



Onondaga County Legislature

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Chairman

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COUNTY FACILITIES COMMITTEE MINUTES – SEPTEMBER 13, 2021 DEBRA J. CODY, CHAIR

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mrs. Tassone, Ms. Kuhn, Mrs. Ervin

MEMBERS ABSENT: Mr. Bush

ALSO ATTENDING: Mr. Knapp, also see attached

Chair Cody called the meeting to order at 10:32 a.m. *A motion was made by Mrs. Ervin, seconded by Ms. Kuhn, to waive the reading and approve the minutes of the previous committee meeting. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.*

1. **FACILITIES MANAGEMENT:** Archie Wixson, Commissioner

a. **INFORMATIONAL: 2021 Budget update**

- Having a difficult year, but getting things done; staff putting in extra effort, getting the hours in; shorthanded - couple of operations positions, trying to get by, dodging some of the complaints
- Labor lines in budget are going to be ok with 101 coming through the end of the year
- Going to be short in 102 - transfer some of the 101 money to 102 because retirement positions vacant; did not have an opportunity to fill the vacant positions; caused some excess in overtime
- Will take some 101 savings and move it into the overtime budget
- Running short on cost of mail room posting; reduced posting because Facilities has their own posting operation - when the city puts out bulk mailing (different pandemic postings, taxes), Facilities team has to cover it
- Another round this fall; will need to move money from 413 account to cover that
- Guard service contract renewal came up end of July; will have to see where there is any excess in any other accounts; no way to predict; based on a prevailing wage; do not get a year advance notice; know at that time what the contract is worth; several dollars an hour more than it was last year
- Premier projects are all going well; NBT stadium projects have had a high end success; fantastic projects for parks
- Completed 2nd floor of the Civic Center; small delay at the end because had to have additional consideration about distancing and requirements that are happening now for the barriers
- Paused a few projects with program renovations - renovations to the DEC Clinic, Children & Family Services
- Overflow will go down in the Civic Center basement and Social Services, Ms. Merrick's programs revolve around Jobs Plus, which will move Jobs Plus out of the County Office Building to newly renovated space
- Move staff and operations from 3rd floor of Civic Center to 4th floor County Office Building; move Jobs Plus fully to Civic Center; keep all of Public Services in the lower floors, easier to control, a little reconfiguration
- Kick off will be January of this year, all of the preliminary planning for that is happening right now

Chair Cody asked if all the moving around was in the plan for this year, or if it was COVID related? Mr. Wixson stated that it was not COVID related. This is an efficiency within relationship between Social Services and the Jobs Plus Program.

Chair Cody asked if what they have projected for this year will be completed by the end of the year? Mr. Wixson replied that they are strategic in capital investments being essential, they can only pause them for so long, and they need to deliver them.

Chair Cody thanked Mr. Wixson for the tours of NBT Stadium. Any preview for anything next year? Mr. Wixson stated there is a laundry list of initiatives that are throughout Onondaga County.

Mrs. Ervin thanked Mr. Wixson for all that his department does. She said she was at NBT Bank for a graduation, and she noticed the wonderful seating area with handicap seating and tables. It was very nice. Mrs. Ervin asked what Mr. Wixson envisions in terms of staffing going forward. Mr. Wixson's response was inaudible.

Ms. Kuhn said she appreciates what he has done; especially the lines in the parking garage. For projects, will the Legislature be getting information at budget? Mr. Wixson responded:

- Will have excess in 101, which will cover shortfall in 102; already transferred funds to cover increase in postage
- Had to move money from one account to cover contract increases - guard service and trash removal services
- Holding back from any investments; not buying new flowers or truckloads of mulch; staying within boundaries

Chairman Knapp also thanked Mr. Wixson and asked him if he will be on budget at the end of the year. Mr. Wixson replied that it will be very close; down to dollars and cents.

Dr. Chase asked if they are hiring to bring the positions up to where they need to be. Mr. Wixson said not at this time. Only open positions are two due to a transfer; filled those. Mr. Wixson stated that he has not been able to refund any of the vacancies left unfunded from the austerity budget. Mr. Wixson replied to Dr. Chase that Facilities had two volunteer folks that requested furlough for family and personal reasons. Dr. Chase asked if they are back, and Mr. Wixson said that one is back and one has left the area.

Chairman Knapp said he knows they have a plumber retiring, and asked if they will be able to fill it. Mr. Wixson replied that is funded in the budget. Chairman Knapp wanted to clarify that he is not in a hiring freeze and that it's within his budget constraints.

2. PARKS AND RECREATION: Brian Kelley, Commissioner

a. INFORMATIONAL: 2021 Budget update

- 2021 an extension of 2020 with COVID restrictions; 2nd year of an austerity budget
- Not able to do everything; all building hours were modified; all programs and events were put on halt
- Did have Golden Harvest this past weekend, went pretty well; great to get back out there for the community
- Several parks are on pace to meet or exceed their admission revenue expectations

2021 Park Accomplishments:

Beaver Lake Nature Center

- The Nature Center once again saw an amazing increase in attendance
- Nature Center able to offer a wide variety of daily educational and recreational programs including snowshoe hikes, Nature Camp, and the Golden Harvest Festival
- Due to their popularity in 2020, the Nature Center continued to offer online workshops, virtual hikes and canoe tours for our visitors; mostly all can be done virtually; fantastic thinking out of the box from Heidi and her staff

Carpenter's Brook Fish Hatchery

- In its 87th year of operation; stocked over 60,000 brook, brown and rainbow trout (110% of the NYSDEC recommendations); Mr. Stanczyk and his team did a fantastic job
- Did not use as many volunteers as in the past due to COVID; own staff prioritized by using resource sharing
- Able to continue to educate and promote responsible use of the fisheries through programs like Time Out to Fish (27th year), school tours, and events like Sportsmen Day on September 25

Highland Forest Park

- With tremendous winter weather Highland Forest had an extremely busy season, even though the Lodge and equipment rentals were closed; used online registration and a newly constructed ticket booth at the trail head
- Sold over 868 ski season passes and approximately 250 annual (non-skiing) season passes; a record year
- Completed various trail upgrades and prep for several Capital Improvement Projects for Scout Camps
- Will start in fall including: Valley Camp main cabin, Carpenter Shop roof replacements, Sawmill building fascia and soffit replacement, Carpenter Shop windows, all Mill Yard building doors replaced, and boilers will be replaced

Jamesville Beach Park

- Beach not open in 2021; shelter reservations, off leash dog area and play structure (completed in June) remained popular
- In September and October, Jamesville Beach will host their first two events of the year
- Canine Carnival, which typically sees over 10,000 visitors and their furry friends and the second Halloween at the Park, which will feature an extended trail and several new features

Onondaga Lake Park (includes NBT Bank Stadium, Hopkins Road Park, and Amphitheater)

- The 2020-2021 season of Lights on the Lake saw the highest attendance ever with over 56,000 cars; provided a safe outlet for families that had been stuck in their homes due to COVID
- Charity night drive-thru's (7 nights) raised over \$16k with 2,500 vehicles benefitting several local nonprofit groups
- Galaxy Communication and Parks worked together to find an alternative for the very popular city event, Taste of Syracuse, which was cancelled this year due to COVID
- Taste of Syracuse Picnics in the Park brought out 200-500 people each Thursday from June 10th - September 2nd for a safe and socially distanced picnic lunch with live acoustic music
- Additionally, Onondaga Lake Park welcomed back several walks, runs and events including the Syracuse Workforce Run, the Chocolate Challenge, ARC Race, Long Branch Food Truck Rodeo, Wild Carp Classic and the Parkway Bizarre
- A number of preventive maintenance and capital improvement projects were completed throughout 2021 at Onondaga Lake Park including the repaving of part of West Shore Trail, water line replacements, electrical infrastructure improvements, and various painting and asphalt replacement projects
- Onondaga Lake park sees a million visitors a year
- Lakeview Amphitheater saw its first concert on July 8th; total of 13 concerts scheduled ending in mid-October

Oneida Shores Park

- Following COVID 19, many visitors took up camping as a new recreational hobby
- Oneida Shores campground benefited from a record number of reservations throughout its 2021 season with several of the weekends being completely sold out
- Welcomed hundreds of boaters and 14 fishing tournaments including the Basspro Bassmaster Open - largest event featuring 250 professional fisherman, each with an amateur co-angler representing 35 states and 2 countries
- Several events returned in 2021 including Hobie Cat Regatta, Swamp Rat 5K Race, VW Club Car Show, and scheduled in December is the Special Olympics Polar Plunge
- In June, Onondaga County offered a Lifeguard Certification Class to help assist with the problem of the lifeguard shortage in the county; program certified 15 lifeguards, 4 of which were hired for Oneida Shores Park
- Other 11 lifeguards from the class were hired by other Parks Departments including Syracuse City Parks allowing them the opportunity to open additional pools throughout the city and county

Pratt's Falls Park

- With people getting out more to walk and hike in the outdoors, Pratt's Falls attendance continued to boom
- In 2021, the annual Biathlon Club clinic and race came; Camp Brockway and shelter reservations rose as COVID restrictions lifted
- Several preventative maintenance projects including trail & culvert repairs, road and parking lot resurfacing were completed

Veterans & Loomis Hill Cemeteries

- The Memorial Day Ceremony at the Veterans Cemetery proved to be a great success; several hundred spectators and speakers paid their respects to our Veterans

- 232 burials at the Veterans Cemetery, and 65 burials at the Loomis Hill Cemetery; planning and engineering has begun for both a new monument at the entrance to the cemetery and for the upcoming expansion project
- On August 12, 2021, the newly renovated Chapel was dedicated as the "Gordon Lane Memorial Chapel," after the passing of Gordie Lane, a long-time Veterans advocate

Rosamond Gifford Zoo

- The Animal Health Center project continued throughout 2021, completion date by late October; animal medical facility will allow the zoo to share with the public all they do for the care of the animals at the zoo
- It demonstrates our continuing collaboration with the Cornell College of Veterinary Medicine, which helps both to meet a shared primary goal: education and encouragement of future generations of animal care professionals
- Thousands of children and adults have participated in the educational programming; includes several types of themed camps, Zoo-To-You virtual programs, twilight evening programs and Adventure Academy
- New animal (camel, elephant, penguin, etc.) encounters were instituted to enhance visitor experiences with animals
- Several animals born this year including a Gila Monster (first time for the zoo), 6 Markhor goats, a White-lipped deer, and two penguins; also renovated/added new species to three aquariums in the cave area
- As part of CIP plan, the main support beams throughout the domestic animal barn were replaced; cyberlock and security cameras were installed; new security system will monitor all access points into the zoo, gates, doors and animal enclosures for safety

Mr. Kelley stated that in terms of the budget, they are on target and within it. He said they will be able to stay on track this year because they are not doing everything. The 2022 budget will reflect all of those things being open and the parks department being at full tilt.

Chair Cody thanked Mr. Kelley and his team for everything they do. She said she is hoping to get to Highland Forest next month. Chair Cody asked if his staffing level is down. Mr. Kelley replied, yes, the staffing level is down. They have some positions that they are trying to fill this year. In the 2022 budget, Mr. Kelley said they made some staffing requests for Onondaga Lake Park and the Zoo; that footprint is growing on a regular basis. Mr. Kelley stated that Onondaga Lake Park is really two parks; East shore trail and West shore trail. Since the Amphitheater was constructed, they really only hired one person. Chair Cody asked if the animal center at the Zoo is opening in late October, and Mr. Kelley replied yes.

Mrs. Ervin asked if they have enough staff to do more with the spacing of the burials and will that be corrected going forward. Mr. Kelley responded:

- They have enough people to do what they are doing on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday's.
- 3 fulltime staff and 1 part-time staff member; condensing burials on Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday's allows staff to be there all day and do that; Monday and Friday's able to send staff to different parks to do different things
- Also, able to take care of grounds a lot better than in the past
- With COVID, this could be a good template going forward; worked with the Funeral Directors and been able to accommodate folks after the fact; if ever there is an issue, will work with folks

The meeting was adjourned at 11:13 a.m.

ATTENDANCE

Respectfully submitted,

COMMITTEE: COUNTY FACILITIES COMMITTEE
DATE: SEPTEMBER 13, 2021

Debbie Kaminski

DEBBIE KAMINSKI, Assistant Clerk
Onondaga County Legislature

NAME (Please Print)	DEPARTMENT/AGENCY
<i>Bill Kelly</i>	<i>Parks</i>
<i>Jennifer Falcono</i>	<i>Parks</i>
<i>Tenisha Murphy</i>	<i>CE office</i>
<i>Archie Wixson</i>	<i>fec.</i>
<i>Tim Frateschi</i>	<i>Leg.</i>
<i>Ryan Frantzis</i>	<i>Leg.</i>
<i>John DeSantis</i>	<i>Leg.</i>