



Onondaga County Legislature

HASSINA K. ADAMS
Clerk

NICOLE WATTS
Chairwoman

SPENCER BERG
Deputy Clerk

JOINT MEETING OF THE WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE AND COUNTY FACILITIES COMMITTEE BUDGET REVIEW DAY 3 MINUTES – SEPTEMBER 17, 2026 MAURICE BROWN & CHAD RYAN, CO-CHAIRS

MEMBERS PRESENT: Leader Hernandez, Leader May, Mr. Burtis, Mr. Bush, Mr. McCarron, Mr. Romeo, Ms. Denton, Mr. Thompson

ALSO ATTENDING: Chairwoman Watts, Mr. Garland, Mr. Kelly, Mr. Meaker, Mr. Garland, Mr. Eriksen

Chair Brown called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m.

Opening Remarks

Chair Brown and Facilities Committee Chair Ryan co-presided over the joint meeting, with Chair Brown yielding the gavel to Chair Ryan to conduct the proceedings.

Chair Ryan introduced Commissioner Archie Wixson, Jr., and noted that any follow-ups will be addressed at Tuesday's committee meeting.

FACILITIES MANAGEMENT: Archie Wixson, Jr., Commissioner

*(Attachment No. 1: Onondaga County Facilities Management, 2027 Executive Budget Written Statement;
Attachment No. 2: Native Exhibit Project Information)*

Budget Overview

- Finance department and the executive office propose a proforma styled budget for the department
- No additions required this year to the proforma
- Personnel roster staying static
- Increases related to escalations, market adjustments, and consumer cost indexes
- Only personnel line cost increases due to the labor contracts and benefits and insurances
- All other lines staying within the proforma

Questions/Comments:

- Overtime wages line projected at \$260,000 for next year; 2025 was \$400,000; where are we currently this year?
 - Going to stay within budget as proposed
 - May need some transfers within budget accounts to cover overtime

- \$50,000 line in the overtime budget to front the overtime for the amphitheater concert coverage; reimbursed
- Departments overrun their 102 or 103 line because of vacancies; look at those three lines in total
- Facilities has remained within their total appropriation of those three lines over the last several years
- When you go overtime and need more, where do you get it from?
 - Typically either the 101 or the 103 line
 - Can move money between those accounts
- Who else is in the 103 line?
 - Temporary employees
 - Seasonal staff in some departments; part-time for a specific purpose in others
- Maintenance, utilities, and rents; anything outside of utility costs?
 - Largest driver is electric, gas, and water
 - A few increases in contractual costs for maintenance and repairs of parts, with inflation
- Just for the downtown campus?
 - Any of the campuses the facilities department provides services to
- Professional services line, used for the STEAM school; project done?
 - Essentially done
 - No expenses; very minor involvement to get warranties covered
 - Still \$100,000 in that line for different studies and assessments
- Provision for capital projects; \$400,000, adopted at \$700,000, going back to \$400,000; what is that?
 - Cash in the operating budget to do selected smaller projects that don't rise to the level of the CIP
 - Almost every year, except a couple periods during COVID
 - Last year, mainly mechanical replacements and roof repairs and maintenance
 - Not projecting that this year; dropped back down to what was carried the previous two years
- Did we not use most of that \$700,000 this year?
 - Yes; used earlier in the year
- Interdepartmental charges, the chargebacks?
 - One of the major ones is MLR, maintenance in lieu of rent
 - Interdepartmental program established years ago, i.e., Facilities, IT, Purchasing, Personnel, Financial Operations
 - Departments like social services and health can get reimbursement
 - Same in the WEP fund
- Going down by half a million; a specific scope of work changing?
 - Facilities used to charge themselves back for MLR
 - Net local doesn't change
- MLR, what is that?
 - Maintenance in lieu of rent
- Transfer to debt service fund?

- Cover the debt service related to projects in the capital improvement plan for Facilities
- Down within Facilities, Parks, and DOT; coincidental or a mechanic?
 - Some is retirement of debt service
 - Interest and earnings on cash designated for capital improvements used to offset debt service
 - Seen in the general fund across most departments
- Revenues under services for other governments, public safety; what is that? Jumping up 40%
 - Mostly the abstracts with the city or the state
- What are the abstract charges; what buildings?
 - Criminal Courthouse and the Public Safety Building
 - Line-by-line detail on the last page of the budget resolution
 - Two-year reconciliation; 2027 charges with the 2025 reconciliation
- Staffing at 150, up seven positions from the year before; did we fill those seven positions?
 - Yes
- How many vacant positions?
 - Three vacant funded
 - In the process of filling those
- Able to provide the staffing positions and vacant positions on Tuesday?
 - Sure
 - Funded and filled positions in all departments being sent over
- ASM's contract; where is it in this budget?
 - Not under Facilities
 - OnCenter has its own fund; annual contribution
- Capital provisions line in their fund for low maintenance jobs that aren't CIP work; what's that number?
 - Not in the Facilities budget
 - Will get the exact number
- PSB abstract; with the police moving to the new building on Fayette Street, does that affect how we charge them?
 - Not affecting how we charge; city is a joint owner
 - City is the primary owner; higher percentage ownership
- Weren't they paying 100% and now should be paying 60%?
 - Never paying 100%
 - 61%, 39% ownership; consistent since 1962
- Not compensating us for our 39% when using the whole building?
 - Never using the whole building
 - New York State city courts, District Attorney's Office, Sheriff's Department, and Facilities have space in the building
- Still looking to RFP for that?
 - RFP was put out and awarded

- City going through a due diligence period with the selected responder; nine months
- New building at the Inner Harbor; any associated costs in this budget for support services, i.e., security, utilities, parking lots, procurement?
 - Nothing in this budget directly aligned with an expected expense there
 - Utilities paid through revenue by the operator
 - Operator responsible for maintenance and custodial
 - Asset protection or a higher level of a skilled trade, county would go in
- Egress in and out on Tuesday's agenda, city land; already funded?
 - Proposed funding for that
 - Won't be paving it; site improvements
 - Consistent with what the city proposed in an ordinance a year ago
- Similar to how the amphitheater is run?
 - Very similar
 - Amphitheater slightly different; bisects a city park
- Utilities?
 - Paid through the venue revenues
- Any areas across county government where it's not just maintenance, utilities, or rent driving the increase? Energy costs?
 - Primarily; inflation costs for repairs in some departments
- Most people across county government getting paid more in 2027; compensation and benefits costs driving the increases in the interdepartmentals?
 - Yes
- Grant project accounts; how do accounts go negative?
 - Closeout process
 - Closing out a project removes those appropriations, only in the current year
- Account cleanups every so often?
 - Grants reviewed on a quarterly basis and at the end of every year
- Grants projects for Facilities?
 - One grant item, \$50,000, moved into a project account for work at the amphitheater; reimbursed
 - 2025 actuals, work related to the courthouse law library; reimbursed
- Any other projects outside that \$50,000 for Facilities?
 - Not asking for any new ones in 2027
 - Grants shows only new appropriations for 2027
- List of projects going on?
 - Sure
- Travel and training, about \$3,000; what does travel and training look like for the department?
 - Increase due to increased travel cards, the gas
 - City fuel under travel and training

- \$30,000 budget not a specific training or travel plan?
 - Training as it becomes available; last year, security trainings, mechanical systems trainings
 - Meal reimbursement costs based on union contracts
 - IUOE at the steam plant held over, meal allowance
- Inner Harbor project going forward, appear under Facilities?
 - No costs associated with the aquarium anywhere in this budget
 - Operated like the amphitheater; owner operator will cover all those costs based on the revenue
- Even maintenance of the facility?
 - Part of their contract
- Loan from last year for the startup costs; when do we expect that payback?
 - By the end of 2027, fully reimbursed
 - 18 months; may be slightly later
- Revenues might come in 2027, but not reflected in the budget?
 - Correct; come back into the project account
- Water not healthy in the harbor; paying for any budget items to clean that up, or relying on the state?
 - State waterway; State Canal Corp, in cooperation with the Army Corps of Engineers
 - Water quality for Onondaga Lake greatly improved over the last 20 years
 - Contract in WEP for a company that comes weekly and cleans the Inner Harbor; new contractor
 - Additional dredging discussed; state did it last about 15 years ago
- STEAM school leased to the Syracuse City School District; how much do we lease it for?
 - Lease covers the debt service and overrun costs to complete the school
 - 10-year lease
 - Lease payments just started; about \$8,700,000
- In a perfect world, what's missing from the budget?
 - Good time to settle in and deliver services without huge overwhelming projects
 - Come back next year with a good plan to move forward

Chair Brown introduced Commissioner Brian Kelley from Parks.

PARKS AND RECREATION: Brian Kelley, Commissioner

*(Attachment No. 3: Onondaga County Parks and Recreation, 2027 Executive Budget Written Statement;
(Attachment No. 4: Sports Tourism Project Information)*

2026 Initiatives & Accomplishments

- Introduced the Explore Water Bottle Series
 - Encouraged residents to visit 10 county parks by collecting a unique sticker at each destination
- Expanded adaptive recreation through Health Department partnerships
 - All-terrain track wheelchairs at Beaver Lake
 - Beach wheelchairs at Oneida Shores and Jamesville Beach
 - Accessible shuttle for Beaver Lake's Nature on Wheels program
- Testing ultrasonic buoy technology at Jamesville Beach

- Reduce harmful blue-green algae and increase available swimming days
- Partnered with Cornell Cooperative Extension for four weeks of 4-H summer camps at four county parks
- Stocked nearly 60,000 trout through Carpenters Brook Fish Hatchery
- 2025-2026 Lights on the Lake season
 - Welcomed 36,931 vehicles
 - Generated \$10,767 for local charities
 - Collected 2,346 pounds of food for Feed Our Vets
- Completed a \$6 million, 230,000 square foot Hopkins Road Park multi-sport synthetic turf superfield
 - Expanding opportunities for baseball, softball, soccer, lacrosse, and football
 - Enabling regional and national tournaments
- Completed a \$13.7 million renovation and expansion of the Onondaga Lake Marina
 - Docks, parking, fueling, utilities, pump out facilities, dredging, and a new comfort station
- Completed a comprehensive Rosamond Gifford Zoo facility assessment
 - Guide future investments
- Planning and renovations underway for the new snow leopard exhibit, tiger pools, and an African savannah
 - Zoo evaluates an additional elephant building
- Zoo welcomed the elephant shrew
 - One of only six North American zoos to house the species
- Advanced planning for the Onondaga Veterans Cemetery
 - Burial capacity, roadway circulation, drainage, and stormwater management
- Advanced the design of the new Oneida Shores beach and campground facility
 - Connected the RV pump out station to the existing sewer line

2026 Budget Review

- Will finish each line within budget this year

2027 Budget Overview

- Standard salary and wage increases
- Increases in supplies and materials, maintenance, utilities and rents, and all other due to inflation and contract escalators
- Professional services appropriation decreases by \$103,811
 - Hiring of a full-time veterinarian at the zoo, which reduces reliance on contracted veterinary services
- Travel and training appropriation increases by \$6,250
 - Additional required safety training
- Automotive equipment appropriation continues the ongoing vehicle replacement plan
- County service revenue decreases based on historical revenue from admissions and shelter rentals
- Commission revenues increase as a result of a new revenue sharing agreement with the Friends of the Zoo
- Sales of property primarily reflects revenue from fuel sales to other municipalities, as well as firewood and ice at county parks

2027 Strategic Priorities

- Continue to invest in and maintain parks
- Expand access and inclusion
 - Expansion and renovation of the boundless playground in Onondaga Lake Park
- Operate efficiently and build strong relationships
- Protect natural resources and connect people to nature
- Create more reasons for people to visit parks

Questions/Comments:

- Other employee wages, 2025 actual was \$2 million; about half a million under for this year and next; who is in that?
 - 103 line, part-time employees
 - About 150 to 200 throughout the year, i.e., lifeguards, part-time maintenance
- How are we looking this year for overtime?
 - Right on track; not worried about being over in any lines
- Going to stay under the \$1.5 million, or need to pull from the 101?
 - Closer to the \$1.5 million than last year, but completely in line with the budget
 - Reviewed every pay period and before any VRR is signed
- Staffing, funded versus unfunded?
 - Will get a report
- ZoOceanarium aquarium contract; none of that in here; funded for how long?
 - Three years with two additional renewals
- When renewing, where does that show up?
 - Another RFP process at the end of that contract
 - Doesn't show up anywhere in the Parks budget
 - Operator entitled to an administrative cost; comes out of the revenue collected
 - Operator holds the bank account for the aquarium
 - Right now paid out of the operating cost; idea similar to the amphitheater; profits come into the county
- Reports to see the profit and how they're doing?
 - Part of the county financials, like the amphitheater
 - Included in the county's annual financial report
 - Reports provided quarterly to the Comptroller's Office
- Outside of cutting the grass, what other services in this budget for the Inner Harbor?
 - Only on occasion
 - Contractor responsible for all maintenance, i.e., plowing, groundskeeping, mowing
- Not a chargeback situation
- How much did the zoo bring in?
 - In the operating budget
 - Typically around \$1.5 million at the gate
 - Expenses usually around \$6 million

- Zoo brings in more revenue than any other facilities
- Arrowhead Lodge; how much it brought in?
 - Can get the revenue numbers for all the lodges
 - Fluctuates; weather dependent
- Not expecting it to generate a profit; as a fiscal steward, would like to know the cost benefit
- Friends of the Zoo; how is that board doing? Relationship?
 - Surviving
 - Really good rapport; relationship much healthier
- Much turnover on that board?
 - Yes, quite a bit, over the past few months
 - Staff at the zoo has had some turnover
- Growth throughout the county; any concept of capacity; need to invest in new parks, facilities, equipment?
 - Always advocates for more green space
 - Capital projects address that, i.e., second phase of the Hopkins Road project
 - Several tournaments with 30, 40, 50 teams
- Amphitheater and aquarium contracts; if they exceed the revenues, do those come to us? If they exceed expenses, who's paying?
 - Never had that happen with the amphitheater; not expected with the aquarium
 - Money can come into the county or into a capital reserve for future needs at those facilities
- If they exceed the revenues, theoretically could pay back taxpayer dollars invested into the aquarium?
 - Theoretically, yes
- At what point might the county be responsible for expenses?
 - No appropriations; would need an appropriation line and approval
- Land adjacent to the zoo, negotiating with the city; finalized?
 - Still in conversation
- Hopkins Road third phase in the CIP; significantly higher price tag; explain what that third phase looks like?
 - Second phase, infrastructure, buildings, storage, roadways
 - Third phase, another superfield
 - Positions for the big national tournaments
 - Same group has the contract at Hopkins Road and Carrier Park in DeWitt
- Phase three similar to phase one, but almost 10 times more?
 - More clearing
 - Estimates; not knowing escalators, not knowing inflation
- All other expenses; 2025 actuals \$700,000, budgeted \$1 million; \$300,000 difference?
 - Right size lawn maintenance for the amphitheater and the vet cemetery

- Subscriptions, maintenance, snow removal, tree removal, trash removal, increases to memberships
- Getting more done, or increased costs?
 - Most of it increased costs
 - Something with significant savings; will get back on that
- Grants side of the budget, \$360,000?
 - \$120,000 a pass-through snowmobile grant; state to local snowmobile clubs
 - Rest anticipated grants, i.e., park rangers, Beaver Lake
- Large animal facility and medical facility, driven by AZA compliance; relevance; translate to the cost of operating the zoo or revenue?
 - Brand new regulations on how the elephants have to be kept
 - Birthed twin elephants; would like to keep them there
 - Elephants are the calling card of the zoo
 - Current elephants can no longer breed; would require acquiring another herd
 - African savanna, revenue drivers
 - Only way revenue goes up is if admission goes up; \$9 to get into the zoo
- AZA compliance is our ability to host a zoo for this community?
 - 100%
 - Species survival program; don't pay for those animals
- Snow leopard; doing anything with that?
 - Snow leopards left as part of the breeding program
 - Opportunity within the next six to eight months to acquire new snow leopards
 - Good time to do some upgrades
- Elephant twins; how long can we anticipate them being here? Patriarch of a new herd?
 - Hopefully forever
 - Patriarch of the new herd; another reason for the new building
- Provision for capital projects, \$312,500; the account Honeywell is obligated to replenish annually?
 - Correct; corresponding revenue
- Designated specifically for improvements in and around Onondaga Lake?
 - In the Inner Harbor, correct
- Specific targeted purpose this year?
 - Can get that information
 - They submit a plan that we review
- Waste seeping in from the western shore from the Honeywell waste beds; any talk about remediating that?
 - Wait until WEP presents
- NBT Stadium; county relationship contractually and fiscally?
 - Contract through the Syracuse Mets; they manage the facility
 - Take care of HVAC and maintenance in the building with Facilities Management

- They pay rent, utilities; 25 to 30 year lease
- Veterans cemetery allows burials a couple days a week; how much of an increase to allow that five days a week?
 - Not an increase per se
 - Part of the Southern District of Parks; share resources
 - Burials Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday; Mondays and Fridays beautification
 - Worked closely with the Veterans Services Advisory Board
 - Model in place 13, 14 years
- Not really a budgetary issue?
 - Not a budgetary issue
- Only one that closes for a full week leading up to Veterans Day to plant flags?
 - Believe so; it is the norm
- Increasing staffing, increasing the operational?
 - Always looking at that; a conversation for another point
 - Hired a couple veterans part-time
- Automotive equipment line; state of the fleet and any anticipated investments?
 - Not a big mower year; trucks and trailers and heavy equipment
 - \$250,000 line
 - New pickup truck for the park rangers
 - Skid steer for Onondaga Lake Park
 - Couple pickup trucks for Highland Forest
 - Cushman hauler for Oneida Shores
 - Equipment trailer at Jamesville Beach
- In possession of that equipment from last year?
 - Yes
 - Trucks, a year out; mowers, two, three months
- Rangers line, one employee; \$662,000; what does that cover?
 - One full-time position; rest in the 103 line
 - Payroll, equipment, ammunition, weapons, day-to-day office
- Wise to hire a vet to save on contracting costs
- Snow leopards moved; is it a sale?
 - No; part of the species survival program
 - No money involved
 - Same with the elephants
- Bathrooms at Onondaga Lake Park?
 - New bathhouse part of the marina project
 - Shared marina public bathroom
- In a perfect world, what's missing from the budget?
 - More people coming into the parks

- Staffing levels in great shape
- 93 funded positions; resource sharing

Chair Brown asked Commissioner Voss to state his name and title before his presentation.

TRANSPORTATION: Martin E. Voss, Commissioner

(Attachment No. 5: Onondaga County Department of Transportation, 2027 Executive Budget Written Statement)

Budget Overview

- 2027 executive budget overview
- Federal process for major infrastructure projects about a five-year period
- 2026 budget will finish within appropriations
- 2027 proposal includes the standard wages and increases with the CSEA contract
- Travel and training is flat
- Contractual services went up a little bit
 - Contract with most of the towns and villages to do some snowplowing, to then contract with the state of New York to do some snowplowing for them
 - Cost drivers are fuel and salt
- Staffing levels are better
 - Several years ago, increased wages to be consistent and competitive with the state and surrounding counties
- Will continue to move federal and state funded projects as outlined in the work plan
- Ready to take on winter

Questions/Comments:

- Overtime wages, 2025 actual versus the adopted; how are we looking this year?
 - Will finish within the 102 line
- Contractual expenses non-governmental; adopted \$3 million, \$3.1 million for next year, modified \$4.7 million; \$1.7 million difference?
 - Additional state money based on severe weather factor
 - Paid out to the towns and villages
- Provision for capital projects; CHIPS money comes back mid-year? Why adopt \$9.2 million this year and \$7.7 million next year?
 - Budget the baseline until final amounts from the state and federal governments are known
 - Reduction is the cash for capital
 - Last couple years, added cash into DOT to offset bonding; couldn't maintain that with the increased pressures
 - Still have the required amount to match the state and federal programs
- Services to other governments line; state roads that we plow?
 - State snow and ice
- Automotive equipment; list of anticipated purchases?
 - One-pager in the back of the budget book

- Vehicles stay within DOT?
 - Purchase of one snowplow in 2027; would stay at DOT
- List of how many snowplows and vehicles?
 - 60 operational snowplows; will have 61
 - Other equipment, i.e., pickup trucks, gradalls
- List of all vehicles requested
- County Executive's vehicle through DOT; should be under his budget; still under DOT's budget?
 - Believe still under DOT's inventory
 - Will take a look
- Non-real property tax items; top revenue item of \$2.8 million, \$2.9 million?
 - New York State DMV auto use tax
- Unclassified general fund transfers?
 - Support for road and machinery from the general fund
 - Revenue in DOT and the library; expense in the general fund

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 10:44 a.m. The committee will reconvene at 11:00 a.m. for the joint Ways and Means and Environmental Protection meeting.

Respectfully submitted,



HASSINA K. ADAMS, Clerk
Onondaga County Legislature