



Onondaga County Legislature

HASSINA K. ADAMS
Clerk

NICOLE WATTS
Chairwoman

SPENCER BERG
Deputy Clerk

COUNTY EXECUTIVE'S 2027 BUDGET PRESENTATION TO THE ONONDAGA COUNTY LEGISLATURE MINUTES – SEPTEMBER 15, 2026

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairwoman Watts, Leader Hernandez, Leader May, Mr. Meaker, Mr. Burtis, Mr. Thompson, Ms. Block, Mr. Eriksen, Mr. Romeo, Mr. Ryan, Ms. Denton, Mr. McCarron, Mr. Knapp, Mr. Bush, Mr. Kelly, Mr. Brown, Mr. Garland; also see attached list

Chairwoman Watts called the meeting to order at 11:04 a.m.

OPENING REMARKS:

Chairwoman Watts welcomed the County Executive back for the start of budget season, noting that we are living in a time in Onondaga County that is a first in 100 years opportunity, and it is extremely important to ensure Onondaga County has a strong foundation to build on to serve the people of Onondaga County. She stated that the Legislature looks forward to hearing how this budget will address community health and well-being and build this strong foundation, and how it will practice fiscal responsibility to meet community needs and seize the opportunities for all. Per the charter, the County Executive will present the budget to the County Legislature, followed by a series of meetings, most in joint committee format, working with committees that have been working directly with the departments that serve the county to ask specific questions developed over the course of the year. Following those, suggestions will be made to the Ways and Means Committee regarding cuts, contingencies, amendments, or additions to the budget presented; the Ways and Means report will be produced, followed by a public hearing on the evening of October 1st, and the amended budget will be voted on October 6th. She then introduced County Executive Ryan McMahon to present the 2027 budget.

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE: J. Ryan McMahon, II

(Attachment No. 1: The Budget Message)

Introductory Remarks

- Three legislators not returning next year: Legislator McCarron, Legislator Garland, Legislator Brown; thanked for their work
- Deputy County Executives Donnelly, Rooney, Johnson, Barlow, and CFO Christy Smiley and team present, part of year-round budget process with departments
- 2027 executive budget presented today
- Budget built on responsibility, momentum, and partnership

County Accomplishments, Past Year

- Property values risen
- Housing starts climbed to historic levels
- Poverty rates, including child poverty, continue to fall
- Lead poisoning rates dropped
- Private sector investment surging
- Job creation at a scale unimaginable five years ago

Central New York Semiconductor Cluster

- Micron construction phase 1 begun; site being prepared for concrete foundations
 - Next year: 3,000 to 4,000 workers at White Pine Business Park
 - At least 20 cranes on site, including the second largest crane in the world
 - Over \$100 billion investment taking shape

Fiscal Pressures

- Financial pressures facing local governments across New York
- State and federal mandates continue growing each year, adding costs counties must absorb regardless of economic conditions
 - Span social services and public safety requirements to regulatory and reporting standards that have become increasingly complex
- Mandated service costs rising faster than local budget flexibility
- Electricity and utility costs increased sharply
 - Keeping county buildings, health facilities, parks, transportation operations, critical water, and wastewater systems functioning requires significantly higher energy expenses than in years past
 - Homeowners and businesses are experiencing cost increases in monthly bills and household budgets
- Onondaga County remains in a uniquely strong position; years of disciplined planning and forward-looking investment
 - Early infrastructure improvements, careful budgeting practices, and strategic economic development have built stability that allows revenue growth to stay ahead of rising costs
 - Strong sales tax performance, steady private sector investment, and a diversified economic base have continued to strengthen financial outlook even as expenses have climbed
- Despite inflation, rising energy costs, and expanded state-driven mandates, financial structure remains strong enough to reduce the property tax rate

2027 Budget – Overview

- All funds: \$1.6988 billion
- General fund expenses: \$1.118 billion
 - Growth in budgets reflects baseline costs such as wages, mandates, essential operational needs, and strategic additions in key areas
- Proposing 9 percent tax rate cut, from \$2.93 to \$2.67 per thousand
- Sales tax: 2026 forecast growth of 4.94 percent; budgeted 2027 growth of 2 percent
- Ninth straight year using zero general fund balance to balance budget
 - Saves average homeowner about \$78 (average home value \$300,000)

- Ninth straight year of tax rate reductions

PIE Platform – People, Infrastructure, Economic Development

- Core funding framework for this budget
- Continues investment in mandated responsibilities: human services, public safety, physical infrastructure

Children & Family Services

- Expanding case workers that deal directly with school districts
 - New case workers to work directly with larger suburban school districts
 - Expansion of initiative that began in the City of Syracuse
- Continues partnership with schools; three-tiered mental health support for students, including on-site clinics
 - Investments since the pandemic approaching \$30 million

2Gen Onondaga & Early Childhood

- Continues 2Gen Onondaga program, helping families toward stability, employment, independence
 - Helps single parents navigate housing, childcare, work placement; addresses generational poverty
- Continues Early Childhood Alliance and Dolly Parton Imagination Library
- Continues childcare affordability support
 - Between federal, state, and local dollars, supported over 2,300 families and 5,000 children in 2026
 - 2027 funding levels could offer childcare support to an additional 1,000 families and 2,000 children

Food Security & Senior Services

- \$500,000 in infrastructure grants announced to food pantries for food security
- Proposing \$250,000 pilot program with local farmers and food pantries
- Budget funds another round of senior center infrastructure grants
 - Senior centers are a backbone of villages and city neighborhoods
 - Department of Adult and Long-Term Care and local partners provide programming

Tourism & Airport

- Room occupancy tax, dedicated to investments in hospitality, tourism, and economic development, will continue to fund Visit Syracuse and CNY Arts at historic highs
- \$250,000 in hospitality and tourism grants for events drawing visitors and overnight stays
- Looking to leverage county funding for larger funding from New York State for the airport
 - Airport growing; robust capital plan for demand
 - Proposing airport revitalization fund, seeded with \$1.5 million of room occupancy tax
 - Down payment for ongoing needs at the airport; encouragement for state to do more

Housing Initiatives

- Partnership with Home Headquarters: Gen Z down payment and closing cost assistance program
 - \$2 million investment; intended to help 200 residents become first-time home buyers

- Aimed at helping younger residents establish long-term roots in the county
- Proposing creation of a Limited Development Corporation (LDC) for housing
 - Outgrowth of Legislature Housing Committee recommendation
 - Could lend low-interest financing for middle-market housing projects; potential 1,000 additional units
 - Local law creating the LDC included in this budget
- Combined with the O-CHIP program, Gen Z infrastructure fund, UTEP changes to OCIDA, and the Onondaga County Neighborhood Initiative, putting tools in the housing toolbox

Plan Onondaga Implementation II

- To be developed and presented over coming weeks
- Fund balance resolution to focus on investments driving the semiconductor cluster forward
- LDC funding could be at the heart of this implementation package

Closing

- Through responsible budgeting and bold investments, put ourselves in the strongest fiscal and economic position in the county's history
 - Building out a semiconductor cluster
 - Expanding infrastructure
 - Growing jobs
 - Lowering taxes
 - Revitalizing neighborhoods
 - Making community safer
 - Driving positive outcomes for people
 - Semiconductor cluster, expanded infrastructure, job growth, lower taxes, neighborhood revitalization, and public safety cited as results
- Now is the time to put aside political echo chambers and focus on what matters, a budget that delivers on the promise of the moment we are in; working together to drive outcomes we can all be proud of

Chairwoman Watts thanked County Executive McMahon and announced that the Ways and Means budget review process would continue the next day starting at 9:00 a.m.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:25 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



HASSINA K. ADAMS, Clerk
Onondaga County Legislature

ATTENDANCE

MEETING: COUNTY EXECUTIVE BUDGET PRESENTATION
DATE: SEPTEMBER 15, 2026

SPEAKER NAME (Please Print)	DEPT/AGENCY/ORGANIZATION
J.P. McMahon	Onondaga County Executive