

CITY OPERATIONS

Tuesday, August 26, 2025 – 6:00 p.m.

Council Chambers – Olean Municipal Building

Present: Members: Chairman Bennion, Vice Chairman Anastasia, Alderman Keary, and Alderman McCall. Others: Alderman Robinson; Mayor William Aiello; Frank Caputo, City Clerk; Bridget Marshall, City Attorney; James Sprague, Director of Public Works; Brad Camp, Water and Sewer Superintendent, and Tiffany Taylor, Managerial Confidential Administrative Secretary.

1. Roll Call

Alderman Bennion called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and asked that the record show that all committee members were present except Alderman Crawford, who was excused.

2. Approval of Minutes of the Previous Committee Meeting (Tuesday, August 12, 2025)

A motion to approve the minutes of the August 12, 2025 meeting was made by Alderman Bennion, seconded by Alderman Anastasia. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried.

3. Executive Session

A motion to enter into executive session to discuss current litigation was made by Alderman Bennion, seconded by Alderman Anastasia. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried. Executive session began at approximately 6:01 p.m.

A motion to adjourn from executive session was made by Alderman Bennion, seconded by Alderman McCall. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried. Executive session adjourned at approximately 6:35 p.m.

4. Unfinished Business

a. QR Code Parking

Mayor Aiello explained he provided the Council an email that details what he feels we should do with QR code parking. He explained he wants to be careful about making a City lot free parking all the time, as we have permitted spaces with revenue in the lots and we don't want to lose that revenue. He explained there was a suggestion to charge for parking at the recreation center, and he feels we should only do this for special events. He explained he spoke with the company and we are able to do paid parking just for special events if we choose in that lot. He explained he received feedback from Aldermen Crawford and Robinson and provided his feedback to their recommendations.

Alderman McCall explained the City was originally looking at QR code parking because we wanted to increase revenues without increasing taxes. She explained originally the perception was that \$100,000 would be made with this type of parking, but some of this is from current parking fees and enforcement and only about \$20,000 of what is proposed is revenue from QR code parking. She explained she has spoken to a lot of residents and the concept that we are going to build capacity by charging for parking is an error. She explained business owners are concerned because it had already been a rough couple of years for them, and they do not feel 60% parking capacity is attainable. She explained when someone comes to shop and gets fined for parking downtown and not paying, they are not going to want to come back. She explained this plan would have been easier to swallow if we had the meters in and were taking them out to replace them with this, but we are talking about going from free parking to paid parking. She explained she was a supporter of this but she thinks now this is wrong for our residents and downtown businesses. She explained she can see charging a fee for the lots. She explained we don't want to lose money and we should continue doing 2 hour parking and then ticket. She explained she does not feel we should move forward with QR code parking.

Alderman Robinson explained he is on the opposite side of this. He explained he sees a lot of paid parking in other communities and explained there may be free parking on certain side streets, but you have to pay to park in premium areas such as North Union Street. He explained he knows the cost analysis didn't do it for any of the Aldermen but there is some money to be made there. He explained whether it is \$100,000 or \$20,000, the point is we are on the positive side, and that is the side he wants to be on. He explained he doesn't know why parking is free, as this was done years ago before he became an Alderman, but the City is suffering for it now. He explained he can't foresee giving something away for free just because that is how we have been doing it. He explained we should move forward with paid parking, and explained if someone does not want to pay to park downtown they can park in a City lot with free 2 hour parking. He explained the longer we wait the more we are hurting ourselves and the more revenue we are losing. He explained he feels we will make more than \$20,000. He explained this was brought up to try to bring revenue into the City, not as a big money grab. He explained you should pay for parking especially when it is premium parking. He understands business owner complaints but if you have a product or service people want, they will come and pay for parking to get it.

Alderman Anastasia explained when this was first brought forward he thought we would be seeing revenues of \$146,000 a year but now it is more like \$20,000. He explained he would support this for a revenue of \$100,000 because that is more than 1% in taxes but he does not support this for a revenue of \$20,000 since it could potentially hurt businesses and he does not think it would be worth it. HE explained he questions how much this would actually make and questioned the cost to do this. Mayor Aiello explained there is no cost to the City to monitor the

program, and the company does the back office work collecting the money and issuing a check to the City for our portion.

Alderman Keary asked what the hourly rate would be for QR code parking, and Mayor Aiello explained it has been proposed at \$1 per hour with a fee added to that for ParkMobil's cost. He explained we could do parking in increments of 15 minutes as well. Alderman Keary explained he does not feel this is enough to prevent people from going to the downtown and he feels this is in line with what we see in other cities. Alderman Anastasia explained there used to be meters and explained he would like to see what the cost is to install meters instead of using the QR code parking.

Alderman Bennion explained he was the one that brought this up and was willing to have conversations about this. He explained he agrees with Sonya and doesn't think the amount of revenue will justify this and explained we don't have the amount of people parking on the street that we project for revenues. He explained this could be a hindrance to downtown businesses when people decide to go elsewhere. He suggested advertising to apartments that their tenants can purchase a lot permit to park there all the time. He explained he does not think Olean is big enough for downtown paid parking.

Alderman Anastasia asked if this is a dead issue, and Mayor Aiello explained he would like to have some direction to let the company know if this is a dead issue or if it is moving forward. Alderman Robinson explained it seems the majority present are not in favor of moving forward.

5. New Referrals for Consideration

a. Tree Maintenance / Removal in Right-of-Way

Alderman Bennion explained the Council has discussed several times trees in the right-of-way and who pays for them and who owns them. He explained residents over the years have talked about trees in the right-of-way and the process to take them down. He explained there is a resident present tonight who has reached out to himself and Alderman Robinson about a tree in the subway. He explained the Council needs to take a hard look at this issue. He explained they have discussed not putting trees in the subway anymore, and explained he feels if the City puts trees in the subway, they should be responsible for removing the tree once it is dead and should not pass the cost along to the resident. He explained if the tree grows into the sewer line the City does not pay for that. He explained we want residents to pay for permits in the right-of-way and wants the resident to use a master plumber to fix the issue, but the City is the one who put the tree there. He explained the City of Buffalo has a program where they take care of trees in the subway. HE explained sometimes we say we own the subway but when a tree needs to come down we make the resident pay to have it taken down. He questioned whose subway it is, whose

tree it is, and who is responsible for maintenance. He explained the City Code says you can't place a permanent structure in the right-of-way or subway, but he feels a tree is pretty permanent.

Alderman McCall explained she feels we can all agree this has been a long-standing issue and that they constantly hear issues about sidewalks and driveways that are affected by trees. She explained the City needs to be responsible for maintaining and getting rid of the trees in the subway. She explained this is an ongoing dilemma where the City planted trees that were not particularly viable or too big for the area long before us. She explained she would fully support the City being fully responsible for trees in the subway. Alderman Anastasia agreed and explained he doesn't feel it is beneficial to be a Tree City USA.

Alderman Keary explained he feels we need consistency when it comes to the right-of-way. He explained if we say the right-of-way is the City's then the City is responsible for everything. Alderman Robinson explained when he came on the Council he heard about issues the City had with trees in the subway. He explained he had a constituent who had just bought her property and a month later her sewer collapsed due to tree roots. He explained she had no money to fix this and had a portable toilet on in her driveway for several months. He explained there was nothing he could do because of this tree policy that says the resident is responsible for the tree. He explained this is wrong and needs to be corrected. He explained the City has an inventory of the trees in the City, and we need to take a hard look at that. He explained we need to create some type of program to pull down trees in the subway that should not be there or that are dead or dying, and then allow residents to plant trees in their yard as long as they are not near the sewer lines. He explained he thinks there is a lot that can be discussed and a lot that we can do, but we need to keep in mind it will be very costly. He explained this is a good conversation to tackle, but if we are concerned about charging \$1 an hour for parking, this will be much costlier than that. He explained he does believe we should correct this for our residents.

Alderman Bennion explained perhaps some City workers could be trained in tree removal so we do not have to pay the prevailing wage. He explained we need to see a plan and budget, and explained at a minimum he would like to be able to prepare to fund this in the next budget. Alderman Keary explained perhaps we can reach out to a college to have a list done at no cost to prioritize what trees to take down in what order. Alderman Robinson explained the City completed a tree survey a few years ago and they are all categorized and rated. Mayor Aiello explained he can provide this survey for the Aldermen to see. Alderman Bennion asked how long it will take to put together an operating cost annually for this and Director Sprague explained he can put this together and explained this is a topic he has experience with, with previous employment. He explained the other two communities he worked for took care of trees in the right-of-way.

6. Committee Reports

None

7. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Alderman Bennion, seconded by Alderman McCall. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at approximately 7:15 p.m.