

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING MINUTES

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2025 – 6:00 p.m.

COUNCIL CHAMBERS – OLEAN MUNICIPAL BUILDING

IN ATTENDANCE WERE: ALDERMEN ROBINSON, BENNION, KEARY, FORNEY, McCALL, CRAWFORD, AND ANASTASIA. OTHERS: MAYOR WILLIAM AIELLO; FRANK CAPUTO, CITY CLERK; LENS MARTIAL, CITY AUDITOR; BRIDGET MARSHALL, CITY ATTORNEY; JAMES SPRAGUE, DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS, AND TIFFANY TAYLOR, MANAGERIAL CONFIDENTIAL ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY.

Alderman Robinson called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and asked that the record show that all Aldermen were present.

1. Homelessness Task Force Update

Alderman Robinson explained Olean has been experiencing issues with homelessness, but Olean is not the only community having these issues. He explained we need to do as much as we can. He explained we hear that people decline assistance, and we need to determine in those cases what the next step is, as we can't leave people on the streets. He asked how long we have to maintain empathy for addicts before it turns to anger. He explained he would like to hear some additional statistics from the Police Department on how we are coping with this from a law enforcement perspective.

Mayor Aiello explained he sent the Council an update on this task force, and read:

“We have had numerous meetings with great attendance. The taskforce is very engaged and is working together to find a solution to a problem, that is not Olean specific, as it exists in many communities throughout the state and nation.

Based on the PIT Count that was completed in January, as federally mandated, there were 68 homeless individuals in Cattaraugus County, three of which were unsheltered. One unsheltered individual was located in Olean and did not want to engage at all.

The numbers of unsheltered seem to increase in the summer. Our police officers do engage with them, and try to get them help. If they refrain from help, they have every right to be on public property, until the parks close at 10:00.

There is plenty of help available and the County, the Hospital, and the shelters work very well together to find solutions for those who want help. Unfortunately, many of the homeless choose that life style, sometimes due to mental health issues.

New York State, during the budget process, changed the laws to help those with mental health issues; the state has committed funding up to \$16 million for more hospital beds and training. Olean General Hospital has or will receive a portion of this grant funding.

The committee has discussed some ideas for local issues. For example, our public restrooms are vandalized on a regular basis. One suggestion was to put a sharps waste container in the restroom, so items are disposed of properly.

There has also been discussion about working with the County to have a mental health team work with the police department when they are confronted with mental illness and the homeless. Jamestown has such a team and it has been successful.

Ultimately what is needed, according to the committee, is safe, affordable and permanent housing. And in that regard, I was introduced, by the Manager of Genesis House, to two representatives from the state. Their department works with agencies to access funding for permanent housing. The City of Olean does not have the resources for the programs that are available, however they will be in the area in November and I plan to schedule a task force meeting during their visit and invite representatives from the County to attend.”

Mayor Aiello explained there have been questions about tents being given out, and there were some tents given out by the Genesis House on a Friday afternoon as a last resort when there was no one available to help the individuals who requested help. He explained there is a meeting scheduled for tomorrow and the Police Department will be giving a presentation on what they have been doing with the homeless they encounter. Alderman Robinson asked if this meeting is open to the public and Mayor Aiello explained it is not. Alderman Keary asked if the meeting is open to the Aldermen to attend and Mayor Aiello explained only three Aldermen can attend in order to stay in compliance with Open Meetings Law, and Alderman McCall is already on the committee. Alderman Keary noted he would like to attend.

Alderman McCall explained there are a lot of reasons for people to be homeless, and one reason she hears is lack of affordable housing. She explained people say there is a lot of affordable housing, but a lot of the housing that is affordable is not safe or fit to be housed in. She explained the monthly benefit a single individual in Cattaraugus County receives for housing is \$179, and the total cash grant inclusive of that is \$364. She explained it is expensive to change housing and this amount does not go far. She explained we do not have enough safe, affordable housing. She explained she also hears people come from all over to Cattaraugus County because we have so many resources, but if someone goes to Social Services the first thing the County will do is try to find a friend or family member to take the individual in, even if they are seven states away. She explained if someone applies for a cash grant it can take up to 45 days to receive. She explained the goal of DSS, if you come to Cattaraugus County from out of the area, is to send you back to where you came from and not to add the individual to Cattaraugus County’s homeless numbers. She explained the point in time count done is done in January and she doesn’t think it makes a lot of sense to get a count of the homeless in January in this area. She explained Genesis House has informed her that there are no resources until a Code Blue goes into effect. She explained part of the issue is educating people to understand what resources we have. She noted she would like to

see a social worker or counselor who can be on call with the Police Department so they can put homeless people in contact with them, if it is needed.

Alderman Crawford explained when this was brought forth a year ago, the intention was to see some actionable items. He explained it has been more than a year since the committee was announced and he was hoping to see something that goes beyond conversation and strategy. He explained he would like to see something quantitative and something we can start to track. He explained we have the data and numbers and now we need to see action. Alderman Keary asked what the City is doing to address the lack of safe, affordable housing and asked if the PIT count date is mandated as it seems the date is picked to artificially deflate the numbers. Alderman McCall explained the Federal government set that date thirty or more years ago, but there is a homeless database that goes on all year that tracks how many people are homeless in Cattaraugus County by zip code. She explained as far as housing, that is a matter in part for Code Enforcement. She explained people do not call Codes if they have an issue because they are fearful they will be evicted and don't want to say anything. She explained it would be good for Codes to give a report of how many apartments have been inspected and see of those, how many apartments had deficiencies. Alderman Keary explained if we allow landlords to be bad, we are reinforcing and expanding the issue throughout the City and we need to put an end to that.

Alderman Bennion explained Code violations are an issue, but safe and affordable housing is an issue in this instance because, as a landlord, he cannot provide a unit that operates at \$179 a month without losing money. He explained no landlord will lose \$500-plus a month per unit. Alderman McCall explained HUD states a person should spend 30% of their income on housing. She explained if we get homeless people into programs, we need to be able to find additional funds to help pay for things. She explained part of this is knowing where resources are.

Alderman Robinson explained part of this is education and keeping the public informed. He explained he would like to see more updates from the taskforce as well as to see more quantitative actions. He explained the Council removed the ZBA from the ordinance for short-term rentals to give more responsibility to Code Enforcement. He asked if a landlord uses a property as a swinging door to get money but is not actually helping anyone, if Code Enforcement can legally inspect the dwelling. He explained he does not know if there is more we can do legally or not. He explained property owners are abusing the system and having a revolving door at their rentals.

2. Splash Park Update

Mayor Aiello explained the recent slowdown in the work at the Splash Park is due to the delay in delivery of anchors, and Director Sprague explained they have been received. Mayor Aiello explained the next step is for PV Paving to install them, pour the remaining concrete, complete the stamped concrete deck, and finish the site utility work and light pole installations. He explained once exterior work is done, interior plumbing can be done and the project will go to the Department of Health for review. He explained the park should be open to the public for next season. Alderman Bennion asked if the anchors were never previously received, and Director Sprague explained we do not have shipping documents from three years ago to make that comparison. Alderman Anastasia asked for an update on the status of the project at the pool.

3. PL #87-25: (Bennion) To authorize the removal of unused, non-working lighting on North Union Street.

Alderman Robinson explained this was not properly moved forward at the last meeting. Alderman Crawford explained he thought there was a request for an update on this, to see the lights replaced and not just taken down. Director Sprague explained when he was at NYCOM's DPW School, he spoke with the vendor who had come in and assisted us in testing the lighting. He explained we should be able to do a straightforward retrofitting of the streetlights to improve the light on the street by switching heads on the existing poles. He explained the decorative string lights would take more work. He explained he has found the original design had the lights going parallel with the street and not across the street. He explained we will need to invest some calendar time into the decorative lighting to get a new design done. He explained in order to conserve efforts, we are not going to mobilize to remove the lighting until it is time to put up Christmas decorations and then the lights will come down at the same time. Alderman Robinson thanked Director Sprague for the efficiency and explained we will continue this discussion as the Council would like to discuss options for making streetlights brighter.

A motion to approve PL #87-25 was made by Alderman Robinson, seconded by Alderman Bennion. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried. Referred to Regular Meeting for Resolution.

4. PL #104-25: (Aiello) To authorize the Mayor to enter into a contract between the City of Olean and the Cattaraugus County Land Bank for reimbursement of demolition costs.

Mayor Aiello explained the City has come to an agreement with the Land Bank to take down the structures at 316 Laurel Avenue, 330 North 10th Street, and 311 South Third Street with reimbursement of the costs to be made by the Land Bank. He explained we will receive payment within 15 days following the completion of the demolition. Alderman McCall asked what the cost to the City will be and Mayor Aiello explained the Land Bank is paying the entire cost for demolition. He explained since the demolition company is already doing other work in Olean, we are saving on mobilization costs.

A motion to approve PL #104-25 was made by Alderman McCall, seconded by Alderman Bennion. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried. Referred to Regular Meeting for Resolution.

5. PL #105-25: (Aiello) To adopt the Cattaraugus County Office of Emergency Services Emergency Services Mutual Aid Plan.

Chief Maurouard explained all of the Fire Departments in Cattaraugus County operate under a Mutual Aid Plan, and this is something the County would like us to enter into for emergency medical services that mirrors how the fire plan works. Alderman McCall asked if this will affect billing and Chief Maurouard explained nothing will be changing. He explained we currently do emergency medical services mutual aid, this plan just puts it into writing.

A motion to approve PL #105-25 was made by Alderman Keary, seconded by Alderman McCall. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried. Referred to Regular Meeting for Resolution.

6. PL #107-25: (Aiello) To support Senate Bill S.8481 and Assembly Bill A.8996 authorizing local governments to opt out of mandates under the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA).

Mayor Aiello explained this was brought forward by our local Senator and Assemblyman's offices to give residents a choice instead of requiring new builds to be all electric.

A motion to approve PL #107-25 was made by Alderman Robinson, seconded by Alderman Anastasia. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried. Referred to Regular Meeting for Resolution.

7. PL # 108-25: (Aiello) To support Senate Bill S.1945 and House of Representatives Bill H.R.3699, the Energy Choice Act, in opposition to government-mandated natural gas bans.

Mayor Aiello explained this is a federal bill to allow people to have a choice for energy services and to not allow states to require all-electric heating. Alderman Robinson explained constituents want us to be a voice for them and this is the Council saying they disagree with electricity-only mandates. Alderman Crawford explained he had no issue supporting the prior PL, but he feels this is a State issue and this legislation is an inconsistent approach and an overreach of the Federal government's authority.

A motion to approve PL #108-25 was made by Alderman Keary, seconded by Alderman Bennion. Voice vote, ayes all except Alderman Crawford, who voted no. Motion carried. Referred to Regular Meeting for Resolution.

8. PL #110-25: (Bennion) To amend the City of Olean Code of Ordinances to remove Section 10-27, Ambulance Board.

Chief Maurouard explained there is an ambulance board in the Code, but it has not met since he was hired in 2009. He explained he believes it was formed in the early 1990's due to conflict between the commercial and municipal ambulance services in the area. He explained he does not see a need for this and Alderman Bennion has suggested it be removed. Alderman Robinson asked if we currently have a Cattaraugus County Ambulance Board, and Chief Maurouard explained we do, as well as other boards regarding ambulance service that the City is a part of.

A motion to approve PL #110-25 was made by Alderman Bennion, seconded by Alderman Keary. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried. Referred to Regular Meeting Tuesday, October 28, 2025 for Resolution to allow for necessary publication due to code change.

9. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Alderman Robinson, seconded by Alderman Anastasia. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at approximately 6:45 p.m.