

CITY OPERATIONS

Tuesday, May 5, 2026 – 8:10 p.m.
Council Chambers – Olean Municipal Building

Present: Members: Chairman Bennion, Vice Chairman Anastasia, Alderman Keary, Alderman Crawford, and Alderman McCall. Others: Alderman Forney; Alderman Anastasia; Mayor Amy Sherburne; Lens Martial, City Auditor; Keri Kerper, Community Development Program Coordinator; James Sprague, Director of Public Works; Eric Maurouard, Fire Chief; Ryan Reed, Code Enforcement Officer; Kris Shewairy, Youth and Recreation Division Supervisor, and Tiffany Taylor, Managerial Confidential Administrative Secretary.

1. Roll Call

Alderman Bennion called the meeting to order at 8:10 p.m. and asked that the record show that all committee members were present.

2. Approval of Minutes of the Previous Committee Meeting (Tuesday, February 17, 2026)

A motion to approve the minutes of the February 17, 2026 meeting was made by Alderman Bennion, seconded by Alderman Anastasia. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried,

3. Unfinished Business

a. Fund Transfers Between Departments

Alderman Bennion explained this is the result of a meeting with the State Auditors clarifying that for fiscal responsibility we should look at a PL that requires Council approval to move funds between various departments. He explained each budget section should be considered a different department and fund transfers between them should require Council approval. He explained right now we can transfer funds from Parks to Streets without Council approval, but he would like to change that. He explained right now the Director of Public Works can transfer funds between his different divisions, but he would like to change it so each division is its own budget center and transfers cannot be made between them without Council approval.

A PL and Resolution will be on a future meeting agenda.

b. Salt Shed / City Garage

Director Sprague explained we have the final plans from a design consultant and it will cost around \$200,000 to replace the salt shed. He explained we have not done anything more with that as there was no place \$200,000 would fit within the budget. He recommended going back to a multi-facility review by a design consultant. He explained he has not made any progress on

this RFP, but he feels that is where we should put the emphasis and then review the review results prior to spending \$200,000 to replace the salt shed.

Alderman Bennion asked if this is the cost to replace the current shed where it is, and asked if there is anything that can be done to stabilize the current salt shed to remove the safety hazard. Director Sprague explained the staff at the garage believe there is something that can be done, but in order to determine that, the shed needs to be emptied completely. He explained they were very judicious ordering salt at the end of the season to ensure the reserve on hand is as minimal as possible. He proposes they empty the salt shed, peel off the plywood and see what is going on to see if they can do the repairs to make it a safe structure. He explained he feels it would be good to do this even if we want to move forward with a new garage facility as it will be at least five years down the road before we can be in a new facility. Alderman Bennion asked how long it will take to get a plan to stabilize what is there and Director Sprague explained it will probably be a couple of months. He explained we don't know what is on the inside walls, and need to remove some of the plywood on one side or the other to see the cavity.

Alderman Bennion asked for an update in two months with a plan and cost to stabilize the shed that is currently there.

c. Ash Tree Removal / Reimbursement Issue

Alderman Bennion asked where we are with the ash tree removal, and explained the reimbursement issue was regarding a tree that was removed in the subway. He asked where we are with the inventory and how many trees total were included, compared to how many we have now. Director Sprague explained there are approximately 65 remaining, although we did take a couple down since that count in the parks. He explained the Capital Fund is down to about \$49,000 and it would not cover all 65 trees.

Alderman Robinson explained it was discussed in a prior meeting that there was a resident paid for half the cost of the removal of the tree from their subway and they asked to find out if the tree was included on the ash tree list. He explained if it was, we should have paid the full amount, and if it wasn't, then the money for the City's portion should have been paid from a separate capital fund. Alderman Bennion explained the question is if the ash trees in the subway were included in the ash tree inventory City-wide. Director Sprague explained he believes that is the case, and Alderman Bennion explained that the City then should have paid the full cost to have the tree removed and the resident should not have been charged. Alderman Robinson explained the resident should then be reimbursed, and Alderman Crawford explained he seems to remember the Council committed to take down ash trees that is the City's responsibility. He explained when he voted for that he was under the impression that it was to take down trees in parks and on City property, and if they were in the subway, the tree would qualify instead for the

tree program and the cost would be split 50/50 with the property owner. Alderman Bennion explained the inventory was for any ash tree on City property, and the subway is on City property so it was calculated into that project for the removal of ash trees. Alderman Robinson explained we have to take into consideration that if Alderman Crawford is correct, the money for this tree removal was pulled from the wrong fund. Alderman Crawford explained he understands, but they are talking about two buckets of money when it is really about policy.

Alderman McCall explained the Tree Committee needs to meet again. Alderman Crawford asked if anyone is updating the inventory, and Director Sprague explained the Streets and Parks Supervisor works on that, but as far as updating the list he does not believe so. Alderman Bennion questioned how much funding it would take to remove the rest of the ash trees and why the fund is underfunded. Alderman Keary explained inflation probably plays a key role, and Director Sprague explained he would need to look into this more and get back to the Council. Alderman Bennion asked what the Council would like to do about the reimbursement issue, and Alderman Robinson explained if the money belongs to the constituent, then we should give it back. He explained if it should have been taken from the other capital fund for the Tree Program, then the funds need to be transferred from there back into this capital fund. Alderman McCall asked if this was a dead tree that needed to be removed, and Alderman Robinson explained it was.

Alderman Bennion asked for a follow up on the reimbursement issue in two weeks.

d. Paperless Water Bills

Alderman Robinson explained the City wastes too much on paper. He explained we need to focus on not using so much paper at the City level, and explained water bills are still holding the hands of residents. He explained a lot of people prefer a paper bill, but there are a lot of people who do not want to receive paper bills. He explained he would like to look at a process to move to paperless bills across the board and then have residents sign up to receive a paper bill if they would like to. He explained we will then have a lot less people we are printing bills for, and explained he thinks there is a significant savings there. Alderman McCall explained she feels the most savings would be in postage costs. She explained she feels people should be opting in for paper instead of opting out.

Mr. Volz explained the only thing about using paper is for the secondary option is that first we would need email addresses for everyone. He explained if we don't get emails, then we can't notify them. Alderman Bennion asked how we are going to get emails to go paperless. Mr. Volz explained we can't really discount for paperless billing, but we can charge for paper bills. Alderman Robinson explained he would like to see the City move forward with that. Alderman Robinson explained he pays \$2 for a paper bank statement, so we should charge for paper bills and then encourage people to sign up for paperless billing. Mayor Sherburne explained she will

look into this, and explained it will probably take a few months to start as we put the notices on water bills. Alderman Bennion asked if we can have a plan in place in a month on how to implement this and Mr. Volz explained implementation will not be an issue as we can add a fee and do a notice on the bill that it is coming.

Mayor Sherburne explained we will also be moving to have the fees for credit cards passed along to the user, and we will see about putting this together as well. Alderman Anastasia asked about the people who are on a fixed income without computers, and explained he does not feel we should have this fee. Alderman Bennion explained right now this is just a discussion and we can have that conversation after the Mayor comes back with a plan. Alderman Robinson explained he wants to mention that a lot of people who are older without computers have some type of assistance so they would have a means if they want to do paperless billing. He explained no one is being left behind or excluded.

4. New Referrals for Consideration

a. Front Street / Seneca Avenue Repaving

Alderman Bennion explained he previously met with Director Sprague, Ms. Kerper and Mayor Sherburne stating that both Front Street and Seneca Avenue need to be repaved. He explained very recently there was a Facebook post about hot patching and he asked why we are hot patching something that we will soon be milling and paving. He explained he asked about CHIPS funding and found out Seneca will be repaved from Front Street to King Street, but Front Street is not on there. He asked where we are with this, and explained although it needs a full redevelopment, it will probably be seven years before we can do that and it is one of the top five worst streets in the City. He explained he wants to know why this is not being resurfaced.

Director Sprague explained he believes it was included on the list initially in error, and he apologizes for that. He explained Front Street is admittedly bad, but there are other streets on the list that are judged to be worse. He explained he knows we all want to see a long-term redevelopment of Front Street but we all agree that is many years out. He explained we are trying to take care of what we can on Seneca while still taking care of other streets. He explained if we decide to mill and pave all of Front Street in a particular year, that will be a large chunk of our resurfacing program, and it will be a big commitment that we would need to discuss because other things will not get done in the rest of the City. He explained that is a decision making process that we need to wrestle with. Alderman Bennion explained he would challenge to find other streets that are worse than Front Street. He explained the Council previously discussed ancillary streets and avenues, and using a company that comes in to oil and stone them that would make our money go a bit further. He explained it is disappointing to learn that we don't want to do that. He explained money is tight, but we are not looking for ways to stretch it.

Alderman Robinson explained he is not a fan of the oil and stone, although it may be fine for smaller streets. He explained the Council received a document on how roads were inspected, graded and so forth, and he doesn't understand how Front Street is not on the top of the list of worst streets. He explained the fact that the street will cost so much might be why the City continues to punt it down the road. He explained he understands we are trying to get as many streets done as possible, but this is negatively affecting a main artery in the City. He explained one year we will essentially have to dedicate all of our funding to get Front Street done and hold off on the other roads for a year.

Alderman Bennion explained the idea with the CHIPS funding is to get streets fixed before they are where Front Street is, but that street has been punted so many times, we have to do something. He explained we need to resurface it. Alderman McCall explained the Council previously asked why some streets were redone and some weren't, and the Council was given a large document without explanation. She noted this predates the current Mayor and Director. She explained what the Council was given did not give them the information that was truly needed.

Alderman Crawford explained he does not envy having to stretch CHIPS funding while it never goes up despite increasing costs. He explained he knows we have talked internally about the extra funds we are receiving from New York State, but we struggle spending something like that on depreciating roads. He explained he would be willing to forego paving of streets in his ward so that Front Street can get done this year. He explained it is important for the City to maintain its largest, most traveled roads in the City, and Front Street is one of them. He is not saying other roads should not get done, but they can wait until next year. He explained the main arteries into and around the City need to be maintained better. He explained the underpass on Buffalo Street should be mill and paved as well, not just patched up. He explained he knows there was an argument about who owns that portion of the roadway but it looks terrible when people come into the City and that is the first thing they run into. He asked for a quote to mill and pave Front Street. Alderman Bennion asked if this could be brought back to the Council and Director Sprague explained he would provide that, as well as the CHIPS list of streets.

5. Committee Reports

None

6. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by alderman Bennion, seconded by Alderman McCall. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at approximately 8:55 p.m.