

FINANCE

Tuesday, March 17, 2026 – 6:50 p.m.
Council Chambers – Olean Municipal Building

Present: Members: Chairman McCall, Vice Chairman Crawford, Alderman Bennion, Alderman Keary, Alderman Robinson, and Alderman Anastasia. Others: Mayor Amy Sherburne; Jennifer Fairbanks-Black, Chief of Staff; Lens Martial, City Auditor; Mike Morgan, City Attorney; James Sprague, Director of Public Works; Stephanie Olson, Principal Account Clerk, and Tiffany Taylor, Managerial Confidential Administrative Secretary.

1. Roll Call

Alderman McCall called the meeting to order at 6:50 p.m. and asked that the record show that all committee members were present except Alderman Forney, who was excused.

2. Approval of Minutes of the Previous Committee Meeting (Thursday, March 12, 2026)

A motion to approve the minutes of the March 12, 2026 committee meeting was made by Alderman McCall, seconded by Alderman Keary. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried.

3. Unfinished Business

- a. PL #15-26: (Sherburne) Budget 2026 – 2027.

Sewer Fund

Ms. Olson explained the 100 line item for Sewer Maintenance includes contractual increases as well as one proposed part-time position. She explained there are no changes to the 101 and 102 lines, and one position for the Water and Sewer Superintendent that was split between the Water and Sewer budgets has been removed from the budget. She noted the positions that were discussed to be split between budgets are in the 8130 budget, not this 8120 budget.

Alderman Crawford asked when the Water and Sewer Superintendent position was removed, and Mayor Sherburne explained she has proposed that for this budget as it is a redundant position. Alderman Crawford asked when a discussion occurred regarding this, and asked if this was in the original budget that was received. Mayor Sherburne explained it is in the amendment of the Sewer Fund budget, and it is being vocalized that the job is redundant. Alderman Crawford asked how this position is redundant, and Mayor Sherburne explained the DPW Director should be supervising the water and sewer, and even in our Charter it states that the water and sewer facilities and all employees shall be supervised by the DPW Director. She explained we have a new junior engineer position to support projects, and explained there are projects according to

the DEC that need to be regulated internally by someone that holds that certificate. She explained that position is increasing our entire budget including water and sewer. She explained she cannot in good faith give a budget that has redundant positions.

Alderman Crawford asked if Director Sprague oversees the water and sewer departments on daily basis, and he explained he does not because we have a Water and Sewer Superintendent. Alderman Crawford asked if he oversees water and sewer projects, and Director Sprague explained he has been involved in and oversees major projects. Mayor Sherburne explained she has spoken with all of the water and sewer supervisors, and those in these positions are doing very well. She explained we currently have four supervisors overseeing five employees. She explained it is her opinion that this is a redundant position and is something that may have worked in the past but she does not think it works for our future. She explained decisions need to be made and our users deserve for us to be fiscally responsible for funds in this budget. She explained she feels this is a decision that has to be made and not taken lightly after two months of observing. She explained we do not need an extra person in the field, and we need to evaluate all positions in that manner.

Alderman Crawford explained he thinks this budget is suggesting 8 to 12 new positions to be added including part time. He explained he was on the Council when this position was created given the DPW Director's purview and oversight. He explained water and sewer funds are very healthy. He explained being fiscally responsible means working on our sewer agreement with Allegany. He explained he has major concerns with the elimination of this position. He explained the City itself has major water and sewer challenges and we are looking at undertaking projects that will cost tens of millions of dollars. He explained he does not think that now is the time to reduce or eliminate oversight. He explained this position being called redundant is essential to ensuring projects are being done effectively and efficiently and within regulations and requirements. He explained he is also concerned regarding our commitment to the Seneca Nation down the road, and eliminating a key role in water and sewer sends the wrong message. He explained if there are other issues he hopes they are dealt with correctly and fairly with due process, but he does not think the elimination of the position is the right thing to do.

Alderman Anastasia explained he agrees with what Alderman Crawford said. He explained there are surpluses in both the water and sewer funds and we would be getting rid of someone who he feels has done an excellent job. He explained the DPW Director has enough to do. He explained this budget has been a disaster. Mayor Sherburne explained she has been here working in the day-to-day operations and she sees the projects that are blooming. She explained she has sat in meetings with the DEC to discuss things as we move forward with all of the upcoming projects we will need to do. She explained we need someone with the correct licensing and background and that has been put into the budget to support the DPW Director. She explained at the end of

the day you need the skillset and experience required by the State to do these projects. She explained we do not need someone to oversee supervisors, and if they have an issue they can report to the DPW Director. She explained this issue has led to a lot of confusion that she has seen firsthand. She explained this position has been given duties that are not feasible. Grants are not being fulfilled and we are losing grants because there is a complicated process that is not being done. She explained she sees a valid reason for a Junior Engineer that was asked of us by the DPW Director. She explained with costs of water and sewer going up we have to look at every measure where we can save, and we need to be taking care of things with the proper people in place to do that. She explained in the past it has always been a DPW Director and she feels we are too top heavy with supervisors. She explained we have many projects that need to be done that have not been done in the past due to budget constraints, and we need to determine what we can to spend our money on and budget for. She explained when we have this many people in supervisors positions, we need to make tough decisions and move forward.

Alderman Crawford asked Director Sprague what his opinion is. Director Sprague explained he was involved in several conversations with the Mayor about this. Alderman Crawford explained as he is the professional engineer here, he is curious what challenges or opportunities you see with the elimination of this position. He asked if he is hearing that a junior engineer would offset the workload and responsibilities held by the Water and Sewer Superintendent. Director Sprague explained that is the proposal. He explained if this change happens he will obviously need to reassess what he is doing and what will get assigned to existing staff and new staff. He explained he will have to shuffle the cards. Alderman Crawford asked how much staff Director Sprague has. Director Sprague explained there is one engineer and there would be a new position in the engineering department. He explained there are two chief operators in water and wastewater, and he will need to see which tasks they are currently doing and how to rearrange the workload to make sure everything is done. Alderman Crawford explained if there are administrative concerns about this position, those are things that should be remedied, addressed and corrected. He explained he is a firm believer that this sends the wrong message and he thinks a number of projects we have under our purview and upcoming, including the levee reaccreditation, require this position. He explained this goes beyond the scope of just managing a handful of supervisors. He explained this budget started with a proposed 18% tax increase but we are squabbling over a position that is critical to water and sewer infrastructure. He explained eliminating this position to split the junior engineer across the funds is being shortsighted.

Director Sprague explained the Capital Outlay in Sewer Maintenance is to provide what we are anticipating we will need for the syphon, upgrades to the South 4th Street pumping station, or both. He explained we have applied for at least one grant for the syphon but were not awarded that. He noted we are still looking for funding. He explained we are still waiting on an engineering report from Ramboll for South 4th Street and explained that project will probably require some

more engineering before we have the total scope. Alderman Bennion asked how much the DEC Consent Order requires us to budget each year and Alderman Crawford responded \$250,000. Director Sprague explained with the new Order on Consent, there will be opportunity to sit down with the DEC to discuss priorities for projects.

Director Sprague explained Supplies and Materials is actually for funding for repairing excavations for streets that was required for sewer upgrades or repairs. He explained this funding is for backfill and asphalt, and possibly for contractor costs. Alderman McCall explained this line was originally budgeted at \$40,000 and asked if the \$15,000 it has been reduced to is sufficient. Director Sprague explained he feels this is sufficient and explained we really don't know how many digs we will need to do. He explained we were a little over \$15,000 last year but anticipate coming in under \$15,000 this year. Alderman Bennion asked if this is only for City-owned issues, and Director Sprague explained that is correct. He explained if an opening is done for a property owner, either the contractor carries the cost or we charge the owner for the cost.

Director Sprague explained Gas and Oil is budgeted at \$14,000 and Mr. Martial explained the City Garage has \$180,000 budgeted while water and sewer each have \$14,000. Director Sprague explained Miscellaneous Contracted Services is typically linked to sewer upgrades such as new manhole covers, manhole lining, and new catch basins. He explained part of the DEC Order on Consent is for the development of a GIS system. He explained we have met the milestone under the consent order and will continue to upgrade the system as we move forward. He explained there will be some carrying costs for that.

Ms. Olson explained the 100 line under Sewer Treatment and Disposal includes the removal of a position and split pay for various employees, as well as contractual changes. She explained the 102 line includes funding for split employees for out of title pay as well. Director Sprague explained Capital Outlay is budgeted for \$150,000 which has traditionally been moved from the sewer fund into a Capital Fund targeted for sewer repair or replacement, He explained this is the Capital Fund we will be using in the next month or so when we replace the sewer on Orleans Avenue. Alderman Bennion asked how there is a negative balance from the previous year and Mr. Martial explained that line is not in the negative. He explained there was an adjusting entry that we received from the auditor because of the way we did a transfer. HE explained this is what had to be done, and is something we will need to fix moving forward. He explained the CPA made reverse entries to the way things were done.

Director Sprague explained Departmental Project Reserve is for the Hoop Street Pump Station as well as lift station equipment. Alderman McCall explained that she appreciates the fact that these projects are included in the budget. Director Sprague explained the Office Supplies line may seem high, but that is for all of the water and sewer billing costs as well. Alderman McCall explained we should work towards online bills rather than paper bills to bring cost down, and Alderman

Robinson recommended discussing in the future going 100% paperless and only sending a paper bill when it is requested.

Director Sprague explained there has been a lot of discussion during recent meetings about rogue telephone lines. He explained Mr. Kahm has been working on that and is starting to back them into a corner, and he feels very soon we will have at least a few we can disconnect to eliminate those charges. He explained he is confident he has identified most at this point, but he is literally working with telephone company representatives trying to unpeel large sheaths of old copper telephone lines to backtrack to find ones that are still connected and where they go. He explained it has been a significant detective enterprise, but we are making headway on that. He explained Light and Power and Fuel for Heat costs are increasing and noted the wastewater treatment plant is an electric-heavy pursuit. Alderman McCall explained she is glad to see these amounts increased with costs going up. Director Sprague explained 440 is primarily for sludge hauling. He explained that cost has increased quite a lot, and diesel has just hit a new high that will affect trucking costs. He explained Travel and Training has been increased because we have an employee at the plant who is ready to obtain his certification. He explained this will result in additional costs for training this year.

Alderman McCall asked if the garage mechanic is now correctly split in the budget, and Ms. Olson explained it is correctly split 34% in the garage and 33% in each water and sewer. Alderman Anastasia asked if the proposed summer help position is in addition to the nine that we are already hiring, and Director Sprague explained that position is in addition to the four proposed in streets, four proposed in parks, and one proposed in electric. He noted there was also a request for two in water, but those were not included in the draft budget. Mayor Sherburne explained Judge DiCerbo has a program that requires community service, and he asked for a list of duties that he might be able to provide volunteers for. He explained there has been someone recently helping maintenance in the building, so there are specific things these people can do. She explained she feels this is a really great program, and it helps build relationships with people who can fulfill their community service hours by helping the City. Alderman Anastasia asked if this \$8,900 can be cut for the summer position and Mayor Sherburne explained it is possible. She explained she will provide Judge DiCerbo with a list of items to be addressed over the summer and we will go from there.

Mr. Martial explained under Undistributed, the State tells us what amount we have to put in for retirement, he explained Social Security is based on what was used the prior fiscal year, and Workers Compensation is based on current year-to-date. Alderman McCall asked if the \$423,000 budgeted for Hospitalization includes the buyouts for not taking insurance, and Mr. Martial explained that is included in this line item. Mr. Martial explained under Special Items, Unallocated Insurance is located in all three funds for the cost of insurance on property and vehicles. He

explained Judgment and Claims was increased because he does not think we had enough in the past, and explained we had a claim for last year and no funds to pay for it. He explained Service Charges dropped to \$5,000 because we are in the process of switching the company for credit card processing and will be passing the fees to customers at some point, which should get done sooner rather than later. He noted Contingency was increased to \$100,000.

Alderman McCall explained the Council spread information on social media about following the YouTube channel, and it appears we may have enough subscribers that we do not need to pay for live streaming anymore. Mr. Wells explained we will be trying this and if it works well, we will turn off podcast. Alderman McCall explained everyone should go on and subscribe because knowing what the City is doing has more effect on day to day lives here than what is happening federally.

4. New Referrals for Consideration

None

5. Committee Reports

None

6. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Alderman McCall, seconded by Alderman Bennion. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at approximately 7:50 p.m.