Comments:

- Mr. May: I do not expect a response from any of this, Gregg. I appreciate that we are talking about this now. I think there was a comment earlier about some of this coming down the pike at 5:15 p.m., 5:14 p.m., specifically, on Friday. This was our first look, this is our first dialogue. That is what it is, water under the bridge. To give credit where credit is due, I appreciate the spirit of what is trying to be accomplished here, but as far as the hypothetical gamesmanship, I cannot help but think the same thing hypothetically could happen from a sitting majority. Theoretically, the same exact thing could happen with a sitting majority. With this coming at 5:14 p.m. and our first discussion with anyone, even an email response today, three, four, five business days after I sent one with questions, I just do not appreciate that is the way we are doing business here. I understand the spirit of your intent, but I think we can be doing a lot better as far as how we undertake our legislative process. I just wanted for the record to mention this is not a great way to do business. It is not super transparent. There is no time or deliberative process. I am not asking for more time, I am just saying this is not the way to do things around here
- Ms. Hernandez: This is not really unique, this is something common at other bodies. It is just giving the power back to us, the body, the people who really have to work closely with the person who is appointed. This is already being done at other local government levels

This item was considered and will be referred to Session.

- c. Local Law Amending the Onondaga County Charter to Impose a Term Limit on the Office of County Executive
(Sponsored by Ms. Hernandez)
- Local law sets the same criteria imposed on legislators in 2025, term limits, for the county executive
 - In 2025, when term limits were set for legislators, the body also looked at setting term limits for the county clerk, the DA, and the controller but was told it could not at that time; it was said to do one elected level at a time; the legislators were entertained first, and it was said they would come back and entertain the county executive, and that is what is being done now; in July, term limits for the controller will also be brought forward
 - When this was discussed in 2025, the county executive was not up for reelection, but the legislators were; now the county executive is up for reelection; this local law sets the same term limits imposed on legislators in 2025 for the county executive

Questions/Comments:

- Mr. Meaker: The county executive is not up for reelection, is that what you just said?
- Ms. Hernandez: In 2027, yes, not this year. This will go on this year's ballot for referendum for constituents to vote on. Just like last year when we quickly passed it in July 2025, this year we are trying to pass it in June so we can get it to the commissioner of the Board of Elections by August 3rd. We were rushed with ours, this year we do not want to be rushed. We want to have time for questions to be asked
- Mr. Bush: Just for the public record, we talked about what offices can be term-limited by this body versus those that have to be term-limited by the state legislature
 - A lot of people do not understand why we can do it for the county executive and the county controller but have no jurisdiction over the district attorney, county clerk, or sheriff
 - I think that needs to be explained to the population. And secondly, in my personal opinion, I am sorry that the county comptroller is not part of this process right now because it lends itself to being a rather political movement rather than a good government movement
 - Our goal is good government. There is no urgency now to do that; we can do this and get it on next year's ballot and still have it in place for those two positions when they are elected or filled
 - This is not regarding individuals, we are talking about positions. There is no need to rush it now. We have plenty of time to get it on the ballot for the following year and let the people vote
- Mr. Brown: Last year, when we did the legislators, what we changed was this year's election, that is why our terms right now are one year and not four years
- Mr. May: The governor changed the term
- Mr. Brown: But we put term limits on ourselves. This body is now trying to put term limits on the county executive. Because that election is next year, it has to be voted on this year, in the same way that last year we had to vote for it to take place this year. Does that make sense?
- Mr. Bush: Our term was automatically changed by the state legislature; term limits were not applied to us, not changed to a one-year term
- Mr. Brown: Correct, so we are not changing the county executive's term length
- Mr. Bush: Right, we really just had to get it done for an election cycle
- Ms. Hernandez: First, I want to say thank you for your statements because you are the original sponsor of this legislation. When you originally sponsored it, you also added the county executive into that local law
 - Last year when we passed the legislation on ourselves, we also wanted to do the county executive. At that time, through emails and conversations, we said we would do one at a time. We are not changing any rules, we are continuing the same process
 - When we term-limited ourselves last year, we said we would come back this year and do the county executive. That is what we are doing now
 - In July, we will also do the comptroller. We have a lot of local laws in June, we are going to come back and revisit the controller

- It is not political this year, just like it was not political last year when we were in the minority and I stepped up and co-sponsored this bill not even knowing we would be in the majority
- We took a chance because our constituents told us they wanted local government to be term-limited
- Mr. May: I just want to clarify one thing I have heard twice, I just do not know if I take that as fact because it certainly does not speak for my opinion of what happened last year
 - Not even close. The one at a time thing, I think that is a little presumptuous. What we did from my perspective was do what we could do, which is different from saying we are going to do these one at a time, this year this, next year that. That was not the case
 - We knew this body could make a decision among itself about the offices that it holds. We knew that taking on others was a much bigger bite
 - That being said, we did not take it on, it did not happen. I just do not want us to embrace the notion that everyone decided we were going to do this one at a time. That was not the case. We did what we could do last year. I do not want us to hang our hat on something that is not necessarily true or universally accepted
- Mr. Brown: I do appreciate that, and I will just push back a little. I was under that impression. I do not know if I would have voted in favor of imposing term limits on ourselves if I knew we were not going to do everyone, I do not think our office is that special. I think the public views us all as elected officials and they want term limits for all of us. They voted overwhelmingly in that favor
- Mr. May: And on that I am sure we agree. It is just how it is being represented
- Mr. Brown: It was not universal, everyone did not think we were going to do them one at a time
- Mr. May: I just want to be clear on that because right now one position is being addressed
- Ms. Hernandez: We are actually going to do two at a time this time because we are bringing the comptroller in July. And you were not at the table for a lot of the conversations, unfortunately
- Mr. May: I was not at the table for any of the conversations, nor was I invited. Thank you
- Ms. Denton: That is kind of why they are on our agenda now, so we can talk about this timing. The voters at the end of the day have to have the final say if these move forward, but the deadline to get on the ballot is August and we only have June and then July session. That is why we are here today to discuss these three local laws that really impact our charter and whether or not the voters would want to change those. It is a process and I am really glad we are here today discussing all these
- Mr. Bush: So, the legislature is saying that if it moves forward, the county executive will be on the ballot and the county comptroller position will be on the ballot, is that what you are saying?
- Ms. Brown: That is what we are discussing. Today we are only discussing the county executive. If the vote goes forward and passes this month, the county executive; and if it passes next month, the controller. So yes, both will be on the ballot in November
- Mr. Bush: Not to belabor it, why isn't the county controller being discussed today as well?
- Ms. Brown: My understanding from last year was that we were doing them one at a time. I was really opposed to putting term limits on ourselves but not the county executive. I almost drew a line in the sand within the caucus, but my floor leader really wanted us to vote as a block and I support her, we are a united front.
 - I ultimately do think term limits are a good thing. However, the message it sent to the voters was that we are not separate entities, we all work together as a team. If one member of the team has term limits, I think the other should too, but we decided to separate them
 - My understanding of today is that we are continuing that trend. It seems like we are not all in accord on that, and that is all right, but that is how we got here
- Ms. Hernandez: We were trying to put them both on one local law and we were advised that we could not, we had to have two separate local laws. We have a lot of local laws in June. We are bringing the local law back with the comptroller in July. But we did try to put both on the same local law
- Mr. Bush: I do appreciate that. In the meantime, can you put a local law together right now that includes the county comptroller and get it all done?
- Ms. Hernandez: Y'all showed us how quick one can get put together last time
- Mr. Meaker: It is unfortunate. The position of county executive and the position of comptroller should both be now, that is the right thing to do
- Ms. Hernandez: When you say now, do you mean now, today, June?
- Mr. Meaker: They should be discussed, both of them now, in June.

- Ms. Hernandez: I said we could not put both on the same local law, we had to do two separate laws
- Mr. Meaker: That is a play on words. I know you cannot put them both on the same document, it would have to be two separate local laws, two separate lines on the ballot. But to have one and not the other is not the right thing to do
- Ms. Hernandez: We look forward to discussing the comptroller in July
- Mr. Meaker: And last year, it was not one; there were 17 that got voted on
- Mr. Brown: The office of the county legislature, or the board of supervisors as noted in the county charter, is one office made up of 17 individual offices. When you are making a change to the board of supervisors, you do not do 17 different local laws, you do one, just the same way that the county executive has one
- Mr. Meaker: With all due respect, I understand how that works. It still comes down to the right thing to do to have them both at the same time

This item was considered and will be referred to Session.

- d. Local Law Amending Section 207 of the Onondaga County Charter and Section 2.17 of the Onondaga County Administrative Code to Revise the Onondaga County Reapportionment Commission to Ensure a Fair and Objective Process by Which the Onondaga County Legislature Districts Are Reapportioned (*Sponsored by Mr. Ryan*)
- At its core, this proposal is about one thing: creating a fairer, more transparent, and more publicly trusted process for drawing legislative district lines; right now, elected officials ultimately control redistricting, whether intentional or not, that creates the appearance that politicians are choosing their voters instead of voters choosing their representatives
 - Under this local law, district lines would be instead developed through an independent citizen-led process with public hearings, transparency requirements, geographic balance, and legislative oversight built into every stage
 - The proposal does not eliminate the legislature’s role, the legislature retains significant authority throughout; the difference is that legislators no longer draw their own districts
 - How it works:
 - This body passes the local law; it goes before voters in November as a charter amendment; the public gets the final say on whether this system exists at all
 - If approved, the process begins the following year with an application administered by the comptroller; any qualified resident can apply
 - An independent application review panel, made up of appointments from the county executive, comptroller, county clerk, and legislative chair, reviews applications and selects a qualified pool of 100 candidates
 - The legislature still has oversight at this stage; the legislature may remove applicants for cause by a two-thirds vote, for conflicts of interest, dishonesty, inability to serve impartially, or other legitimate concerns
 - Through a public and transparent random selection process, the initial commissioners are chosen; the commissioners then complete the full 15-member commission while complying with geographic and voter enrollment balance requirements
 - The commission begins the actual redistricting work; the proposal requires multiple public hearings, publication of draft maps, written public comment periods, public records retention, and detailed written findings explaining how maps comply with legal standards; this process is designed to happen in public, not behind closed doors
 - Once the commission adopts a final map, the legislature still reviews it; the legislature can reject the map if it believes the commission failed to comply with the charter criteria, but objections must be tied to actual legal or procedural standards, not politics or incumbency protection; the legislature cannot redraw the map itself
 - If disagreements continue, there are additional review stages: executive veto authority, override provisions, and ultimately judicial review if the process fails entirely
 - This is not a system without checks and balances; it has multiple layers of accountability. What this proposal does is modernize the process and align it with what many voters increasingly expect: that redistricting should be transparent, fair, and insulated from direct political self-interest

Questions/Comments

- Mr. Burtis: I spent my time redistricting. Prior to me, Legislator, then Chairman Knapp also did. Let me just say it is difficult. In my opinion, the way it was, it was very political.
 - The minority leader, Chris Ryan, and I spent a lot of time together talking about the maps. It is very difficult to draw these maps; I would like to say that about 12 times. I would describe it all as a puzzle
 - There are requirements that districts need to look like, and agreements we made, we will not take apart villages, we will try to keep things together as best we can, and you need the certain makeup of the map with the percentages. It is very difficult. Last time we did include the public, and if it is difficult and complicated, the public has a hard time understanding, as some legislators did
 - I had some misunderstandings before I was fully pushed into it. I believe last time it was fair and objective. I would like to give this to you, but back to the puzzle, it is hard
 - The idea that this would be independent, I understand that is probably a desire, but it is very difficult to do in this community
 - There are not a lot of people who want to volunteer for anything, let alone something so polarizing and political. There are only going to be so few people really wanting to dive into this. I understand what is written here, and as a former chair I understand it, but it is complicated
- Mr. Romeo: I will agree with Legislator Burtis that it is difficult to draw those puzzles, being somebody that put one of those puzzles together
 - I just want to thank Mr. Ryan, he did a lot of work with this. He reached out to me a number of times and the number of drafts that went into creating this, trying to make it the best law possible. I appreciate that work. Thank you
- Mr. Durr: This is not a question but a clarification. First, on the last local law, regarding whether one or multiple people can be put on that law, you can put multiple people on it, so you could include the comptroller
 - Regarding this specific law, there are a couple of problems:
 - First, it is in direct conflict with Municipal Home Rule Law, which says we do this every 10 years. The last redistricting resulted in a lawsuit that went before a Supreme Court judge, we hired the best expert in the country, who told us the lines could not have been any more perfect
 - The reason I mention that is this is going to make us susceptible to another lawsuit and more expense when we are trying to improve on a process that did not need improvement
 - Home Rule Law says once every 10 years, based on when we get the census results. If you are going to draw new lines next year, you will be using the same census that was used last time, which was in 2023, delayed a year because of COVID
 - That same information resulted in the law that was approved by the Supreme Court for legality and commended, our expert stated the lines could not have been drawn any better
 - Additionally, there are provisions that may be in conflict with the New York State Constitution, provisions that bind future legislators regarding finances, which you cannot do
 - Our office was not really consulted on this. I spoke to Mr. Ryan last week. We could assist because we have knowledge of the charter and home rule law. As this sits, this is not a legally viable law, it is going to be open to lawsuits and questioning. I am not saying not to do it; I am just saying do it properly
- Mr. Ryan: I agree that if these were drawn next year, we would be drawing on that same census data from last decade. Maybe Legislator Burtis and those folks got it absolutely correct. The intent of this law is to create public trust in the process and to have this done through a commission of citizens who have volunteered their time and efforts to make sure it is done correctly. And if the maps come out exactly the same, then Mr. Burtis got it right
- Mr. Durr: That is just one of the problems. There are also other problems we would like to vet. Once again, you cannot bind future legislators, which this is attempting to do. You cannot be in conflict with the state constitution, whether or not you are, I do not know, but there is a question. There is conflict between state law and county law that needs to be resolved
 - There is conflict regarding Municipal Home Rule Law and this proposed legislation that needs to be resolved. There is conflict regarding whether this binds future legislators, which no legislative body can do

- There are things that need to be vetted, and as it stands right now this is not a legally admissible resolution or law. The law department cannot approve it as it sits
- Mr. May: Mr. Durr, just to be clear, this local law is not approved by the law department as it sits right now?
- Mr. Durr: It is not approved by the law department. There is a lot of research that needs to be done regarding conflicts with the state constitution, Municipal Home Rule Law, and binding future legislators, along with some other issues
- Mr. Ryan: Thanks for the clarification, Mr. Durr. Do you think this law is illegal?
- Mr. Durr: Do I think it is illegal? I do not think it is in legal form right now. As it sits, yes, you are susceptible, you are opening the county up to lawsuits
 - Without knowing anything else and not doing any further research, this law cannot be approved by the law department, and there are provisions in there that I think at this point in time are legal but at least need to be vetted

This item was considered and will be referred to Session.

- e. A Local Law to Prohibit Demonstrating Within Ten (10) Feet of Another Person Entering or Leaving a Place of Religious Worship and Not Within Thirty-Five (35) Feet of an Entrance Thereto (*Sponsored by Mr. Burtis*)
- In January of this year, there was protesting at a church in Minnesota; thinking about the church he attends and other churches in his district; became concerned and started asking questions; the world is not getting better and these are divisive days, we need to lead in this area; it is not about his church specifically, it is about all religious institutions, some with security and some without, some large and some small; believes these things should be written down in the form of a local law
 - The distance: 35 feet from the entrance of the place of worship; 10 feet from a person entering or leaving
 - In the church world, the main auditorium is called a sanctuary, a quiet place to pray and worship; this law is not about restricting anyone's ability to pray or worship
 - It is the Places of Worship Protection Act; places of worship make up less than 1% of Onondaga County, there is 99% of other space where the right to demonstrate exists; these are parameters
 - Just because nothing is happening here now, we should lead for the community so they know of these parameters; people should understand this law today and the penalties for conducting themselves in such a manner; it is prudent and timely

Questions/Comments

- Mr. Ryan: I would like to echo Leader May's point that this came across at 5:14 p.m. on Friday, and the concern he had for the way our caucus was operating was operated in the same manner as his caucus
- Mr. Brown: I actually do have a question about penalties. Section 5 says that the penalty is someone guilty will be guilty of a misdemeanor. How are we going to go about enforcing this? Have you spoken with your local police departments? This seems like a real burden it is going to put on them from my purview
- Mr. Burtis: This has been passed in another county already. It is punishable by a fine of not more than \$250 or imprisonment of not more than one year. Of course, it is up to law enforcement to make that decision, punishment is up to law enforcement on the ground
- Mr. Brown: The county you are mentioning, is it Nassau? There is a Long Island county that has a lawsuit pertaining to this, is that what this is?
- Mr. Burtis: I believe it is Nassau
- Mr. Ryan: So, they passed it and now the lawsuit is pending. And we do not know what the outcome of the lawsuit is going to be at this moment?
- Mr. Burtis: I do not
- Mr. Ryan: Could you clarify the lawsuit?
- Mr. Brown: It looks like Nassau County has a buffer zone law, the only other county I saw with anything similar was because the lawsuit came up. I followed the lawsuit. In Nassau County there is a buffer zone law
- Mr. May: Someone is challenging the buffer zone law?

- Mr. Brown: Yes. It's like NYCLU
- Ms. Denton: Peaceful protests in public spaces including sidewalks near places of worship are protected speech under our constitution. There are also federal laws and trespassing laws already in place, like the FACE Act, which is a federal law that protects places of worship from harassment and violence. Why would this be needed when we already have federal and state laws in place? And the county that was mentioned, Nassau, is being sued for this very same law because it could violate the US Constitution. It is very concerning that we would open the county up to lawsuits
- Mr. Burtis: We live in a land of disagreement and that means lawsuits, whether it is about maps or anything else. The fact that it is being challenged in a lawsuit is not that meaningful to me. The FACE Act is a federal law, the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances. That is pretty much what I had seen
- Ms. Denton: It does include places of worship
- Mr. Burtis: The FACE Act was passed by Congress in 1994, that was 30 years ago. I do not know that people know there is a law on the books. I think it is reasonable that people should be able to walk into whatever religious institution they want without fear of protesting happening outside or inside
 - There is 99% of more space in Onondaga County to protest. We are saying people can protest everywhere, I am suggesting there should be this legislative block
- Ms. Block: I am a little confused about some of this terminology. It says it is unlawful to distribute literature or engage in oral advocacy or other forms of expressive or symbolic conduct. Would that be pertinent to giving out religious literature on the steps or holding mass outside?
- Mr. Burtis: I am not clear. Passing literature out in front of your church; somebody passing out other literature
- Ms. Block: Yes, because you are saying you cannot pass out literature within 10 feet. So can they pass out their own literature outside?
 - Mr. Burtis: I would not think so, if you have people walking into your organization, your church, they can pass it out there. But this is specifically talking about without an individual's express consent, for the purpose of demonstrating, picketing, protesting, distributing literature, displaying signs, engaging in oral advocacy or other forms of expressive or symbolic conduct
It is folks with opposing views
- Mr. Thompson: You mentioned that the FACE Act from 1994 is on the books and that it protects places of worship for points of access. Did I hear you correctly that because it was from 1994, people have forgotten that it exists?
- Mr. Burtis: That is my suggestion
- Mr. Thompson: So are we creating a law to remind people that a law exists? Does this supersede the federal law passed in 1994?
- Mr. Burtis: No
- Mr. Thompson: Is it doing anything different?
- Mr. Burtis: I believe it is; we are giving more context than what was on the FACE Act
- Mr. Thompson: It specifies the distance
- Mr. Burtis: On the FACE Act, it is primarily for access to clinic entrances, pro-life, pro-choice
- Mr. Thompson: But also places of worship
- Mr. Burtis: And later down it talks about places of worship
- Mr. Thompson: I am struggling to see what this new law does that the previously existing law does not do and why it would be necessary for us to entertain it here
- Mr. Burtis: I understand
- Mr. Brown: I just want to go back to my original question, especially after hearing this conversation. I would like to know what the buy-in is from law enforcement. This sounds like enforcement is going to be rather challenging with these specifics. Do we know if this has come up in other places? Is there a fear that law enforcement is going to struggle to enforce this?
- Mr. Burtis: We have security at the church I attend, it is a uniformed police officer in the building. Another large church in my district has paid security as well. The point of all of this is to give more guidance. This is a challenging space

- There have been threats I know of in this space before, far past protesting. I believe it is a meaningful step, it is necessary. I talked to a police officer some months ago and asked if he thought it was important, pertinent, relevant, and timely. He said yes
- To my opening point, he said things are not getting better out here. I understand and appreciate all the points, but even just through this process we can shine a light on these important laws and notify people that there is protection and there is punishment for others if you conduct yourselves in such a manner around any religious organization
- Mr. May: I appreciate all the questions and thoughts. I do agree with Legislator Burtis, the world is different today. I believe this local law brings specificity to a hot area of existence. In the business world I always tell people, do not tell me no, tell me how
 - The United States Constitution allows for freedom of speech and freedom of religion. What this does is tell everybody how they can pursue whatever they want and where the boundaries are to reason. No one is saying you cannot protest
 - There are points of reason here. I am not in law enforcement, but I have been in situations where I have been approached in public places and people have crossed that physical line, that is a tough spot for any human being. What do you do? It happened to me once at church, believe it or not, and another time at a public place
 - I do not think law enforcement was able to help that much because I do not know that they knew what they could and could not do, which constitutional right should I oppose, which should I support? This says how
 - It does not say you cannot. It does not say Tim cannot go to church. It does not say someone cannot protest Tim's church, they can do it. That is just how I am looking at it. I do not think it is that complicated
- Mr. Erikson: I had either a question or some thoughts about how we might be able to have this conversation proceed. I am looking at this in some of the same way the county attorney has, trying to avoid legal challenges
 - Since I think I am the only person in this body who had to really study the First Amendment, I will get a little nerdy about it. If we are going to put restrictions on the First Amendment, courts look at reasonable time, place, and manner restrictions
 - This is leading to some places where we may need more information to help the conversation continue. My thought is, is this the kind of reasonable time, place, and manner restriction on free speech that is likely to survive a challenge? I do not know that right now
 - I will stipulate that I am pretty sure everyone here would agree that we do not want to see people being harassed on their way into or out of a house of worship. The question is whether this type of restriction is narrowly tailored enough to survive scrutiny
 - Knowing how that has happened can help us better understand whether this type of restriction would be narrowly tailored enough to be that reasonable time, place, and manner restriction that might withstand scrutiny
 - I do not expect you to get into all of that now, I think that is how we might be able to continue to have a productive conversation on this
- Mr. Burtis: Back to what got us here, I am not here trying to play politics or run for higher office. Back to January 2026, I see the video. I see the protesters. It does not matter to me what they are affiliated with
 - I see still in my head the pews, people just fleeing, because you do not know what is going to happen. They walked into a church and did their thing. It is not normal, just like this auditorium it is not normal, it has happened here before, it does not make you feel calm
 - The point of all this is in the corner off to the left of this frame I am looking at is a father holding a young daughter. I said to myself, what are you doing? Everybody is leaving and you are still sitting there with your daughter. Just the negativity of that moment
 - We are all so concerned about children today and what they see. My thought was, you do not know what is going to happen, just get up and leave. That is how this started for me. No other way just concern for those that want to do this. And then what happens to these people if security, whether paid or private, puts their hands on an individual? What is going to happen then? That is how it starts.
- Ms. Denton: With the county attorney sharing concerns about previous local laws and an actual pending court case on this law with a different county, I was wondering if we could hear from county law on this local law. And should we wait until that current case is resolved before we open the county to that risk?

- Mr. Burtis: Law has looked at this and said it was lawful in its form and function. What you described is not leadership, let us wait for the next thing. I do not know how long that will take. That could take a while. To me that is not leadership. I am not afraid to walk forward
- Mr. Ockenden (County Attorney): I just want to note there is a difference between something that is illegal on its face and something that is maybe illegal; there is a huge difference. The legal analysis is completely different. That is what we are dealing with today with the law department's perspective on the redistricting local law versus this one
- Ms. Denton: But with the active local case, is that concerning?
- Mr. Ockenden: It can be of concern to whatever degree you think. Some people are more risk averse than others. It is ultimately the legislature's decision. If you say we cannot do something because there is a lawsuit on it, nothing gets done
- Mr. Brown: What happens if the lawsuit goes and says the Nassau law is illegal? What happens to our law?
- Mr. Durr: The Nassau lawsuit has been brought in the Second Department in New York State. We are in the Fourth Department, so we would not be specifically bound by their decision. What would happen, and I assume will happen if found against the county or the other party, is this would go up to the Court of Appeals and then to Albany for additional scrutiny
 - That process is a two-year process By putting this on the back burner you are probably putting it on the back burner for a year and a half to two years. We would be bound by the state decision but not by the local decision
- Mr. Brown: I am not a lawyer. My fear, if we pass it and two years later it is determined they did break the law, will we be held liable for violating the law for the past two years?
- Mr. Durr: What would probably happen is when this is enforced, that individual will specifically bring forth a suit at that time, they are not going to wait. There are statute of limitations issues. It is never a good idea to wait if you have an issue that needs to go before a court. I do not have a crystal ball; I cannot tell you what would happen, but if there is no malice in it, our exposure is not going to be that high

This item was considered and will be referred to Session.

Mr. Romeo left the meeting at approximately 3:05 p.m.

C. Adjournment

A motion was made by Ms. Hernandez, seconded by Ms. Denton, to adjourn the meeting. Ayes 6 (Brown, Hernandez, May, Burtis, Bush, Denton) Absent 1 (Romeo); MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



HASSINA K. ADAMS, Clerk
Onondaga County Legislature

ATTENDANCE	
COMMITTEE: WAYS & MEANS	
DATE: MAY 26, 2026	
NAME (Please Print)	DEPT/AGENCY/ORGANIZATION
<i>John Head</i>	<i>Comptroller's Office</i>
<i>Rosea Morgan</i>	<i>"</i>
<i>Alex Lawson</i>	<i>Young People</i>
<i>Kevin Sexton</i>	<i>IT</i>
<i>Kristy Smith</i>	<i>Finance</i>
<i>BJ Ruiz</i>	<i>CEO</i>