THE GENEVA CITY COUNCIL

JOURNAL OF PROCEEDINGS

SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING

OCTOBER 7, 2025 – 6:00 PM

City Hall – 2nd Floor Council Chambers
47 Castle Street
Geneva, NY 14456

Presiding – Steve Valentino, Mayor

1. EXECUTIVE SESSION

ACTION TAKEN by Clr. Petropoulos; seconded by Clr. Brenan
MOVED THAT council move to executive session at 5:34 to discuss the employment of a particular person
MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (5-4 absent)

ACTION TAKEN by Clr. Gillotte; seconded by Clr. Brennan
MOVED THAT council exit executive session at 5:46pm
MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (6-3 absent)

2. ROLL CALL

Present:	Clr. Petropoulos, Clr. Gillotte, Clr. Grimaldi (arrived at 6:00), Clr. Pealer, Clr. Lavin (arrived at 5:45), Clr. Brennan,
Absent:	Clr. Whitfield, Clr. Moracco

3. AMENDMENT TO THE AGENDA

ACTION TAKEN by Mayor Valentino; seconded by Clr. Petropoulos
MOVED THAT the agenda be amended to add a resolution rescinding the authorization of the sale of parcel number 104.8-1-34 to Home Leasing
MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (7-2 absent)

4. RESOLUTION – Rescinding Resolution Authorizing Sale of Parcel Number 104.8-1-34 to Home Leasing

City Manager Hendrix presented the following resolution:

WHEREAS, the City of Geneva previously adopted a resolution authorizing the sale of Parcel Number 104.8-1-34 to Home Leasing, following review by the Property Acquisition and Disposition Committee and a public hearing; and
WHEREAS, the terms of the proposed sale included a purchase price of $70,000, a non-refundable $2,500 deposit, and a due-diligence period of up to three years with additional non-refundable deposits; and
WHEREAS, Home Leasing has informed the City that they will not proceed with the Jackson Street site, citing challenges in the current development environment, including impacts from federal policies on tax credit pricing and investor interest, concerns regarding density and local funding for project feasibility, and uncertainty following recent hearings for other local projects; and

WHEREAS, Home Leasing has expressed their appreciation for the City's support and encouragement of development in Geneva and suggested that the site remains a consideration for future Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) applications; and
WHEREAS, the City Council has determined that proceeding with the sale under the previously authorized terms is no longer in the best interest of the City;
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the City Council of the City of Geneva hereby rescinds the prior resolution authorizing the sale of Parcel Number 104.8-1-34 to Home Leasing; and
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the City Manager is directed to take any necessary administrative actions to formally terminate negotiations or contracts related to this proposed sale and to report back to City Council regarding any implications for the City's property portfolio, grant programs, or future disposition of this parcel.

Councilor Pealer wondered if the City has heard a reason for the sale being rescinded. City Manager Hendrix explained that funding at the federal and state level and site challenges were driving forces in Home Leasing's decision, and noted that they remain committed to working with the City in the future. Councilor Lavin called this a terrible loss for the City, and a major step backwards with the City's housing problems. Councilor Petropoulos recalled Home Leasing sharing at a recent community meeting that they'd come up with alternative designs, and said he wasn't surprised given that the project needed 10-20 variances. City Manager Hendrix clarified that the project didn't go to Planning or Zoning Boards, and never asked for any variances.

ACTION TAKEN by Clr. Pealer; seconded by Clr. Gillotte
MOVED THAT this resolution be approved
ROLL CALL VOTE: Aye - Clr. Petropoulos, Clr. Gillotte, Clr. Grimaldi, Clr. Pealer, Clr. Brennan, Mayor Valentino
Nay - Clr. Lavin
MOTION CARRIED (6-1-2 absent)

5. PRESENTATION – 2026 Budget

City Manager Hendrix provided a revenue overview. She explained that property taxes are the main revenues for the City, funding all of general services including Police, DPW, and Administration. She explained that sales tax is volatile, due to economic activity. She then reviewed other funding streams including State Aid including AIM funding, CHIPS funding, and state grants; user fees and charges in water and sewer funds, recreation fees, PILOTS, federal grants, fines, interest and miscellaneous income. City Manager Hendrix also explained the process to increase or change occupancy taxes related to short term rentals, which is a local decision, followed by state legislation.
Comptroller Blowers reviewed employee benefits, noting a pretty substantial increase from 2025 to 2026, which is consistent with other municipalities and private businesses alike. He explained that being part of the Consortium is keeping increases lower than going it alone, and reviewed the percentage of healthcare costs overall. Councilor Pealer asked for a chart demonstrating those percentages. Councilor Brennan wondered what the percentage of increases are between 2025 and 2026.
City Manager Hendrix reviewed cost containment measures for 2026. She explained that some costs, like retirement are beyond the City's control, and that bargaining unit contracts commit the City to a certain percentage of healthcare costs. She reiterated that the Consortium provided an increase that is lower than anticipated by increasing premium costs for certain plans, changes in preventative care versus emergency care costs, driving people to seek preventative care, and avoiding catastrophic claims; savings have been realized from changing prescription plans as well. City Manager Hendrix explained that all of these costs are factored into contract negotiations, taking into account what the City anticipates those costs to be. Mayor Valentino shared that this information can be found on Budget Book page 17. Councilor Gillotte wondered if the Consortium is forecasting for 2027. City Manager Hendrix confirmed that they are, noting that these healthcare increases are something that wasn't seen pre pandemic, and that projections remain high now three to five years out.

Comptroller Blowers reviewed the pressure created by maintaining staffing levels, especially if revenues don't meet projections. He explained that the first thing the City would do in the event of a revenue shortfall is look at deferring larger purchases, not reductions in staffing. If deeper adjustments are required, the city would prioritize deferring hiring, modify schedules to reduce overtime, and prioritize essential services.

City Manager Hendrix noted the attorney line increase in the 2026 budget for retainers with two law firms. Year to date spending as of September 1, 2025 has been $247.500, explaining that she is anticipating litigation increases for 2026. Councilor Pealer requested an executive session on some of that material.

Comptroller Blowers reviewed grants, noting that a presentation will be scheduled for an upcoming council meeting. He explained that Geneva has been awarded $2 million in grant funding this year, for housing, economic development, and infrastructure. Matching requirements differ by program, some are a 100% match, it differs depending on the grant. A key opportunity in 2026 will be to establish alignment in the capital plan with grant opportunities. Councilor Lavin noted that the CDBG is treated like a regular grant, but it's different, and has a range of possible uses. He noted that it was thrown at the fire truck recently, but would like to see this grant applied for with specific uses. City Manager Hendrix explained that the City was advised by the State to use this funding for one large purchase, the fire truck, rather than several smaller purchases, noting that he would have rather reduced taxes by using that funding for something else. City Manager Hendrix explained the process, and alignment with the Comprehensive Plan for grant applications. Mayor Valentino explained that the CDBG and BEST grant programs won't necessarily reduce taxes, but getting grant funding for a fire truck does impact the tax rate.

City Manager Hendrix then reviewed consulting service lines, noting that baseline budgeting isn't happening. In some cases, the city may use the same consultants year over year, as projects progress. Councilor Gillotte asked for a clear definition of "consultant." City Manager Hendrix explained that the term is outside contractor in City language, the question was called consultant. She explained that the City utilizes outside contractors for specialized services like engineering, and electrician, among other things.

Chief Eveland reviewed cost savings if the city eliminated the police spots held by suspended officers. Chief Eveland explained that the Police Department currently has 36.5 FTE's. He also explained that if any positions were eliminated, overtime would increase. Councilor Pealer wondered if removing positions of officers on leave was allowable. Chief Eveland confirmed that you cannot, City Manager explained that this was just a response to a question from a council member. Councilor Lavin noted that his question isn't about the police departments performance, he's looking at difficult decisions, as he believes the city won't be able to pay employees in a few years and keep up the level of service provided now. Chief Eveland reviewed challenges in focusing attention on smaller infractions when officers are moving from call to call during their shifts.

Chief Eveland reviewed the Police Department's annual calls for service, noting a dip in 2021, because there was less proactive enforcement. In 2023 there were 35,203 calls for service, and in 2024 37,083, based on year to date numbers, Chief Eveland is projecting 35-40,000 calls for service by the end of this year. He explained that making an arrest is a lot different now than it was years ago; officers are off the road two or more hours. Councilor Pealer wondered what the impact is of bail reform? Chief Eveland explained that he doesn't have those numbers, and will get them from the state. He also shared that the Police Department's annual report breaks down the types and number of calls for service. Councilor Lavin wondered if violent crime is trending down. Chief Eveland believes that it remains flat. Councilor Grimaldi wondered how many officers and supervisors work each day. During the day the Chief, two Lieutenants, one Sergeant, and a minimum of 2-3 Officers are on duty, depending on time of day, Chief Eveland would like to see the daytime Officer number at 3-4. Councilor Petropoulos wondered what the requested part time Officer's duties might entail. Chief Eveland explained that civil paperwork post arrest is prepared timely, and correct, the part time employee would do this, function as a liaison between the Police Department, City Court and DA's Office, explaining that it would free up an Officer on the road. Councilor Pealer noted that previous Council abolished two positions, and wondered if Council is the only way to bring back those positions. City Manager Hendrix explained that those positions would have to be funded in the budget, then be brought back, noting that two positions were unfunded, and two were abolished. Chief Eveland explained that the Police Department hasn't had a Youth Officer for the past five years, serving the Family Services Unit, or a Narcotics Officer. Currently there is just one detective working in the Narcotics Unit. Councilor Pealer said that he would entertain putting both back in the budget. Councilor Lavin noted that there is still an investigation, and it's hard to support what the Police Department is doing

without more information. Chief Eveland explained that he could explain a little bit more in executive session, noting that what happened wasn't preventable by him. He also noted, as a testament to the Geneva Police Department that the City is getting lateral transfer applications despite the "black eye" described by Councilor Lavin.
Chief Eveland reviewed Police vehicle conditions. He explained that he wanted to request four replacement vehicles in the 2026 budget, and that the City Manager forwarded two marked patrol vehicles and one unmarked car in the budget. Chief Eveland explained the move to Dodge vehicles, noting that there have been a lot of maintenance issues with them. He'd like to get those out while the City can get a higher return on them. Councilor Pealer wondered if the City will move away from Chryslers. Chief Eveland explained that it takes about 10 months to get vehicles upfitted and marked. Chief Eveland also noted that Dodge Chargers at 60-80,000 miles are having mechanical issues, as well as the Durango's. He noted that with the move to 12 hour shifts the vehicles are on for 24 hours, there isn't a rotation anymore for them, with 15-18,000 miles going on cars monthly, and lots of wear and tear. Councilor Pealer recalled the delay of the purchase of a new vehicle. He wondered what options three are aside from Dodge. Chief Eveland explained that a lot of agencies are going to Tahoe's, which handle well and have a lot of space, however they are a little big for the City of Geneva. Explorers perform well, and have enough storage for the officers as well. City Manager explained that a marked vehicle is budgeted at $65,000 all in, and explained the procurement process.
Chief Eveland responded to e bike concerns. He explained that these issues won't go away, rather, they are becoming more accessible, and a cheaper transpiration option. He believes that education and enforcement are the best options. Councilor Brennan wondered if the City could create ordinances to assist the Police Department in dealing with e bikes. Chief Eveland said that council could further regulate their use, but he'd need people to enforce it, and he doesn't know if it would bring more compliance. Councilor Brennan asked Chief Eveland to bring any help he may need to council. Councilor Pealer supports Councilor Brennan's comments, and would like to see e bikes licensed, like mopeds. Councilor Pealer wondered if the vehicle replacement schedule is on track, after pulling a replacement last year. City Manager Hendrix explained that the Police Department mostly on schedule.
Assistant City Manager Youngs explained that there isn't one line item for all City events. She is exploring an events ordinance, looking at coordinating, permitting, funding, and accounting for all of those expenses, and recovering them as the City puts events on. She hopes to create a more proactive approach to events, bigger, better, well supported, and accounting for event costs. She explained that economic development remains stagnant, day to day efforts focus on grant administration and the Farmer's Market. She pointed out that in the 2026 budget the City is looking to revamp the Comprehensive Plan, to ground grant applications, align with new zoning laws, and economic development, among other things. Councilor Pealer wondered about .5 FTE staff, shared between departments? Assistant City Manager Youngs explained the Community Vitality Coordinator, who will work part in Recreation, and part time in Economic Development. Councilor Pealer wondered about downtown businesses, who affirm that downtown events are important to their businesses, as he sees Geneva becoming a pocket event community. He recalled a mobile event trailer in the Town of Webb, wondering if that's an investment to look into or look for grant funding for. City Manager Hendrix explained that the City has some of that equipment, and provides it to events. She wondered what Council wants to give to events, and what the return on investment might be. She stressed that all events are treated the same, with consistent practice. Councilor Pealer would like to see more event spaces used in the City. Councilor Lavin wondered if there is PILOT money coming in from the Legin property. Comptroller Blowers explained that they're not paying the PILOT at this time, explaining that there is a taxable parcel that they are paying property taxes on. City Manager Hendrix explained that part of the parcel wasn't eligible for PILOT, thus part of the parcel is taxed. She explained that the IDA holds the PILOT, and they will move forward. Councilor Petropoulos wondered if Iron Man and the Floating Circus are City events, or does the City rent out the lake front. City Manager Hendrix explained that there are very few City sponsored events; they include the Mayor's Tree Lighting, and the Memorial Day Parade. The BID is part of any downtown events, and they are part of the planning and recap as well. City Manager Hendrix explained that there are events that have asked for the City to pay them to be there, but the City doesn't have a fund for that.

ACTION TAKEN by Mayor Valentino; seconded by Clr. Petropoulos

MOVED TO amend the 2026 General Fund Budget by $78,500 to allocate one-time funding from the general fund reserve fund to the Fire Dept for two SCBA breathing replacements, $22,500, one SCBA washer $30,000 & five sets of protective gear, $26,000

ROLL CALL VOTE: Aye - Clr. Petropoulos, Clr. Gillotte, Clr. Grimaldi, Clr. Pealer, Mayor Valentino
Nay - Clr. Lavin, Clr. Brennan
MOTION CARRIED (5-2-2 absent)

Councilor Petropulos suggested amending the 2026 budget, adding $75,000 from the tax levy to hire a part time Police Officer, to free up administrative work, getting full time officers out on the road. Councilor Grimaldi wondered what can be cut to make up the money. Councilor Pealer recalled previous budgets, calling last year's extreme justice by keeping the budget to an average, sharing his opinion that the City is underspending this year, fearing that will trigger a bigger increase next year. He explained that Labor is expensive, the City needs to fund equipment, and that the City can afford this $75,000. He went on to explain that next time there is a corrective reassessment, Council can continue to control the tax rate. Councilor Pealer sees an opportunity to be mathematically intelligent with the 2026 Budget. Councilor Lavin lamented rate vs. levy, in this case, the cost of living vs. our rate of spending, noting that last year Council ran 2.5% above the cost of living, calling this a leading tax burden in NYS. Councilor Gillotte noted that school and county taxes go up, to keep up. He explained that the City isn't looking at luxury, rather talking about safety and security.

ACTION TAKEN by Councilor Petropoulos; seconded by Clr. Pealer

MOVED TO amend the 2026 General Fund Budget and allocate on- going funding of $75,000 from tax levy to the police department to support the hiring of a .5 FTE police officer, with the addition of $75,000 from tax levy to general fund

ROLL CALL VOTE: Aye - Clr. Petropoulos, Clr. Gillotte, Clr. Pealer, Mayor Valentino
Nay - Clr. Grimaldi, Clr. Lavin, Clr. Brennan
MOTION CARRIED (4-3-2 absent)

Mayor Valentino introduced a motion to amend the 2026 General Fund Budget by $130,000 to allocate one-time funding from the general fund reserve fund to the Department of Public Works for $65,000 for one F150 truck and to the Recreation Department for $65,000 for one Recreation Truck.
City Manager Hendrix explained that the General Fund will still sit at 18.15% after this motion, and explained that these vehicles were requested by departments but not added into the City Manager's budget.

ACTION TAKEN by Mayor Valentino; seconded by Clr. Petropoulos

MOVED TO amend the 2026 General Fund Budget by $130,000 to allocate one-time funding from the general fund reserve fund to the Department of Public Works for $65,000 for one F150 truck and to the Recreation Department for $65,000 for one Recreation Truck

ROLL CALL VOTE: Aye - Clr. Petropoulos, Clr. Gillotte, Clr. Pealer, Mayor Valentino
Nay - Clr. Grimaldi, Clr. Lavin, Clr. Brennan
MOTION CARRIED (4-3-2 absent)

ACTION TAKEN by Mayor Valentino; seconded by Clr. Petropoulos

MOVED TO amend the General Fund Budget by $100,000 to allocate one-time funding from the general fund reserve fund to the equipment reserve fund, as well as amend the Water Fund Budget by $50,000 to allocate one-time funding from the water reserve fund to the water equipment reserve fund, and, amend the Sewer Fund Budget by

$50,000 to allocate one-time funding from the sewer reserve fund to the sewer equipment reserve fund. This motion adds a total of $200,000 to the equipment reserve funds

ROLL CALL VOTE: Aye - Clr. Petropoulos, Clr. Gillotte, Clr. Pealer, Clr. Grimaldi, Clr. Brennan, Mayor Valentino

Nay - Clr. Lavin

MOTION CARRIED (6-1-2 absent)

Councilor Petropoulos made a motion to amend the General Fund Budget by $65,000 for the purchase of one marked police vehicle. Councilor Lavin raised concerns around looking for offsetting cuts, starting a sewer plan to support the expansion of the town, and death to City finances, and raised concerns about short term yeses and long-term threats coming from down the road. Councilor Petropoulos explained that the Police Department needs a replacement vehicle, which will only get more expensive down the road. Councilor Pealer noted that if Council focuses on levy control, with fund balance being part of the total budget, not just the tax levy, there is value in spending this money on one time purchases. Discussion followed around controlling spending.

ACTION TAKEN by Clr. Petropoulos; seconded by Clr. Pealer

MOVED TO amend the 2026 General Fund Budget by $65,000 to allocate one-time funding from the general fund reserve fund to the Police Department for one marked vehicle

ROLL CALL VOTE: Aye - Clr. Petropoulos, Clr. Gillotte, Clr. Grimaldi, Clr. Pealer, Mayor Valentino

Nay - Clr. Lavin, Clr. Brennan

MOTION CARRIED (5-2-2 absent)

Mayor Valentino made a motion to allocate one-time funding of $120,000 from the water fund reserve fund to the Water Department for two trucks for the water department. Mayor Valentino explained the equipment amortization fund, which allows the City to pay cash for equipment and avoid bonding. Councilor Grimaldi wondered if the purchase will be on state bid. City Manager Hendrix explained that the City buys everything on state bid. She also noted that if the City gets on a good replacement rotation, the cost will break even on vehicles. She then explained that most non specialized equipment takes a few months to get in, and 2026 budgeted funds can't be spent until January. Discussion followed around passing the budget before adjourning this meeting. Discussion followed around City spending, efforts to improve the City over the past 11 years, bonding costs and being behind on equipment replacement. Councilor Lavin asked for an update on the rate study. Staff advised that they are working on scheduling that meeting. Councilor Pealer wondered what the City's longest bond term is. Comptroller Blowers explained that General Fund bonding is usually for 15 years, while Water and Sewer Funds are typically 30. Discussion followed around young people inheriting these decisions, and what Council projects would want to eliminate if they chose not to bond, noting that costs don't go down when projects are put off. Deferred maintenance and its consequences was also discussed, as well as sharing assets and their costs with surrounding municipalities.

ACTION TAKEN by Mayor Valentino; seconded by Clr. Petropoulos

MOVED TO allocate one-time funding of $120,000 from the water fund reserve fund to the Water Department for two trucks for the water department

ROLL CALL VOTE: Aye - Clr. Petropoulos, Clr. Gillotte, Clr. Grimaldi, Clr. Pealer, Mayor Valentino

Nay - Clr. Lavin, Clr. Brennan

MOTION CARRIED (5-2-2 absent)

6. <u>ADJOURNMENT</u>

ACTION TAKEN by Clr. Petropoulos; seconded by Clr. Gillotte

MOVED THAT the meeting be adjourned at 8:11pm

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (7-2 absent)

Nicole Tillotson

City Clerk