COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING MINUTES

TUESDAY, APRIL 14, 2026 – 6:10 p.m.
COUNCIL CHAMBERS – OLEAN MUNICIPAL BUILDING

IN ATTENDANCE WERE: ALDERMEN ROBINSON, BENNION, KEARY, FORNEY, McCALL, CRAWFORD, AND ANASTASIA. OTHERS: MAYOR AMY SHERBURNE; JENNIFER FAIRBANKS-BLACK, CHIEF OF STAFF; MIKE MORGAN, CITY ATTORNEY; FRANK CAPUTO, CITY CLERK; LENS MARTIAL, CITY AUDITOR; KERI KERPER, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM COORDINATOR; GREGG PIECHOTA, CITY ASSESSOR; JAMES SPRAGUE, DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS; RON RICHARDSON, POLICE CHIEF; ERIC MAUROUARD, FIRE CHIEF; STEPHANIE OLSON, PRINICPAL ACCOUNT CLERK, AND TIFFANY TAYLOR, MANAGERIAL CONFIDENTIAL ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY.

Alderman Robinson called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m. and asked that the record show that all Aldermen were present.

1. PL #27-26: (Sherburne) To enact a Local Law authorizing the City of Olean to override the tax levy limit.

A motion to approve PL #27-26 was made by Alderman Robinson, seconded by Alderman Keary. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried. Referred to regular meeting for resolution.

2. PL #28-26: (Sherburne) To amend water and sewer rates in accordance with Sections 27-22 and 27-167, respectively, of the City of Olean Code of Ordinances.

A motion to approve PL #28-26 was made by Alderman McCall, seconded by Alderman Robinson. Voice vote, ayes all except Alderman Crawford, who voted nay. Motion carried. Referred to regular meeting for resolution.

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

Alderman Anastasia asked what the final proposed tax rate increase is. Alderman Bennion explained the proposed tax increase is 8.85%, water is 4% and sewer is 6%. Alderman Robinson explained the Council has had some discussions about the draft budget, and explained they have no confidence in this. He explained he feels there is potential for something else to be removed. Alderman McCall explained the Council has sat here in years past and has heard that salaries and benefits are in the ballpark of 75% of the budget, and any contractual amounts basically break the 2% tax cap. She explained being under 2% is not going to happen, as salary increases as well as an increase of $450,000 in medical expenses does not allow for us to be below that 2%. She explained she feels this has been the most challenging budget since she has been on the Coucnil. She explained she had sent the Mayor concerns and she responded and went over different line items. She explained they discussed the Water and Sewer Superintendent position, which will be addressed later tonight, as well as the added positions of the Municipal Training Officer with no cost, the Civil Engineer and a mechanic's helper. She explained there are a lot of not-for-profits that don't pay tax but do pay for water and sewer, so there is value to spreading positions over three funds that have responsibilities over the three funds.

Alderman McCall explained we are very fortunate that the Fire and Police Departments have received grants to be able to add personnel, without increasing the budget with the exception of some basic things, and we want to applaud that effort and continue to see things like this done. She explained the Council discussed adding a grant writer later and taking that cost partially form the water and sewer funds. She explained we want to revisit the youth and recreation revenue, because they do great things and we want to look for untapped sources of revenue moving forward. She explained the Council agreed to leave the bed tax in revenues, as well as move some money from the Oak Hill Park Capital Fund for tourism purposes.

Alderman McCall explained one of the largest cost increases in the budget is $452,000 for health insurance, and $600,000 to $700,000 of this line item goes for insurance buyouts for people who do not take insurance through the City. She explained this is probably what is causing the biggest difficulty with our residents, as these buyouts are extraordinary and well beyond industry standards. She explained across the board the Council is in agreement that this needs to be decreased, and are asking for a decrease in that line in the budget. She explained to the degree that a small amount of individuals cost and put out taxpayers a couple more percent in terms of the tax rate is unacceptable in the Council's eyes, so they recommend this be decreased. She noted there are some specific recommendations the Council would like to talk to the Mayor about. She explained we had to adjust sales tax and remove $175,000 in revenue from the budget, and we are already looking at being over budget for 2025-2026 so we know we need to do something different. She applauded the Mayor and Department Heads for being proactive and setting funds aside for projects that will be needed, but that increases the budget. She explained taking these amounts out though will leave us looking for large amounts of funding for projects in the future outside of the budget.

Alderman McCall explained the general, water, and sewer funds are like savings accounts and you do not want to deplete them, or you will not have a savings. She explained we are trying to be good stewards in that respect. She explained the Council was hoping to land below the 8.85% and have ideas how to get there. She explained she speaks for the Council when she says the Council is not prepared to pass this budget at this tax increase without looking at the medical costs and buyouts.

Alderman Robinson explained he wants to thank Alderman McCall as she has led the way on finances going through this budget, and she has really helped to be a liaison for the Council. He explained he agrees the buyout has been a significant burden on the City for many years, and he feels it is time attention is brought to that, whether it is contractual or not. He explained that is one of the reasons taxes are increasing, because we are playing catch up from the prior year.

Alderman Bennion explained these increases can be a tough pill to swallow for many residents, but for the first time many positions are accurately being split between the three funds, an we should continue splitting costs proportionally to distribute costs to all users rather than just taxpayers. He explained there have been discussions about using Temporary Municipal Aid to offset the tax increase, but he does not agree with this as using it will only delay increases to next year. He explained this should be used instead for long deferred infrastructure needs. He explained we should also have updated Intermunicipal Agreements and should not be subsidizing another municipality's sewer, costing our users more. He explained we charge other municipalities less than what our own residents pay, and then they turn around and make a profit themselves. He explained we are asking for the sewer increase because we are subsidizing others and we need to look at that to help offset a lot of our financial needs.

Alderman Anastasia explained he is not supporting this budget because a large number of our residents live below the poverty level and our residents can't afford these costs. He explained he did speak to someone in the Governor's office who did state that we will be getting the Temporary Municipal Assistance at the larger amount in August or September, and he is asking the Council consider using enough funding from that to bring the tax increase down by 2%. He explained those funds were to help ease the burden on our taxpayers. Alderman Keary explained he does not support this budget until we have done all we can to reduce the tax and usage fees and reduce costs for our residents.

There were no sponsors to approve PL #15-26.

4. PL #29-26: (Sherburne) To amend ambulance billing rates in accordance with the schedule provided by Professional Ambulance Billing, LLC.

Chief Maurouard explained he worked with our ambulance billing company to come up with these rates, and they used a software system that compares different municipalities and what they charge. He explained some were significant percentage increases, but this gets us where we need to be and we will have smaller increases in future years. Alderman Anastasia asked if this is paid for by patient's insurance companies. Chief Maurouard explained Medicare and Medicaid pay a set rate that is much less than what is shown on these fee schedules. He explained commercial, VA, auto and comp insurance pay almost this amount, and then sometimes we bill the patient for the copay.

Alderman McCall thanked Chief Maurouard for going out and doing this, as we need to ensure we are not in the business of giving things away and we are balancing out our costs. She explained she appreciates the due diligence in doing this. She explained this helped the Council look at the budget and be able to work towards a better tax rate for residents.

A motion to approve PL #29-26 was made by Alderman McCall, seconded by Alderman Bennion. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried. Referred to Regular Meeting for resolution.

5. PL #30-26: (Sherburne) To authorize the transfer of funds from Capital Fund #255 to line items 3620.440 and 3650.440.

Chief Maurouard explained when he presented his budget, the Council had some questions about the balance of this capital fund. He explained Capital Fund #255, Code Enforcement Cleanup, currently has a balance of just under $105,000. He explained there are two line items that are overspent, and were overspent paying for things this capital fund will be covering. He explained The plan was to use these funds when they were received in order to balance the overspent lines, and the balance remaining will be enough to get started with expenses for the coming year. He explained what is spent will be recouped from bills paid, administrative fees, and tax liens.

A motion to approve PL #30-26 was made by Alderman Robinson, seconded by Alderman Keary. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried. Referred to Regular Meeting for resolution.

6. PL #31-26: (Sherburne) To authorize the transfer of $22,400 from line item 3120.100 to line item 3120.462 for tuition costs for four Police Department employees.

Chief Richardson explained when we received the grant for six new officers, it did not including training. He explained the Alfred academy starts in May and this is the cost for four officers. He explained they will be ready to go on their own after the academy and all field training by the end of December.

A motion to approve PL #31-26 was made by Alderman Bennion, seconded by Alderman Anastasia. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried. Referred to Regular Meeting for resolution.

7. PL #32-26: (Sherburne) To amend the Water and Sewer Infrastructure and Billing Policy to amend the fee for rolling unpaid balances to taxes each year to $500 for commercial and industrial accounts.

Mayor Sherburne explained the existing fee is $250 for residential, commercial, and industrial. She explained hopefully this will be motivation for larger accounts to pay their water bill. Alderman McCall explained she feels this makes a lot of sense, as it is always the same people who are listed over and over who do not pay their bill.

A motion to approve PL #33-26 was made by Alderman McCall, seconded by Alderman Keary. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried. Referred to Regular Meeting for resolution.

8. PL #33-26: (Sherburne) To confirm the Mayoral appointment of Gilbert Witte to the Planning Board.

A motion to approve PL #33-26 was made by Alderman Anastasia, seconded by Alderman Crawford. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried. Referred to Regular Meeting for resolution.

9. PL #34-26: (Sherburne) To confirm the Mayoral appointment of Kathleen Martel to the Planning Board.

A motion to approve PL #34-26 was made by Alderman McCall, seconded by Alderman Forney. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried. Referred to Regular Meeting for resolution.

10. PL #35-26: (Sherburne) To confirm the Mayoral appointment of Alan Bernstein to the Planning Board.

A motion to approve PL #35-26 was made by Alderman Robinson, seconded by Alderman Forney. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried. Referred to Regular Meeting for resolution.

11. PL #36-26: (Sherburne) To authorize the transfer of funds from various Capital Funds to revenue line item A01-4-2020, Community Development.

Mayor Sherburne explained these are capital fund amounts we feel comfortable transferring into the new budget coming up, which fulfils the request of the Oak Hill Funds from the Council and also transfers funds from Tree Pruning and the Times Square Entrance. She explained the funds for the Times Square entrance were being held, as she understands, for a heated ramp, but this will not be realized until we have an HVAC system that can handle that. She explained this is an effort to try to clean up some capital funds that have been existing and have aged out at this point.

Alderman Robinson asked why this is being listed as a revenue, and Mayor Sherburne explained it is coming into the new budget as a revenue for community development. Alderman McCall explained as we included bed tax in the overall budget, we knew we needed to allocate dollars for tourism, and the Mayor wanted to ensure we did this. She explained Ms. Kerper put together an excellent plan that will help us move forward. Alderman Robinson added there are still a few months left this fiscal year we will receive bed tax revenue for. Alderman Crawford asked if this is correct accounting and if it should be in a revenue account. He explained he is not questioning moving the funds, just the account they are being placed into. Mayor Sherburne explained we will need a special reserve for these funds, as well as for the bed tax, to ensure it is correctly allocated. Alderman Bennion asked how it gets from the revenue to the reserve account and Mayor Sherburne explained we will need to create a special reserve line.

Alderman Robinson explained he wants to ensure we earmark these funds and move them to the proper reserve so they are not swallowed up by the General Fund. Alderman McCall asked if this was put in as an expense under Community Development and Mr. Martial explained it is offsetting expenses already in Community Development. Alderman McCall explained this makes it sound like there are no dollars being added for tourist dollars, and the intent is not to use these funds to balance the budget. Ms. Kerper explained the bed tax funds cannot be used to offset salaries and consultant fees, and this would help offset those costs. She explained there will be efforts from Community Development staff and consultants in regards to tourism. Alderman McCall explained the bed tax being included as a revenue was completely absorbed by the budget.

Mayor Sherburne explained she thought about how to title this. She explained a lot of new initiatives have been proposed this past year and there are many initiatives we have started or want t6o move ahead with so we can use these funds rather than letting them sit unused in a capital fund. Alderman Crawford explained this is a revenue account and all money should be earmarked in reserve accounts. He explained he is still confused why this is being listed as a revenue. Mayor Sherburne explained she feels we should come back to this later, as this is not something that has been done since the capital funds were always the methods to put away money, although we have found out that was not the correct method.

A motion to postpone PL #36-26 to the next Committee of the Whole was made by Alderman Robinson, seconded by Alderman Keary. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried.

12. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Alderman Robinson, seconded by Alderman Anastasia. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at approximately 7:00 p.m.