



Onondaga County Legislature

JAMIE McNAMARA
Clerk

TIMOTHY T. BURTIS
Chairman

TAMMY BARBER
Deputy Clerk

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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION COMMITTEE MINUTES – FEBRUARY 18, 2025 JULIE ABBOTT, CHAIR

MEMBERS PRESENT: Dr. Kelly, Ms. Cody, Mr. Brown

MEMBERS ABSENT: Mr. Romeo

ALSO ATTENDING: Chairman Burtis; also see attached list

Chair Abbott called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m. and the previous meeting’s minutes were approved.

1. ONONDAGA COUNTY WATER AUTHORITY (OCWA):

a. **Confirming Appointment to the Onondaga County Water Authority (John Dougherty)** (Sponsored by Mr. Burtis)

- Former Legislator and previous vice chair came off the board

A motion was made by Ms. Cody, seconded by Dr. Kelly, to approve this item. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED

2. OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENT: Elizabeth Bough Martin, Director

a. **BOND: A Resolution Authorizing Ash Tree Management in and for the County of Onondaga, New York, at a Maximum Estimated Cost of \$750,000, and Authorizing the Issuance of \$750,000 Bonds of Said County to Pay Costs Thereof (\$750,000)**

CAPITAL PROJECTS

Ash Tree Management

DEPARTMENT: Office of the Environment
PROJECT TYPE: Environment & Sustainability
PROJECT STATUS: Ongoing
BUDGET STATUS: Partially Authorized
PHASE STATUS: Implementing



SUMMARY

Emerald Ash Borer (EAB), an invasive species of beetle that kills ash trees, arrived in the U.S. around 2002 and is spreading across the Country. The beetle is already infesting ash trees in Onondaga County. One in nine trees in Onondaga County is an ash tree.

FUNDING BY SOURCE (000's)

<i>SOURCE</i>	<i>Prior</i>	<i>2025</i>	<i>2026</i>	<i>2027</i>	<i>2028</i>	<i>2029</i>	<i>2030</i>	<i>6-Year</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Authorized Borrowing</i>	<i>4,050</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<i>4,050</i>
<i>Borrowing to Authorize</i>	-	<i>750</i>	<i>750</i>	<i>750</i>	<i>750</i>	-	-	<i>3,000</i>	<i>3,000</i>
<i>Cash for Capital</i>	<i>250</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<i>250</i>
<i>TOTALS</i>	<i>4,300</i>	<i>750</i>	<i>750</i>	<i>750</i>	<i>750</i>	-	-	<i>3,000</i>	<i>7,300</i>

SCOPE & DETAILS

Onondaga County has developed and is implementing an Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) management strategy in order to minimize the hazard risk to the community, the impact of EAB on County operations and to plan for and minimize EAB costs (tree removal/inoculation, manpower and equipment, disposal and tree replacement). All County-owned ash trees with potential targets in the drop zone (people or physical assets) will need to be removed or inoculated to protect the public, protect assets and reduce liability.

The County owns approximately 300 parcels of land covering roughly 8,000 acres (including parkland, water supply and wastewater treatment plants, drainage districts, pumping stations, radio towers and institutional campuses for uses including administration, correctional facilities, emergency response operations and more) and nearly 800 miles of highway rights-of-way. These properties are home to tens of thousands of ash trees. Steps must be taken by the County to ensure that the threat of harm to humans and/or damage to County-owned property is minimized, that the public cost of managing affected trees on County-owned property is minimized and that overall disruption in the community is minimized (including tree replacement needs). To this end the County has taken the following steps:

- 1) Conducted an inventory of ash trees on County-owned property*
- 2) Managing ash trees on county owned properties (treating or removing)*
- 3) Helping organize a community-wide task force to coordinate a Community EAB Management Strategy.*

The inventory of ash trees (location, size, health, nearby targets) was initiated in 2012 and was completed in 2014. Early management efforts have been aimed at removing priority hazard trees, and damaged trees that are likely to become priority hazard trees in critical areas.

Onondaga County will implement a balanced or “selective” ash tree management strategy. The benefit of this balanced approach is that management of ash trees can be optimized at each location, preserving tree functions where they provide the greatest value, restoring lost canopy over time in other locations, and preemptively removing less valuable trees before they become a safety hazard. Since the program's inception the following has been accomplished (as of December 2023):

- 1) Preemptive removal of approximately 25,590 ash trees over a period of 10 years.*
- 2) Replacement of approximately 3,270 non-ash trees in 59 different species*
- 3) Preservation of 393 ash trees through injection treatment.*

To carry out the County's Ash Tree Management Strategy, the County Office of Environment has continued to renew its agreement with the Onondaga County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) to prepare bid documents, administer contracts with vendors and to oversee tree removal and replacement. The SWCD has also assist the County with other EAB associated activities such as monitoring for infestations, and held 16 community outreach and engagement events.

When this project started the projected cost to carry out the County's ash tree management strategy over 25 years was \$15.8 million. At this point, due to more competitive bidding as well as saving due to the fact that we are not hiring outside contractors for inoculating the trees, we have reduced the total cost of the project to about \$8 million.

Total Cost of project for tree removal, tree replacement, tree inoculation, and administrative/oversight costs (over 10 years): \$3.51 million

Annual tree removal, tree replacement, tree inoculation, and administrative/oversight costs: \$0.75 million Estimated total cost (over 25 years): \$10 million.

In spring 2025 we intend to seek legislative authorization for \$750,000.

- Ash Tree Management has been going on for several years
- Emerald Ash borer (EAB) (exotic beetle) came through Onondaga County and decimated it
- Onondaga County chose to do a proactive management plan that addresses the hazard trees impacted by EAB
- Continuing to treat 591 trees (not the original 591); some have been taken out of the program
- Some of the saplings not counted in original inventory have reached a stage where they can be treated and continue on
- Ash is a fast-growing program
- Where trees have been taken out, ben planting of non-Ash trees have been planted
- Office of Environment manages the program
- Soil & Water Conservation District does the contracting
 - Coordinates the tree planting
 - Coordinate with Consultants doing the injections
- Last year almost 5,000 trees were removed (still a few years left of this program)

Questions/Comments from the Committee

- What areas are trees getting the injections?
 - In the big parks, when trees are taken out they are replanted with non-native
 - At the edges where there is no mowing is where the saplings are taking off
 - Ash a fast growing tree, able to capture and treat them
 - 590 trees staying in treatment
 - Injection is every 3 years
- Soil & Water started putting up educational signs as to why they are taking down trees
- Communication is an important piece of the program
 - Have not done any outreach in the last couple of years
 - Talked about some type of messaging to remind people and to share successes
 - The fact that there are still young Ash Trees because of this management plan says a lot
 - Hopefully long enough for the Parasitic Wasp to be developed
 - There may still be Ash Trees to be saved with natural treatment (wasp) that will kill or eat the Ash Borer
- In the past there was a voluntary program sent to villages/towns to opt in, is there any plan to do that again?
 - The bonding is for County land
 - Will take note of this
 - One thing that the office is doing is a tree canopy assessment
 - Talked to towns of VanBuren and Lysander; they are also taking down trees
 - Everybody wants to plant trees
 - Trying to work together to do tree planting; hope to move forward with this

A motion was made by Ms. Cody, seconded by Mr. Brown, to approve this item. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED

3. WATER ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION: Shannon Harty, Commissioner
a. 2024 Transfer Resolution (\$35,000)

MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

Title: AMENDING THE 2024 COUNTY BUDGET TO PROVIDE FOR THE TRANSFER OF FUNDS FROM SALARIES TO PAY FOR ADDITIONAL COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH INCREASED SLUDGE/BIOSOLID DISPOSAL

Purpose: WEP is seeking to transfer funds from Regular Salaries to All Other Expenses for the supplementary costs associated with unpredicted sludge/biosolid disposal. Sludge/biosolid disposal costs have increased due to delays in getting the Metro WWTP sludge dryer fully operational which has resulted in unbudgeted expenses. A transfer of funds is requested in the amount of \$35,000.

Summary: The 2024 410 – All Other Expenses budget assumed that the Metro Sludge Dryer would be fully functional by the end of Q1 2024. The dryer, when operational, will remove significant amounts of water from the waste biosolids reducing the tonnage of material to be disposed at a landfill. Unforeseen delays in getting the sludge dryer fully functional has regrettably increased the removal costs for sludge/biosolids resulting in costs exceeding the 2024 Supplies and Materials Budget. To cover costs already incurred, as well as costs projected through the end of this year, a transfer of \$35,000 is being requested for the 410 – All Other Expenses account from 101 – Regular Salaries.

Fiscal Impact: This will have no impact on the budget – net \$0.

- End of year close out (clean up)
- There was a budget transfer done last October/November related to the Sludge Dryer, and was \$35K short
- Looking for authorization to transfer from salaries (there is a surplus) into the 410 account to cover additional overage
- **Questions/Comments from the Committee**
- Is it operational now?
 - Yes, still working through the safety issues to get it up and running
 - Had it running; some of the issues are environmental stuff, so doing a lot of environmental testing

A motion was made by Dr. Kelly, seconded by Ms. Cody, to approve this item. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.

Meeting was adjourned at 1:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



DEBBIE KAMINSKI, Assistant Clerk
 Onondaga County Legislature

ATTENDANCE

COMMITTEE: ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION COMMITTEE
 DATE: FEBRUARY 18, 2025

NAME (Please Print)	DEPARTMENT/AGENCY
TAVIA HUGHES	Financial Operations
MARCY ZIMMERMAN	OEED
ELIZABETH BOUGH MANTI	Office of the Environment
Kyle Cody	" "
Dan Meluhoff	DMB
Darcie Lesniak	Leg
Jim Brown	Leg
Shannon Harty	WEP
John DeSantis	Leg
Ben Yans	Law
Ryan Ockenden	Law