



Onondaga County Legislature

HASSINA K. ADAMS
Clerk

NICOLE WATTS
Chairwoman

SPENCER BERG
Deputy Clerk

JOINT MEETING OF THE WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE AND HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE BUDGET REVIEW DAY 5 MINUTES – SEPTEMBER 21, 2026 MAURICE BROWN & DAN ROMEO, CO-CHAIRS

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. Brown, Mr. Romeo, Leader Hernandez, Leader May, Mr. Burtis, Mr. Bush, Ms. Denton, Ms. Block, Mr. Kelly

ALSO ATTENDING: Chairwoman Watts, Mr. Garland, Mr. Ryan, Mr. Thompson; also see attached

Chair Brown called the meeting to order at 8:49 a.m.

Chair Brown and Health & Human Services Committee Chair Romeo co-presided over the joint meeting, with Chair Brown yielding the gavel to Chair Romeo to conduct the proceedings.

Chair Romeo pointed to section one, page 15 of the budget, which lists the county's long-term goals, and noted that the number one goal is to protect and improve the health and quality of life of the community, which reflects how important health is to the county, and that the Health Department approaches that goal very well.

HEALTH DEPARTMENT: Kathryn Anderson, MD, Commissioner

(Attachment No. 1: Onondaga County Health Department, 2027 Executive Budget Written Statement)

2026 Initiatives & Accomplishments

- Operating well within 2026 budget
- Achieved national re-accreditation by the Public Health Accreditation Board
 - One of a limited number of accredited county health departments in New York State
- Growing community gaps in coverage around essential public health services, i.e., childhood immunization
- Childhood lead poisoning rates among the lowest in the last 10 years; 9.1% remains too high
- Substance use outreach and support one of the most robust community-based programs
 - 2025, decrease in overdose fatalities; 56% decrease from 2021
- WIC continues to exceed target caseloads
- Forensics lab and MEO provide critical investigatory support

2027 Budget Overview

- Increase overall of 14 authorized positions, no net change in funded positions; no change in local cost
- \$2.7 million increase for special children's services
 - Increase in the number of children served, the number of services per child, and increases in state approved provider rates
- Increases in professional services for tick surveillance and tick education
 - Upstate tick testing laboratory and the CNY Lyme and Tickborne Disease Alliance
- \$25,000 for a new academic health collaboration with SUNY Upstate

2027 Strategic Priorities

- Institutionalize the academic health department relationship
- Advance public health orders or local laws; increased regulatory control over convenience stores that sell products that harm residents, i.e., flavored vapes, synthetic cannabinoids
- Renewed focus on maternal infant health, particularly among moms and infants of color
 - Model reflective of the Refugee and Immigrant Health Hub; very low barrier for entry
- Sustain the decline in overdose mortality through education and outreach
- Community safety net for immunization, women's health and STD services
- Improve billing efficiency

Questions/Comments:

- 14 increased positions, funded staying flat; trade off with the ones that came off?
 - Realignments of title and scope of work for positions already in the department
 - Very few actually new positions
 - Some titles reflective of needs 30 years ago
 - Not at the expense of any programs
- Contingent account, \$100,000 less this year; what's in there?
 - Last year, the \$100,000 in contingency for Lyme tick
- Furniture, furnishings and equipment at zero in the 2027 executive; down \$148,000?
 - Structural gap; reductions where they would not hurt any programs or services
 - Over the last five to 10 years, surplus funding put into furniture and equipment and vehicles; grant dollars helped offset
 - Pause for one year
- Vector control; funded?
 - No changes; still funded within the professional services line
 - Remains a robust priority, mosquito surveillance and control
- Academic health partnership and the IMA; scope of that partnership?
 - Bring the multiple ways already collaborating with Upstate under one agreement
 - Follow-on agreements; data sharing, supports preparedness
 - Strengthen training frameworks; more Upstate trainees in clinics, special children's services
- SUNY Upstate partnership; other measurables, deliverables?
 - Numbers of trainees engaged; their experience with training exposures

- Collaborative applied research
- Recruiting and retaining local talent
- Special children's services; lag between increasing rates at the state level and Medicaid approval; increase retroactive; reflected in state and federal aid?
- Authorized agencies for human services, contractual expense non-government, \$16 million; section four, page three?
 - Grant line, correlated with indigent defense and legal services
 - Operating went down slightly in light of additional grant dollars
- Section four, page 25, staffing number the funded positions; down one from last year?
 - Yes; offset for grant dollars; Lyme tick
 - Very successful with grant funded positions
 - Significant amount of grant funding; some positions grant funded
- Substance use team responses with AMR for overdoses; previously staffed or new positions?
 - Program ongoing and staffed
- Staffed two years ago and continuing?
 - Yes

Chair Brown introduced the Department of Adult and Long Term Care Services.

ADULT AND LONG TERM CARE SERVICES: JoAnne Spoto Decker, Commissioner

(Attachment No. 2: Onondaga County Adult and Long Term Care Services, 2027 Executive Budget Written Statement)

2027 Budget Overview

- Standard salary and wage increases consistent with the baseline budgeting approach
- Increased cost for maintenance and utilities and supplies; inflation and contractual escalators
- Professional services increases by \$9,000; domestic violence services
 - Preventive and protective adult services, case review services provided by SUNY, interpreter services
- Contractual services flat from 2026; prevention and response of elder abuse
- Travel and training increases by \$15,411
 - Employee mileage reimbursement and parking
 - Professional development; food safety, aging services, new employee development, leadership and elder law
- \$250,000 in the transfer to grant line to establish a senior center capital grant program
 - Capital support for facilities serving older residents
 - Required local match for state and federal grants
- State and federal revenues increase modestly; reimbursement of eligible administrative expenses

2027 Strategic Priorities

- Equitable, timely, and meaningful access to programs, services, and benefits that support healthy aging independence

- Strengthen education and outreach strategies
- Those in greatest social and economic need continue to be priority

Questions/Comments:

- Charges filed under FA; what is FA?
 - Federal aid; state and federal reimbursement
- What constitutes a professional service?
 - 49 contracts throughout the county
- Also include housing, emergency housing? Electricity?
 - No
 - Majority related to domestic violence services; interpretation, preventive and protective adult services
 - Housing would not fall under this department
- \$755,000 balance in the 2026 wellness and nutrition budget; plan for those funds?
 - Most grants fully spent; provide a specific account
 - Estimate the grant award each year
 - Budgeting on a calendar year; grant programs run state and federal fiscal years
- 755-49025, the 2025 one, \$276,000? Balance in the 2026 one as well
 - Different calendar years; will look into it
 - 2026 one probably just started
- Senior centers; what projects in the works?
 - Another \$250,000 for senior centers
 - 2023 with a million dollars; 2025 with another \$250,000
 - Upgrade older senior centers
- Still work being done with those past funds?
 - Not to my knowledge; a few things left out of the 2025 grant
- \$60,000 in wages line, other employee wages; new position?
 - Grant expenditure; temporary employee instead of a full-time employee; no new positions
 - Shift from a contracted position into a county position; fully grant funded
- Overtime wages increasing; reason?
 - Adult Protective Services; 148 guardians; evening, emergency situations
 - Increase related to contractual wage increase
- Increase of necessary senior resources; employees basically the same; need more employees, with the increase in overtime wages?
 - Budget constraints; able to hire some additional staff
 - Would always like more; can make do
- All other expenses, \$548 in 2025, increases; examples?
 - Flat in the operating budget; bus passes for seniors

- Ride shares for seniors; same amount or an increase?
 - Same
- Senior center capital grant program; just brick and mortar, or for operation?
 - Brick and mortar; also upgrading a kitchen or buying chairs or tables
 - Application process
 - Not for operating dollars like program; bricks and mortar, capital; not for salaries
 - Kitchen upgrade capital; can't buy the food
- How many senior centers expected to serve?
 - About 22; 22 or 23 within the county
- In 2025, all 23 took advantage?
 - Yes; everyone that applied received about \$12,000
- GoGo Grandparent; what line?
 - Office for aging; transportation program, hoping available in 2027
- Use all of that funding for 2026?
 - Absolutely; tightened the eligibility qualifications
 - Looking to New York State Office for the Aging for additional funding
 - 15 other transportation programs; seniors and persons with disabilities
- Senior centers, outreach, transportation, upgrading facilities well received and outstanding; crucial for the senior centers to have support
- Grants contractual expenses non-government up \$808,000; 250 from the senior center; the other 558?
 - Additional grant dollars, unmet grant; food and delivered meals
- Unmet grant increased; cover more people or increasing the cost?
 - A little bit of both
 - Small department that does big things
- Senior center transfer to grant expenditures in 2023 and 2025; spent all?
 - 2023, a million dollars; went over by maybe \$200,000; COVID money
 - 2025, reduced to \$250,000
- Any money remaining in the project account?
 - All funds obligated; very popular grant program
 - Original \$1 million set aside; applications much higher; COVID money added
- Applied, not spent yet?
 - Majority spent; a few projects wrapping up; fully obligated to specific centers
- Requested where the remaining funds for the senior center will be going

Chair Brown introduced the Department of Children and Family Services.

DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES: Amy Cunningham, Commissioner

(Attachment No. 3: Onondaga County Department of Children and Family Services, 2027 Executive Budget Written Statement; Attachment No. 4: Children and Family Services Local Projects)

2026 Initiatives & Accomplishments

- Recognized the dedicated staff of DCFS
- Theme that best describes the work, collaboration
- Cross-departmental collaboration focused on individuals experiencing homelessness, substance use, mental health challenges
 - More coordinated case strategies; connect individuals with mental health, substance use, housing, community-based resources
- Continues to support every school district in Onondaga County; school-based funding
- Home-and-School Collaborative, developed specifically to work with Syracuse City School District
 - Specialized unit within child welfare investigations; investigates all reports of abuse and neglect referred by Syracuse City School District
 - Reduced the number of child abuse and neglect reports from Syracuse City School District
- Attendance project, in partnership with Department of Social Services Economic Security and its Childhood Poverty Reduction Initiative
 - Expanded from four city school districts at launch in April of 2025; now in 13 school buildings
 - Close of the 2025-2026 school year, working with 505 students; 70% improved their attendance
- At Hillbrook, youth earn high school credits, pass Regents exams, earn high school diplomas
- Syracuse Onondaga County Youth Bureau continuing to expand youth sports opportunities
- Central New York Threat Assessment Management and Strategy Team, with probation and the sheriff's office
 - 2026, established an advisory board with the district attorney's office, federal law enforcement; meets weekly; full TAMS team meets monthly
 - End of 2025, approximately 250 school personnel in the second countywide school-based threat assessment training
- 911/988 Persons in Crisis program; coordinated twenty-four seven response model
 - Law enforcement, City of Syracuse, Contact Community Services, St. Joe's Hospital and Liberty Resources
 - Behavioral health calls diverted from a traditional law enforcement response to trained mobile crisis professionals

2027 Budget Overview

- Projected to remain within budget in 2026 other than mandated services, most notably foster care
- Adding an additional two case workers to expand child protective investigations in the schools to county schools
- Increases driven by inflation, contractual increases, state mandated rate increases and court ordered services and placement
- Professional services increases by approximately \$620,000; foster care aftercare services
- Contractual services increasing approximately \$1.2 million

- State mental health, OMH, OASAS and OPWDD funding; adolescent day treatment program at BOCES to a full contract with BOCES
- Fully funded with reimbursement
- Approximately \$900,000 increase in juvenile delinquent expenditures; court ordered placements
- Foster care line increase of approximately \$6.4 million; higher rates
 - State rates increased 6% this past June
 - Number of children in foster care increasing; over the past six to 12 months, somewhat stabilized
- Local direct support for grants line decreasing by \$675,000; transfer to grant projects by approximately \$532,000
 - Using existing balances and prior county investments
- Increased state and federal aid revenues; foster care, juvenile delinquent and detention services, mental health services, child welfare services

Questions/Comments:

- Salaries line, the 101, 102 and 103, going down; how do we make that?
 - Unfunded a few positions with the day treatment program, a partnership with BOCES
 - Wasn't working with two entities in one program; weren't able to hire
- How many positions?
 - Three
- Stayed flat; added the two school-based, those three come off; another position added?
 - Double encumbered legal secretary; unfunded a legal secretary one to fund a legal secretary two
- Unfunding positions but leaving them authorized; plan to hire down the road?
 - No
- Which BOCES?
 - OCM, the Cortland-Madison BOCES
- Cayuga-Onondaga BOCES that serves schools in Onondaga County?
 - Day treatment program at the OCM BOCES open to those students as well
- School districts assigned to a different BOCES but Onondaga County schools; eligible for these programs?
 - Believe so; or a program within their county that's the same program
- Onondaga County residents should be served by the same programs, regardless of BOCES affiliation
- Reaching all county schools? Public and private?
 - Not necessarily private; opened up discussions with private schools
 - Agreements with all of the county public schools
- Reached out to all schools in the county; asked whether they wish to participate?
 - Yes; ongoing conversations

- Positions kept authorized, contracting through BOCES; issue that we were unable to hire, but BOCES is able to hire?
 - BOCES has clinicians on staff; works with the Racker Center out of Cortland County, now moving into Onondaga County
 - Fuller range of clinical services and supervision, areas for growth, promotions
 - Last direct service clinical positions on our roster
- Were we competitive?
 - Believe so
- County services revenue, social services; 2025 actual to the 2027 budget a few million dollars lower; 2025 an anomaly?
 - Repayments; spikes after the pandemic; will look into that specific one
- Operating grants; need to follow up
- Contractual expenses, non-government for grants; actual spend \$17 million in 2025, budgeted about \$24 million the last two years; increase in 2026?
 - Yes
 - Recovering from the pandemic; hiring with contracted agencies
 - Within the past six to 12 months, substantial increase in hiring and retention of staff
- Local direct support for grant projects down \$675,000; OnCare and early childhood enhancement programs?
 - OnCare initiative goes back more than a decade; mental health supports, behavioral supports
 - Savings throughout the pandemic and staffing; using prior year authorized funds
- Remaining COVID money; how have we not been able to spend that money?
 - Staffing and services not happening during COVID
 - Grant funds stay available; used for the same authorized purpose
- Local dollars up by almost \$2 million; foster care up a lot because it needs to be up a lot; good looking budget
- Unfunding positions or adding positions; ability to abolish a few positions when adding positions, to keep the overarching county roster tight and clean; same for the health department adding 14 positions
 - Roster for funded positions for all departments
- Adding two additional caseworker positions; how do we arrive at two?
 - Various metrics and data for staffing ratios
 - Added about 26 positions post COVID; training new staff, hiring new staff
 - Training put on by OCFS at the state, virtual; advocating for regional in-person trainings
 - Two in line with our growth; number we can bring on, train and fully integrate
- Family court; county's responsibility; staffing versus contracted outside attorneys?
 - Mandate; every case that goes through the court process has to have an attorney
 - No mandate from the state whether county staff or contracted staff
 - Parts in family court; an attorney assigned to each one

- Combination of county attorneys and contract attorneys; enough positions on the roster, not fully staffed
- Recruiting for county staff; eventually transition to full county staff
- Caseworker, caseworker HELP and senior caseworker positions, 162, 41 and 11; how many filled?
 - About nine caseworker vacancies; no senior caseworker vacancies
- Across both the HELP and the regular line?
 - None of the HELP titles funded; vacant funded caseworker title for each
- How long in that HELP title, just one year?
 - Up to one year; at the end of one year, automatically convert
- No one over a year?
 - Shouldn't be; hundreds of HELP titles on the books
- Transfer to grant expenditures decrease; mental health services; same situation?
 - Not decreasing or cutting any services
 - Staffing vacancies with large contracts within the schools; money still authorized for those purposes covers 2027
- Not spending all the money for mental health services; what are we doing to address the staffing vacancies?
 - Don't have those staffing vacancies now
 - Partners engaged recruitment and retention consultants; employee wellness programs
 - Able to budget the full amount for 2027
- Changes in state policy around the panic button for case workers; funding number attached?
 - Identified providers; DSS uses one
 - Conversation with CSEA and staff; some pushback on both sides
- Should the governor sign, we have a plan?
 - Yes
- 13 family court attorney spots?
 - Family court attorney one, two, and three sequence; budgeted seven
- Full-time positions?
 - 13 authorized, seven funded; funding moves between the one, the two and the three
- How many in-house and how many contracted?
 - Three full-time and four contracted; a full-time attorney in a supervisory position, the deputy human services attorney
 - One supervisory role and seven attorneys in court
- Policy to contract out that many positions or trying to fill them in-house?
 - Trying to fill them in-house; interns coming in the spring; several interviews recently
- What's missing from the budget?

- Public perception of what this team does and how difficult the work is
- Not reducing accountability; supporting and celebrating the work
- Every public criticism taken personally; doesn't help kids and families
- Attendance project, two or three year funding; when does that end?
 - Mid 2028; meeting internally to figure out how to sustain that
- Local dollar funding for children and family mental health and school based initiatives down about a million dollars; more state, federal or outside funding; thought behind not keeping that local dollar number flat?
 - Certainly a possibility; partners in the growing phase
 - Stabilizing at the current level step one
 - With more funding, could expand
- Juvenile delinquent line higher than usual?
 - Very small, 10 to 20 kids; judge ordered placement
 - Type of programming defines the daily rate
 - Try to keep them out of placement and with community based services
- Raise the Age; changes in the types of crimes or situations? More children, but less children in juvenile delinquency?
 - Raise the Age refers to 16 and 17 year olds; raise the lower age to 13
 - 12 year old cannot go to Hillbrook; 11 year old cannot be charged with any crime
 - 11 and younger, diversion program
 - 12 year olds, community based services or non-secure programs
 - Shift in youth detained at Hillbrook; not putting 13 and 14 year olds in detention for minimal criminal activity
- Success rate? Change in recidivism?
 - Have to stay with the families; not a one and done
 - Close collaboration with probation; Youth Advocates Program
- CIP, \$5.5 million Hillbrook vocational expansion; just the expansion or also operational staffing and security?
 - Security in their staffing
 - Expanded beds with Raise the Age; not enough programming space
 - 16 and 17 year olds there for a year or more; vocational skills
 - Cafeteria turned into programming area; staff break room too small
 - Up to \$8 million now; vocational wing for barber, mechanical, engineering, cooking classes
 - Renovations for the staff break room and the family waiting room
 - Do not need to increase the number of staff
- Authorized for a while?
 - \$5.5 million authorized; design phase with OCFS and DCJS; adjustments increased the scope
- Contractual expenses non-government increase of \$318,000 under the grants budget?
 - Movement of McMahon/Ryan Child Advocacy Center from the operating budget; corresponding offset

The committees reached consensus to take a 10-minute recess before the next department.

The committees recessed at 10:17 a.m., to reconvene at 10:27 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



HASSINA K. ADAMS, Clerk
Onondaga County Legislature

Chair Brown called the meeting back to order at 10:32 a.m.

Chair Brown introduced Sarah Merrick, Commissioner of Social Services.

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES: Sarah G. Merrick, Commissioner

(Attachment No. 5: Onondaga County Department of Social Services, 2027 Executive Budget Written Statement; Attachment No. 6: Department of Social Services Local Projects)

Overview

- Department of mandated programs
 - Temporary assistance, family assistance, the federally funded part, and safety net, the state and local portion
 - SNAP, child support, childcare assistance, Medicaid, HEAP
- Rules and regulations set by the federal government with some augmentation by the state
- Since the passage last year of HR1, a level of volatility not seen in 13 years as commissioner
 - Ebbs and flows with caseload; weekly changes in the categories for non-citizens and temporary permanent resident status
- Over 450 staff
- Temporary assistance; nothing really changed at the national level
- Most volatility with SNAP
 - ABAWDs, able bodied adults without dependents, required to work since the spring
 - Added other categories, including families with dependents over 14
 - Non-US citizens no longer eligible automatically for SNAP
 - Anticipate by March closing about 5,000 SNAP cases; from 35,000 down to 30,000, even 28,000 cases
- Anticipate processing 18,000 temporary assistance applications, 22,000 SNAP applications, almost 9,000 Medicaid applications
 - Determine and redetermine eligibility every six months to every year
 - Must process every application
- Assisted language processing; taking 30% of phone calls offline
 - Last year saved two FTEs
- Cleared the childcare assistance program waiting list; state awarded \$9 million more

- At one time serving 7,000 kids; now about 5,000; \$9 million to bring back 2,000 kids or more
- Homeless population escalating; on an average night, 650 to 700 individuals and families in the shelter system
- Second year of the child poverty reduction initiative
 - 2Gen Onondaga initiative continues to expand; stabilize families, sustain employment
 - CNY CHANCE program with the Housing and Homeless Coalition; 95 new landlords; hundreds of families out of shelter
 - Poverty funds help over 1,200 children with free diapers
- No new initiatives for next year
- Always audited; process everything within 30 days

2027 Budget Overview

- Total salary line basically flat; funded count at 488 in 2027
 - Slight adjustment; organizational and management changes with two deputy commissioners retiring
- Supplies going down; mailings
- Contractual line; 211, mandated drug and alcohol assessments, food bank, employment programs
 - Jubilee, RISE, Northeast Community Center, OnPoint, CNY Works
 - Volunteer Lawyers; non-Americans who turned 65, preventing evictions
- Safety net and family assistance; caseload flat, but emergency shelter costs continue to rise
 - Approximately \$14 million of contracts; Catholic Charities, Rescue Mission, Salvation Army and local hotels
 - About a hundred families in hotels
- Standard of need not increased by the state since 2012; family of four, \$842
- Emergency assistance for adults on SSI; prevent evictions and energy shutoffs
- Medical payments; local share of Medicaid costs; total expenditures \$1.4 billion
- HEAP; \$15 million goes directly to energy companies
- Daycare, the \$9 million increase; a family of four making \$116,000 a year is eligible
- Program not ever in a budget, SNAP; \$160 million on those cards
- Travel and training very small; mileage, parking, mandated training costs
- Professional services; child support attorneys, fingerprinting, DNA for genetic paternity, language interpretation, AI contract
 - About 26,000 or 30,000 child support cases; about 2,000 temporary assistance cases
- All other expenses, state chargebacks
- Maintenance, utilities and rent; client records at Rock West
- Two grant programs; 2Gen, early childhood alliance efforts
- Revenue; \$9 million increase
- HR1, administrative share of SNAP was fifty-fifty; changed to 75% local, 25% federal

Questions/Comments:

- Administrative share; at the bottom?
 - Federal share; local share had to go out

- Local increase at the bottom
- 2Gen in the local direct support grants program; how much?
 - \$1 million a year; county executive and then the legislature upped it
- How many people currently being served?
 - Over 300 families served; about 210 families at one point
 - Double the size of staff due to state poverty reduction funds
- 2Gen getting any attention or interest from other municipalities?
 - Commissioner and deputy commissioner from OTDA visited in June
 - Talking about possibly replicating it across the state; still in evaluation mode
- How many families being served presently?
 - When fully staffed, about 200, 210 at a time
 - Only about 90 to 100 with local funds; doubled with state funds
- Measurements of efficiency?
 - Jury's still out; work with them maybe even three years
 - Nine households in over a year have not come back to temporary assistance
 - Maybe December, January, SU, outside evaluator; bigger cohort
 - Generations living in poverty; takes some time
- Change the need, expertise, competency of staff moving forward?
 - Broaden the team approach; eligibility experts, employment experts, case management wraparound experts
 - In addition to skill sets never had in the past
- Local dollars up almost \$5 million; targeting areas that are very relevant and important
- Daycare, a 20% increase in funding; any regulatory relief to carry through 2027?
 - Allocation given in advance
 - County executive used local funds to keep cases open; petitioned the state to get local expenditures reimbursed; state said yes
 - Need to get cases up to show the need
- Attendance piece, the driver of inefficiency; changed or improved?
 - No
 - Advocate to decrease paid absences from 80 down to 20 per child per year
- \$9 million extra for daycare; get the word out
- Current vacancies; fully staffed or short staffed? Payments late due to short staff?
 - About a 5% vacancy rate; 20, 25 vacancies a pay period
 - Portion of staff at retirement age
 - 30 day window; 21 days with childcare; very good prompt payer
- Medicaid payments up to six months delinquent; holding up beds in hospitals; our end or a state issue? Short staffing?
 - Don't make payments related to Medicaid

- Processing of approvals for people to move into long-term care?
 - State has about 65% of total Medicaid recipients; we handle the balance
 - Medicaid applications for nursing home care; look back five years through financial records
 - Applications often incomplete
 - Sometimes 30 days, 45 days; a lot of income, may take a year
 - 45 cases still over a year; most completed within three months
 - Meeting with the nursing home association
 - About 40 people in that unit; highly skilled
- Anything budgetarily, or advocacy with the state, to help resolve these issues?
 - State Medicaid takeover a decade ago left 100% of chronic care decisions with the counties
 - Almost need forensic accountants on staff
 - At the state level, where the changes need to come
 - State Department of Health takeover two to three years out still
- Added staff then; adding five more staffers now?
 - Right number; maybe 30
 - Five more staff, two years to get up to speed
 - On the job training for eligibility rules
 - Last year, income maintenance worker twos created; temporary assistance intake and nursing home intake; approximately 60 titles; helped stabilize
- Did it last year and it worked; why not add onto that program?
 - Appropriate number of staff; applications need to be complete
 - Recommended nursing homes hire someone to collect that information
- Unable to put someone towards helping families navigate that?
 - Staff work with families; family consultations
 - Can't get into the advocacy business
 - Not the volume causing the delay; access to the information
- State change; easier access to information or lowering the bar?
 - Don't think they'll ever lower that bar
 - 50% of all Medicaid dollars going to nursing homes
 - Increased the look back to five years
 - Audited relentlessly
- Point of contact should be the nursing home with the family; going back five years a real challenge
- Daycare vacancies for families?
 - Still capacity in our community; need more
 - Zero to two year olds costs the most; providers having a hard time
- Families searching for a spot; not distributed throughout the county?
 - Childcare deserts; difficult in some parts of the county
 - Early Childhood Alliance; grow more providers for zero to two year olds

- Market rate set by the state too low
- Providers corporate or mom and pop operations?
 - Some for-profit with national affiliations; most local, non-profit
 - Largest are mom and pops; family or group providers out of their homes
 - Portion are relatives
- Support to grow that group of providers?
 - State incentive funds; county executive infrastructure support
 - Need much more infusion of dollars
- In the trenches helping everyday citizens; a calling and a mission
- 20 to 25 vacancies dispersed throughout, or concentrated?
 - Pretty much dispersed throughout
- Estimate of how many getting assistance are full-time employed?
 - Track it; would need to run those numbers
- Indigent burials; funding federal, state, local?
 - Very small reimbursement through the temporary assistance grant; mostly local dollars
 - About a million dollars a year
- Mostly local dollars; control over the rules?
 - Legislature sets the rates
 - Changing the rates made local costs go from a half a million dollars to over a million dollars
- January 1st, Medicaid rules change for able-bodied individuals 19 to 65; effect here? How many affected? Staffing for eligibility?
 - Cases requiring work taken over by the state; state will do the monitoring
 - Aged and SSI population exempt from Medicaid work requirements
 - Tens of thousands of individuals; can look into an exact number
 - If we have to pick up some cases, ready
- AI data sharing policy within the department?
 - Draft policy; comply with the state
 - Tools vetted with OTDA and New York State ITS; 12 months; approval in May
 - Don't collect identifiable information, like social security number
- More funding for childcare; fear of too many people and backlogs?
 - Confident; back to a level once at
- What's missing? What could this body do?
 - Continue to support what is in this budget; staffing, investment in technology, 2Gen model
 - Basic needs business

Chair Brown introduced the Veterans Service Agency.

VETERANS SERVICE AGENCY: Anne-Marie Mancilla, Director

2026 Initiatives & Accomplishments

- New veteran service officer dually accredited with New York State Division of Veterans' Services and the American Legion
- Senior VSO to lead the claims team
- VSOs attend meetings for the ESGR, the Veteran Expo and Parade Committee, Clear Path Summit, Onondaga County Veterans Council
- Veteran Service Aide position responsible for intake, reviewing power of attorney, providing applications and advocacy
- Outreach efforts, especially regarding the PACT Act
 - Syracuse University, the VA Medical Center, local American Legions, VFWs and DAVs
- Office hours at the Vet Center for ease of access
- Onondaga County Executive Veteran Advisory Board, the ESGR, the Central New York Expo Committee
- Memorial Day ceremony in May of 2026 at the Onondaga County Veterans Memorial Cemetery
- Veteran Expo and Parade on November 8th at the Fairgrounds; Veterans Day Ceremony, November 11th at the War Memorial

2026 Budget Review

- Forecasted to finish 2026 within budget

2027 Budget Overview

- Standard salary and wage increases consistent with the baseline budgeting approach
- Contractual services flat from 2026
- Travel and training flat from 2026; accreditation and professional development through the National Association of County Veteran Service Officers
- Maintenance, utilities and rents increases; Onondaga County Veterans Memorial Cemetery
- Appropriation flat from 2026; state aid received as reimbursement for eligible salary costs

2027 Strategic Priorities

- Encourage local municipalities to hire veteran outreach coordinators at the town level

Questions/Comments:

- No grant fund page; why?
 - No grants in the last several years
- Shape Up for Veterans a grants program?
 - Community development
- How can we serve you better?
 - Continued support
 - Understanding of what we do in the community and what our partners do

Chair Romeo introduced the Onondaga County Public Library.

ONONDAGA COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY: Amanda E. Perrine, Executive Director

(Attachment No. 8: Onondaga County Public Library, 2027 Executive Budget Written Statement)

2026 Initiatives & Accomplishments

- Launched OCPL Passport program; rewards visiting all 32 public libraries
- Partnered with OCC and SCSD to launch the Barbershop Books program; also at beauty salons
- Hosted Micron's Day of Volunteerism at Central Library
- Donated books for the new Vera House library
- Celebrated the two millionth book for the Dolly Parton Imagination Library with the Literacy Coalition
- Increasing social media presence; Instagram and TikTok
- Focused on safety and security in libraries

2027 Budget Overview

- Standard contractual and wage increases consistent with the baseline budgeting approach
- One net new funded position; corresponding reduction in the temporary employee appropriation
 - Social media and connecting to further demographics
- Maintenance, utilities and rents going up modestly; contractual obligations
- Training and travel flat
- Professional services increased by \$447,666
 - Security at Central Library and White Branch Library
 - Snow removal costs
- Higher revenues in 2027; state aid reflects actual award amounts
- County services and sales of property increase; public copiers
- Services to other governments; city branch library operations, charged through the city abstract
- Appropriated fund balance increases based on unspent funds from 2025

2027 Strategic Priorities

- Partnerships with county departments, nonprofits, business partners
- 2027 to 2031 system plan of service, central plan of service, and MOU with member libraries; launch in January

Questions/Comments:

- Future needs different, or built to serve now?
 - Always talking about future needs
 - Librarian helping small business entrepreneurs and people starting nonprofits
 - Working with member libraries in North Syracuse, Liverpool, where Micron will be
- Library's own fund balance?
 - Two-year reconciliation with the city; shows up in the fund balance line
 - Branches' fund balance; unspent in 2025, charged to the city abstract
 - Offsets increases to the abstract
- \$25,000 expected; printer fees?
 - Mainly; 10 cents for black and white, 25 cents for color, a dollar a page for fax

- 11 city libraries
- Gotten rid of almost all overdue fees; only for park passes
- Home printers not as quick; about \$89 to replace cartridges; a dollar on the color print at the library much more economical
- Grants budget, all other expenses line up \$180,000, about \$500,000 from 2025 actuals?
 - Incorporating new grants; increased total grant dollars
- CIP, Petit Branch Library; update and timeline?
 - Design company hoping for October 23rd for an updated cost estimate
 - Code change, scope of projects
 - County executive committed significant funds; holding pattern
 - Construction manager
- Update for the December committee meetings?
 - Happy to do that
- What's missing from your budget?
 - Two new delivery vans in 2024 and 2025; two more purchased way back not in the best of shape
 - Pick up a passport, visit libraries, tell your friends
- Central library important to servicing the member libraries

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:06 p.m. The committee will reconvene at 12:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



SPENCER BERG, Deputy Clerk
Onondaga County Legislature

ATTENDANCE

MEETING: BUDGET REVIEW DAY NO. 5,
JOINT BUDGET MEETING OF WAYS & MEANS AND HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

DATE: SEPTEMBER 21, 2026

SPEAKER NAME (Please Print)	DEPT/AGENCY/ORGANIZATION
Katie Ardura	DC HD (Health)
JoAnne Spots (Ardura)	ALTS
Sarah Merriek	DSS-ES
Amanda Perrine	CCPL
Lisa Farewell	Fin ops
Inda Galt	
Whitney Shapiro	
Donna Robinson	DSS-ES
S. Easterly	DSS-ES
Stacy Lippert	DSS-ES
Jyanna W-Reed	DSS-ES
Greg Lewis	PH-E
Amy Cunningham	DCES