Onondaga County Legislature

HASSINA K. ADAMS
Clerk

NICOLE WATTS
Chairwoman

SPENCER BERG
Deputy Clerk

WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE, MEETING B- BUDGET REVIEW DAY 7
MEETING MINUTES – SEPTEMBER 23, 2026
MAURICE BROWN, CHAIR

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. Brown, Leader Hernandez, Leader May, Mr. Burtis, Mr. Bush, Mr. Romeo, Ms. Denton
ALSO ATTENDING: Chairwoman Watts, Mr. Ryan, Mr. Meaker, Mr. Kelly; also see attached list

Chair Brown called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

1. <u>COUNTY EXECUTIVE</u>: Brian J. Donnelly, Deputy County Executive
(Attachment No. 1: Onondaga County Office of the Executive, 2027 Executive Budget Written Statement)

Overview

- County Executive functions as the chief executive officer of Onondaga County, along with being the chief budget officer
- Responsible for oversight of all county departments that don't fall under the purview of another countywide elected

2026 Budget Review

- Anticipate finishing 2026 at budget

2027 Budget Overview

- Budget is relatively straightforward
- Increases are in salaries and wages, employee benefits and interdepartmental charges, which are influenced by salaries and wages across the county

Questions/Comments:

- What are the two positions that are authorized but not funded?
  - Executive secretary
  - Confidential information aide

- What is the status of filling the director of intergovernmental affairs?
  - 12 funded positions, 10 filled right now
  - In the process of searching for a replacement for that position

2. **<u>COUNTY LEGISLATURE</u>:** Nicole Watts, Chairwoman; Kyle W. Madden, Director of Legislative Programs

Overview

- Legislature is a separate branch of government, but its facility and a good deal of its services are provided through the executive branch
- Two primary elements of staff
  - Elected officials; legislators, plus a chair and two floor leaders with slightly different salaries
  - Other employee wages; historically seasonal

2027 Budget Overview

- Salaries line consistent with historical cost of living increases
  - No new staffing and no changes
- Other employee wages; slight increase for the same reason
- Supplies and materials; slight increase
  - More activity at the office, and things are costing more money
- Travel and training; increase
  - Higher level of interest in training this year, and ran out of money to pay for all the trainings
  - NYSAC, NACo and more localized opportunities such as the planning symposium
  - Would like to see more legislators able to participate
- Professional services; currently slated to have a cut
  - Where conflict counsel and outside counsel come from, as well as the fees to court security for evening meetings
  - Somewhere around $1,000 at least to keep the building open after hours, such as for the budget public hearing
  - Hoping to return more local next year with the outside counsel contract
  - Suggest getting the number back to where it was this year, $40,000, with enough for any evening meetings next year
- All other expenses; the catchall
  - Tech subscriptions
  - Post-Standard publications of meetings and public hearings, which have increased in cost
- Utilities and rents; the printer, with costs that keep going up
- Transfer to grant expenditures; currently at zero
  - Understanding is that historically it is zeroed out and the Legislature adds it back in
  - Legislative grants; over the last five years at least 75% of the districts have probably seen some use of these funds
  - Example; the brine maker in the Village of Fayetteville, which serves the eastern district for snow treatment of roads the county also shares and uses
  - Legislature will need to decide how much to put into the fund this year; $50,000 last year and $75,000 the previous year

Questions/Comments:

- The $1M in grants funding in the Legislature's budget, related to Home Headquarters; why is it there and how does it work?
  - When it was set up, some of it was in a transfer to grant line; moved over in the modified budget
  - Done through Community Development, with the Legislature having an administrative oversight piece
  - Any expenses are reviewed through the Legislature

3. <u>LAW DEPARTMENT</u>: Robert A. Durr, County Attorney

(Attachment No. 2: Onondaga County Law Department, 2027 Executive Budget Written Statement)

2027 Budget Overview

- Two significant increases
  - Salaries; because of the problems attracting attorneys; hopefully this will alleviate that and bring some qualified candidates
  - Outside counsel; not something that can be predicted, not knowing how many lawsuits will come within a year; going by what previously occurred
- Increase of approximately $7,500 for training and travel
  - In anticipation of new people coming in
  - Training for those already there who haven't been able to go to some of these sessions

Questions/Comments:

- Professional services; are there times all the costs are encumbered ahead of time, or paid after something is finished and made retroactive; will what is spent for 2026 have to be reconciled next year?
  - No
  - When outside counsel is engaged for litigation, an assumption is made about the cost and a purchase order is set up
  - Oftentimes there are delays
  - Through the year end closing process, once all the bills are paid through the end of the year, that PO gets shut down; only paying for costs in the current year
  - Encumbrances are sometimes artificially higher because the timing isn't known
  - Reconciliation happens at the end of the year, once actual bills are in

- It would not carry for a number of years?
  - Correct

- Positions look restructured from 2025 to 2026?
  - Restructuring is more of an increase in salary to attract candidates; very difficult time recruiting, so the salary structure was upped
  - Also included a municipal and a litigation head
  - Decrease in positions from 2025 to 2026 is family court moving into Children and Family Services

- Family court positions transitioned to DCFS, which is struggling to hire lawyers; were there similar issues, and can the Law Department help support them given its oversight role?
    - Oversight as far as family court is concerned is now regarding juveniles and JDs, not the day-to-day operation of family court at the Department of Children and Family Services
    - All the management and hiring goes through that department
    - Used to oversee them, but not anymore

- 2025 actuals are higher than what was adopted in 2026, and there is an increase going into 2027; how will 2026 end, and is this sufficient for 2027?
    - All related to family court
    - In the 2025 actuals, family court was still in the Law Department
    - Increases show in Children and Family Services related to those lines

- County law office provides legal support to the Legislature; if all positions are filled, about what percentage of one position is dedicated to the Legislature, for preparing legislation and responding to its needs?
    - Another hire experienced in this area is on the horizon, who will be able to dedicate some time to assist the Legislature
    - Very thin, but relief is on the way

- Assistance to county residents who have an issue with the county has been outstanding; walking them through property rights and other issues; to be commended for that outreach
    - Keep in mind the office is the attorney for the county and not their attorney; cannot give legal advice to someone who is not a client
    - Try to guide them and give as much information as possible so they can take care of their issues

- What is missing from the budget?
    - Hopefully the increases that are proposed will resolve a lot of the problems

4. <u>FINANCE DEPARTMENT</u>: Jason Dean, Deputy Director
(*Attachment No. 3: Onondaga County Finance Department, 2027 Executive Budget Written Statement)*

2026 Initiatives & Accomplishments

- Continues to be successful in utilizing technology improvements to streamline county procedures, reduce resources needed and allow for better tracking and analysis
- Beginning in February, implemented the Oracle EPM planning, budgeting and narrative reporting system
    - Replaces Hyperion on-premises for budgeting and roster development
- Continued the implementation and expanded the use of PeopleSoft project costing, including better tying personnel and related expenses to projects
- Stood up the short-term rental registry

- Began utilizing the same DSS AI solution for triaging and directing incoming calls to the social services and accounts payable unit

2027 Budget Overview

- Standard salary and wage increases
- Maintenance, utilities and rents line increases by about $195,000
    - Primarily ongoing costs associated with the county's new budget system and the short-term rental platform
    - Offset by the corresponding reduction in the transfer to grant projects line, as these technology initiatives transition from implementation to ongoing operations
    - Also offset by increased room occupancy tax revenue generated through the short-term rental collection efforts, in the non-real property tax revenue line
- Services to other governments increases slightly, based on the contractual agreement with the Syracuse City School District for procurement services

2027 Strategic Priorities

- Continue to focus on technology enhancements that improve the efficiency and effectiveness of county procedures
- Facilitate better relationships and responsiveness to vendors
- Provide management with improved reporting and analysis

Questions/Comments:

- Having a pretty good year with interest earnings on investments, and 2027 looks very conservatively budgeted given the trajectory of the prime rate; is there an opportunity to drive that up?
    - Finance has a little piece of that interest and earnings, which supports the treasury program
    - Short-term rental registry sits in that same treasury program; getting more ROT funds there, so the amount of interest and earnings in Finance's budget was decreased
    - Increase in interest and earnings countywide is on page 3-43 of the budget book

- GIS system on real property was recently changed; some changes need to be made to it; not what it used to be
    - Not renovated; the existing provider changed the platform and everyone had to change over
    - Same vendor services Oswego County and several other counties
    - Not as user-friendly and the toggles are not there
    - Not a change or decision the county had control over
    - Working with the vendor to make things more user-friendly, including the font size, which significantly decreased
    - Real property team is willing and able to help folks

- How many vendors do that work, and what percentage of counties are using this one?
    - A more select group does things like this
    - Exact percentage not known; vendor has a lot of other counties
    - Tried to delay the switch as long as possible, because the other platform wasn't being supported anymore

- Looking into what other vendors are out there

- Short-term rental funding; does some of it go into the Finance budget and the rest somewhere else?
  - Finance budget has just the amount to continue the rental registry platform, funded out of room occupancy tax, and the administrative support for collections
  - Remainder goes into the ROT, where it is included in the ROT initiatives

- What total is being seen from the short-term rentals?
  - Not known yet; letters just started going out a month or two ago, after it took some time to get the platform up and running
  - Will have more information probably at year end
  - A lot of response to the letters; almost 200 have already registered in the last month

5. <u>PERSONNEL</u>: Carl Hummel, Commissioner
(*Attachment No. 4: Onondaga County Personnel Department, 2027 Executive Budget Written Statement)*

2026 Budget Review
- Expected to come in at or under budget

2027 Budget Overview
- Standard salary and wage adjustments consistent with the baseline budgeting approach
- Creation of two new positions in the payroll unit, with no change in funding
  - To better align service to other departments with the payroll
- About $280,000 in the professional services appropriation
  - NeoGov system; three modules, Insight, Onboard and Learn
  - Insight and Onboard are live; Learn is being worked on now
  - True Comp benchmarking platform
- All other expenses remain flat, except a very slight increase in the all other expenses line tied to memberships
- 101 line increase of $195,000
  - Standard salary and wage
  - Function transferred as part of the payroll consolidation; an employee brought over from WEP, with the salary and fringe

Questions/Comments:
- Update on the civil service process the state was going through?
  - State extended the HELP program until the middle of 2028, because it needed the time for its transformation project
  - Looking at ways to modify and modernize civil service; New York's system is the oldest in the country, antiquated and very hard to deal with
  - Also looking to implement a state run application system
    - Some issues with how it will integrate with the county's new system; other counties and jurisdictions have problems with that as well

- Continuing to work with the state, participate in forums and meetings, and advocate on behalf of the county and other civil service jurisdictions
- No recent meetings; updates come every couple of months
- State is still working with the vendor on the setup of its system
- Nothing heard about any changes to civil service law as of yet

- Some of the online application transition is live now; are all of the applications planned for transition there?
  - No; there are three modules
  - Insight; the online application system
    - Live, but not all the functionality is turned on yet; done in stages
  - Onboard; live
    - When someone is hired, the information flows in and the system communicates with them electronically before their start date
    - Some of the paperwork can be done online; eventually everything
    - Used in an orientation for the first time a few weeks ago, and expanding with each orientation
    - Has cut orientation down from three quarters of a day to about an hour
    - All the departments have to be trained on how it works
  - Learn; an online training system
    - Employee dashboard will show the trainings due that day, that week and that month
    - Trainings will be scheduled and tracked, with reminders, reports and monitoring by the immediate supervisor
    - Standard mandated trainings; sexual harassment and workplace violence on day one, information security
    - Other departments will be able to put their own trainings into the system; safety and right to know trainings, DOT, Parks, Social Services income maintenance and caseworker training
    - Comes with about 1,100 pre-built trainings to select from
    - Kickoff was a couple of weeks ago; target for going live is the end of the year
    - Will take pretty much all of next year to fully implement
  - Goal is to be fully implemented with Insight, Onboard and Learn by the end of 2027

- The 2026 budget shows only $85,000, going to $366,000 next year; was this year over budget, or is there a significant cost next year?
  - Part of the funding for this year came out of the tech improvement grants, in project accounts in Finance and IT
  - Cost for implementation came out of the tech improvement grants
  - Large jump next year is the ongoing operational expenses

- So the build out was in other departments, and the operation of it is now under this department?
  - Correct

- What is missing from the budget?
  - Plate is full; could be given buckets of money and wouldn't be able to do anything with it
  - This budget more than satisfies what the department is able to accomplish
  - Would get a diminished product if more was attempted

6. <u>DIVISION OF PURCHASE</u>: Daniel Hammer, Director
(*Attachment No. 5: Onondaga County Division of Purchase, 2027 Executive Budget Written Statement)*

Overview

- Purpose is to help county departments do their jobs by efficiently acquiring the goods and services they need, while maximizing buying power

2026 Initiatives & Accomplishments

- On track this year to conduct over 250 public bids and issue 20,000 purchase orders
- Significant improvements made to the supplier portal to centralize quotes, RFPs and bid opportunities, to help increase competition

2026 Budget Review

- Forecast to finish 2026 within budget

2027 Budget Overview

- Standard salary and wage increases
- Creation of two new funded positions, offset by unfunding two existing positions
  - To better align with current workload and operational needs
- Travel and training appropriation remains flat
  - Conferences and trainings, allowing staff to stay current on best practices
  - Mileage associated with attending bids
  - Postage related to bid advertisements
- Professional services appropriation remains flat from 2026; support and maintenance necessary for some administrative needs
- On the revenue side, services to other governments is up, based on work provided to the Syracuse City School District

2027 Strategic Priorities

- Expect a busy year continuing to support general operations for county departments, as well as
  - City of Syracuse
  - Syracuse City School District
  - Otsego County
  - City of Oswego
  - Several county towns and villages
- Key projects, such as wastewater improvements related to economic development projects in the Town of Clay, will require time and attention
- Continue to expand training for internal and external customers to improve processes

Questions/Comments:

- Work with the other towns and villages; how many is the division working with?
  - Years ago a commitment was made to them to provide services on demand
  - Mayors, supervisors or their town attorneys often call to ask for guidance
  - If they have a public bid, the division will do it on their behalf, rather than them hiring an attorney or an engineer
  - A very small amount of work, offered at no cost

- How is MWBE participation going; has the pool of vendors grown, and are there any trends?
  - Bulk of that work rests in the Office of Diversity and Inclusion
  - County hits its goals every year

- Interdepartmental charges increase a little each year; what are those charges?
  - Charges from the service departments, such as IT
  - Going up because of salary and fringe in those departments; contractual union agreements and benefit pressures
  - Charged out at a higher cost to most departments, which is why those costs are increasing across the board

- What is missing from the budget?
  - The positions will help

7. <u>DIVERSITY & INCLUSION</u>: Monica Williams, Chief Diversity Officer

(*Attachment No. 6: Onondaga County Office of Diversity Equity & Inclusion, 2027 Executive Budget Written Statement)*

Overview

- Continues to advance its mission of fostering equitable access, inclusive engagement and meaningful opportunities across Onondaga County

2026 Initiatives & Accomplishments

- Delivered impactful programs, all while remaining within budget
  - Strengthened workforce diversity
  - Supported small business growth
  - Expanded training initiatives
  - Ensured compliance with federal and state standards

2027 Strategic Priorities

- Committed to building on this momentum by supporting core services and launching targeted initiatives

Questions/Comments:

- MWBE goal numbers; have they been updated, or has there been a need to rethink them?
  - Currently 18% for minority and 12% for women

- Reach those goals every year, and on target to meet them this year as well
- 14 construction projects have been awarded; a little over $47,219,000
- Total of $11M awarded; a little over $5M to minority owned businesses and a little over $6M to women owned businesses
- Not all of the numbers have come in, because it is not the end of the year yet

- Are there areas with room for improvement, or is the county capped by the current availability of minority owned and women owned businesses?
  - One of the strongest things the county did was create its own certification process
    - Has skyrocketed some of the numbers for minority and women owned businesses able to do the work happening with Micron and I-81
  - If anything more could be done, it is really supporting those small businesses
  - Do very well making sure the general contractors know who the subcontractors are; goals are met through that process

- Service Disabled Veteran-Owned Business Certification Program; three are shown as having gone through; how many is the office working with, and how does the word get out?
  - Number is now higher than three; up to nine within the last three weeks, through email blasts and partnerships
  - A very new certification program; helping service disabled veterans get opportunities with what is happening in Onondaga County
  - Marketing is a lot of collaborations
    - In the community doing tabling events
    - Pamphlets put out in the community
    - Working with Hueber-Breuer and other agencies to get each other's material out

- How does the local certification process align with the state's, and is there a reason it is done that way?
  - Minority and women owned businesses were talking about a bottleneck in New York State; they weren't able to get their certifications
  - County's own certification lets them begin work on county projects that don't have state funding
  - Program mimics the same goals and restrictions as New York State's
  - Difference is the really quick turnaround
  - Also helps them get their New York State certification a lot quicker

- Update on the Human Rights Commission?
  - Has gotten a little bit better
  - Still sometimes struggle with quorum; working with the commissioners to find out if the date and time still work
  - Still some open slots that need to be filled

- Are any of those open slots from the Legislature?
  - Two open currently

- What is the office's role in partnering with Personnel on hiring and supporting employees who need ADA accessibility or adaptations to perform the jobs available?
  - Each department has a program rep; if someone being hired needs further services or accessibility, they work with the office to get the proper equipment
  - Most departments have their own ADA rep, and reach out to the office with any questions or concerns
  - ADA reps get their training once a year through the office

- Thank you to the Chief Diversity Officer and staff for all the work and outreach; a very essential department within Onondaga County

- The one-stop shop is used and people are sent there; keep up the good work

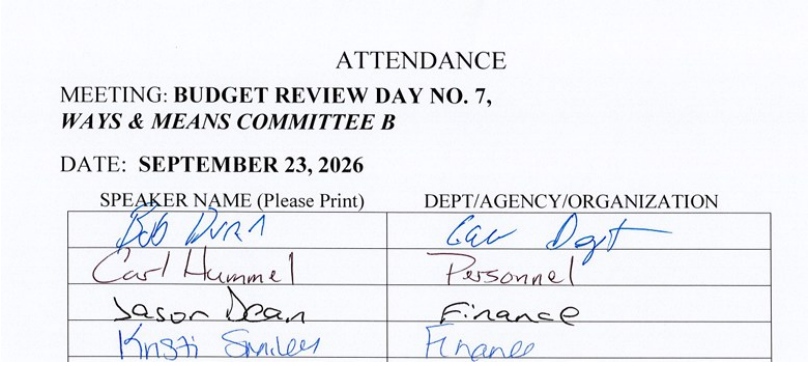
- What is missing from the budget?
  - Nothing missing; within budget
  - Legislators can help by stopping by the tables in the community and getting the information out as well

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 1:57 p.m. The committee will reconvene on Thursday, September 24, 2026, at 9:00 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

HASSINA K. ADAMS, Clerk
Onondaga County Legislature



ATTENDANCE

MEETING: **BUDGET REVIEW DAY NO. 7,**
WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE B

DATE: **SEPTEMBER 23, 2026**

SPEAKER NAME (Please Print)	DEPT/AGENCY/ORGANIZATION
Bob Dyer	Gen Dept
Carl Hummel	Personnel
Jason Dean	Finance
Kristi Smiley	Finance