

# CITY OF OSWEGO



**AGENDA**  
Human Services Committee  
Common Council Chambers – City Hall  
March 16, 2026  
6:30 PM

Roll Call      **Chance Kennedy, Chairman**  
Shane Thompson  
Jonathan Ashline

Minutes: Not applicable.

**I. Old Business**

**II. New Business**

**Authorization**

1. Councilor Kennedy requests discussion regarding coordination of community services addressing homelessness in the City of Oswego.

**HUMAN SERVICES  
COMMITTEE MEETING  
March 16, 2026**

Chairman Kennedy called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

***MEMBERS PRESENT:*** Chairman Kennedy, Councilor Ashline.

Councilor Thompson was excused.

***OTHERS PRESENT:*** Councilor Myer; Councilor FitzGibbons; Councilor Lautensack; Councilor Plunkett; City Attorney, Kevin Caraccioli; Mayor Robert Corradino; Police Chief, Phillip Cady; Commissioner of Public Works and Parks and Recreation, Craig Rebeor; Zoning and Planning Administrator, Jeff McGann; Director of Code Enforcement, Michael Cleary II.

***MEDIA PRESENT:*** No media present.

***OLD BUSINESS:*** There was no old business.

Minutes were not applicable.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

- 1. Councilor Kennedy requests discussion regarding coordination of community services addressing homelessness in the City of Oswego.**

Councilor Kennedy opened the discussion by acknowledging the high level of public interest and emphasizing the need for respectful and productive conversation. He stated that the purpose of the meeting was to better understand the situation and to explore how the city could work constructively with community organizations while adhering to the city's regulatory framework. He then invited Jeff McGann to provide an explanation of the relevant zoning considerations.

City Attorney, Kevin Caraccioli, stated that he has been working closely on the issue and chose to speak first to provide context before deferring to other city officials. He noted that the Mayor had recently directed the City Attorney's office and zoning staff to address the matter, and he commended Councilor Kennedy for initiating the discussion, highlighting that the Human Services Committee had not met since approximately 2009, reflecting limited prior focus on human services issues within the Common Council. He explained that existing zoning laws, developed decades ago, do not reference homelessness, underscoring that the issue was not historically contemplated in the city's regulatory framework and must now be addressed within it. He emphasized that homelessness is a longstanding and complex problem requiring a collective community response, acknowledging that no immediate solution exists but expressing hope that ongoing discussions will lead to workable outcomes. He also noted that strong public attendance reflects community concern and clarified that efforts to address homelessness did not begin recently, citing past initiatives, including engagement with local organizations and support for shelter access, as well as the Mayor's longstanding involvement in the issue. He concluded

by offering to answer legal questions and deferring to other speakers for further discussion.

Councilor Kennedy commented that his questions were more related to specific in zoning and towards the Planning and Zoning Director, Jeff McGann.

Planning and Zoning Director, Jeff McGann, provided additional clarification on zoning procedures, emphasizing that while there is broad community sympathy for addressing homelessness, the City must follow established legal processes without exception. He explained that existing service organizations have successfully operated by obtaining required approvals, typically through a special permit reviewed by both the Planning and Zoning Boards. He outlined a recent case involving a proposed community center, noting that the applicant had been working with the City for several months to identify a suitable location and navigate the approval process, including a prior application that was tabled pending additional information. He stated that operations had begun without full approval, requiring the issuance of a cease-and-desist order, which he clarified was an administrative action taken by his office to enforce zoning laws, not a directive from the Mayor. He emphasized that decisions are made through a fair, multi-member board process with public input, not by any single official, and that the temporary halt in operations was intended to ensure compliance and protect both the applicant and the surrounding community. He further noted that the application is scheduled to return before the Planning Board in April as a new case for a different location, and explained that the special permit process can typically be completed within one to two months depending on the completeness of the application and any additional information requested.

Councilor Kennedy asked about the process and timeline in which organizations like Haven of Hope must go through in order to provide their services in a specific zone.

Jeff McGann, Planning and Zoning Director, explained that the applicant is seeking approval to operate a community center, which is permitted in the relevant zoning district through a special permit process. He outlined that this process requires review by both the Planning Board and Zoning Board, with the Planning Board first evaluating the proposal and making a recommendation before a final decision is made. He noted that a previous application for a different location was tabled due to incomplete information, despite general support, and emphasized that the City has worked closely with the applicant to address key considerations such as security and neighborhood impact. He added that the current proposed location presents additional factors, including proximity to an elementary school, which must be carefully reviewed. He stressed that decisions are made collectively by board members representing the community, not by a single official, and that the temporary halt in operations was intended to ensure compliance with the process and protect all parties involved. He further explained that the special permit process can typically be completed within one month if all required information is provided, though additional time may be needed if further details are requested, and noted that the extended timeline in this case is due to efforts to identify a suitable location.

Councilor Ashline asked if there was a fee to apply for the special permit mentioned. Jeff McGann stated that he had been informed by Michael Cleary II that it is \$400.00. Jeff also stated that although the applicant will be offered a waiver of the fee upon returning, the proposal must be submitted as a new application under a different case number because it involves a different location and cannot be considered prior business.

Councilor Ashline asked if Jeff had mentioned the waiver to the applicant, Jeff confirmed that he did.

Councilor Lautensack asked what the difference in zoning is between the two locations that Haven of Hope is applying for.

Jeff clarified that certain uses are permitted within specific zoning districts by special permit, meaning they are allowed but subject to additional review. He explained that, unlike prohibited uses, these proposals must go through the Planning and Zoning Boards to ensure they are appropriate for the location and do not negatively impact the surrounding neighborhood. He noted that this standard applies broadly to various types of uses, such as operating a business in a residential area, and is intended to evaluate factors like neighborhood compatibility and activity levels. He also emphasized that the process includes public notification, allowing nearby residents to provide input, express concerns, or show support before any final decision is made.

Councilor Kennedy invited community leaders, including Rachel Hendricks from Haven of Hope, to speak about the services they provide, emphasizing that the purpose of the discussion is not to assign blame but to better understand the situation, identify potential barriers faced by organizations, and explore ways for the City to collaborate more effectively with community partners.

Rachel Hendricks from Haven of Hope explained that the organization began operating in the space prior to zoning approval due to an emergency situation, as 20 to 25 individuals would have otherwise been left outside in freezing daytime conditions without adequate shelter. She stated that these conditions persist, with individuals still exposed to harsh weather and limited access to welcoming spaces, and emphasized that Haven of Hope provides a safe, nonjudgmental environment. She acknowledged that isolated incidents requiring police response have occurred but noted these are not unique to their operation, describing one such instance as being handled appropriately with police support. She further emphasized that staff are trained to manage emergencies, including de-escalation and basic medical response, and reiterated the organization's role in addressing immediate community needs.

Councilor Kennedy asked Rachel how she plans to proceed if the April 7 Planning Board decision is unfavorable, emphasizing the need to avoid further conflict while balancing city regulations with the organization's services and encouraging a cooperative approach between the City and community organizations.

Rachel asked what alternative options would be available if the organization is not permitted to remain in the church, emphasizing the need to continue providing an essential service in an accessible and safe location for both participants and the surrounding neighborhood. She described efforts made to address concerns about loitering and supervision, noting challenges in balancing participant needs with neighborhood expectations, and reiterated the organization's commitment to finding a suitable solution in cooperation with the City.

Councilor FitzGibbons noted that the original East 3rd Street location was in a traditional business district rather than a residential neighborhood, suggesting it may have fewer impacts on nearby residents and had previously housed a similar service provider, and asked whether the applicant would consider revisiting that location.

Rachel confirmed that they could revisit the East 3rd Street location, explaining that they initially moved into the church due to limited funding and the urgent need to provide safe shelter during an emergency situation.

Councilor FitzGibbons expressed appreciation for the organization's work, noting it fills a gap within the network of service providers supporting a vulnerable population. He emphasized a shared goal of reducing homelessness through supportive housing and better systems, while recognizing that many individuals are in transition and need pathways to stability. He raised concern that incarceration can appear more stable than available housing, highlighting the need for improved solutions. He acknowledged existing barriers, noting some are necessary for public

input, compromise, and addressing neighborhood concerns, particularly as residents adjust to visible changes. He referenced the upcoming Planning Board review in April, encouraged preparing a contingency plan, and suggested the community could help address financial or logistical challenges, including the East 3rd Street location, urging collaboration to balance community concerns with service needs.

Rachel agreed with the sentiment that Councilor FitzGibbons shared.

Councilor Kennedy acknowledged that change could feel uncomfortable or frightening for neighbors. He said these discussions aim to bring leaders and organizations, such as OCO and DSS, together to improve coordination and communication. He noted that many services exist but are not widely known, citing the Office for the Aging's transportation assistance for medical appointments as an example. He emphasized the need for better outreach so residents can access available support and encouraged efforts to increase awareness and connect people with services.

Councilor Myer suggested that some kind of collaboration with the Police Department and Police Chief Phillip Cady could prove to be beneficial to the subject of the discussion and to the people in these neighborhoods who are cohabiting with the services provided by these organizations.

Rachel was receptive to that suggestion.

Councilor Lautensack asked if the sole reason for providing their services through the mentioned location was because of finances.

Rachel said that was not the case and explained that the church shares the same vision to support people who are struggling with homelessness and other factors hindering their stability.

Councilor FitzGibbons asked the specifics on the East 3rd Street location in terms of its process through the Zoning and Planning Boards.

Jeff McGann stated that while the meeting was productive and included many questions, the group requested to table the decision until additional information regarding security and exterior details is provided, rather than moving forward without complete information on a new proposal.

Councilor FitzGibbons raised concerns about the logistics of having two locations with similar issues in different settings, noting time has already been spent in the review process and questioning whether both proposals can be considered at the same meeting.

City Attorney, Kevin Caraccioli, explained that each location is a separate application and it is not improper to consider both in the same meeting. He reviewed the special use permit criteria under Section 280-27 of the Oswego zoning code, noting approvals are automatic only for single-family homes. The zoning board must consider public health, safety, general welfare, neighborhood compatibility, potential impacts on adjacent properties, and whether the lot is adequate for the proposed use. These criteria allow the board to impose conditions to address concerns. He noted the board previously tabled the applications for additional information, which Rachel Hendricks has since provided, and commended the organization's 501(c)(3) status for enabling access to a broad range of funding, encouraging them to pursue resources and acknowledging their progress in addressing an unmet community need.

Councilor Lautensack asked whether the organization feels better staffed now compared to two months ago, following up with discussions raised by the Planning Board.

Rachel responded that staffing is largely the same, with two staff on at all times supported by multiple volunteers, many of whom are program graduates. She added that with increased funding, they will be able to hire additional staff.

Councilor Myer asked whether there are significant differences between the two sites in

terms of internal facilities, such as showers or other amenities, that might affect what can be offered at each location.

Rachel responded that the church site is better suited, with a kitchen that allows them to provide multiple meals daily and the potential to add a shower, creating a one-stop shop where participants can access services, meals, and hygiene. She noted they also offer laundry services on Tuesdays and that both the organization and the church community value the partnership.

Councilor Kennedy invited other people to speak regarding the discussion.

Kevin Dean, Executive Director of Oswego County Opportunities, thanked the committee for reconvening to address homelessness. He highlighted OCO's role in county efforts, noting that housing needs require collaboration. Kevin described OCO's Safe Options Support First program, launched in 2022, which provides outreach and direct services through two case managers, a clinician, and a mental health peer, with referrals from partners like Haven of Hope, the city library, and the police department. He supported creating a task force to address immediate homelessness challenges in Oswego City and the county, recommending a focused, action-oriented approach. In 2025, OCO's outreach served 79 individuals, 48 men and 31 women, showing unmet needs that require collaboration. He noted technical service questions could be addressed by staff and suggested informal discussions to analyze data and identify resource gaps.

Councilor Kennedy outlined a vision for initiating a monthly meeting with community partners and city government to identify gaps in homelessness services and coordinate efforts to address them. He emphasized that the goal is not to solve homelessness immediately but to start a dialogue, align providers, and promote collaboration rather than division. Kennedy noted the SOS program's county-wide scope, and Kevin Dean confirmed that SOS provides services wherever needed; not limited to a single area.

Councilor FitzGibbons asked Kevin Dean to identify the key community partners that OCO works with.

Kevin listed Desen's House, Farnham Family Services, Friends of Recovery, Haven of Hope, the Oswego Police Department Social Worker, Oswego Health, the Oswego Public Library, the Lobdell Center for Mental Health and Wellness at Lakeview, and Victory Transformation Center.

Councilor FitzGibbons asked if all of these organizations working together could fill the gaps or meet the capacity to address the topic being discussed.

Kevin said that he did not want to speak for other organizations but as for himself, he is confident that it is possible.

Councilor Lautensack asked where the largest need for support was in the county. Kevin confirmed that the City of Fulton is first on the list and City of Oswego is second.

Councilor Kennedy noted that Oswego County officially has only two cities, Fulton and Oswego. He also clarified common misconceptions about municipal classifications, citing that he always thought Pulaski as an example of a city despite being a village.

Chris Squitieri from Ward 7 commended the conversation and acknowledged the challenges involved, as well as the city attorney's clarification of applicable codes. He emphasized that while there is broad support for addressing the issue, it is important to adhere to established zoning regulations and board structures to ensure balanced decision-making. Chris agreed with earlier remarks by Councilor Kennedy regarding public resistance to change and stressed the need to work within existing frameworks while engaging all stakeholders. He highlighted the availability of county resources, including youth programs and shelters, and

encouraged better coordination and utilization of these services alongside city efforts. He also noted the importance of maintaining safety standards and community trust, recognizing that neighborhood concerns about impacts must be taken seriously. Chris concluded by supporting the initiative, urging a thoughtful and collaborative approach that involves the entire community while maintaining necessary safeguards.

Kyle Dzintars, representing a grassroots mutual aid organization, spoke on the urgency of addressing homelessness in the community, emphasizing the immediate risks faced by individuals who may be forced to sleep outdoors, particularly during winter in Oswego. He highlighted contributing factors such as rising rent costs, increased utility and grocery expenses, and broader economic pressures that make stable housing difficult to maintain. Kyle challenged the notion that homelessness has not been a visible issue, referencing past actions that displaced unhoused individuals, and stressed that criminalizing homelessness is not an appropriate response. He underscored the importance of listening directly to those experiencing housing instability, as well as to community members and volunteers actively providing support. Drawing from his experience as a mental health counselor, he illustrated the hidden nature of financial and housing insecurity, even among individuals who may appear stable. Kyle urged the committee to prioritize solutions, maintain urgency in their response, and include grassroots organizations in ongoing planning and discussions, noting their active role in providing food, support, and community connection without formal funding.

Councilor Kennedy emphasized that the purpose of the conversation is to involve all stakeholders who can provide input or assistance, with the goal of collectively improving conditions for the unhoused. While acknowledging that fully solving the issue may not be realistic, the focus is on making meaningful progress and creating better outcomes for everyone affected, particularly those experiencing homelessness.

JT, representing Haven of Hope and formerly working with Victory, shared firsthand observations of the community's unhoused individuals, describing how clients were gathered under a Christmas tree to stay dry and expressed amazement that people would advocate for them. JT emphasized the daily challenges these individuals face, including public scrutiny, lack of safe spaces, and anxiety about upcoming shelter closures from April 30 to October 1. He highlighted the critical role Haven of Hope plays as a reliable and supportive refuge where individuals can find stability and hope. JT urged the committee to seize the current moment to develop timely and effective solutions, stressing the importance of community support and collaboration to address these urgent needs.

Councilor Kennedy responded, acknowledging JT's comments and expressing appreciation for his perspective. He emphasized that addressing homelessness is not a temporary initiative or a pet project, but a sustained effort to engage the entire city in meaningful dialogue. Kennedy noted that many residents are only a few paychecks away from housing instability, reinforcing the importance of keeping the conversation active and the committee focused on long-term solutions.

Another speaker, Danielle, a local community member and volunteer with Haven of Hope, shared both her personal and professional experiences working with the unhoused population. She noted that, despite living nearby, she had not observed significant police issues at Haven of Hope, emphasizing that situations are generally handled appropriately. Danielle highlighted that many individuals served are seniors in their 70s and 80s who have lost housing due to rising costs or unsafe living conditions, underscoring the vulnerability of this population. She described the critical support Haven of Hope provides, including transportation and a sense

of community, and shared a powerful personal account of experiencing homelessness with her five children, illustrating the challenges families face even when provided with temporary shelter. Danielle also addressed disparities in how unhoused individuals are treated in public spaces and emphasized the lack of safe, accessible places for people to go during the day. She urged the committee to take action to provide consistent, temporary daytime shelter and to improve community response, stressing the need for compassion and better solutions.

Another speaker, Mike, spoke in support of proposed services for the unhoused, noting that the location under consideration is surrounded by three other churches and near Victory Transformation, suggesting that the local faith community would likely support efforts to assist homeless individuals. He emphasized the importance of forming strong relationships, highlighting Rachel's passion and experience, and stated that her success will depend on building connections both with the unhoused population and with community members who can provide support.

Another speaker, Laurel, a regional service coordinator for Conifer Park's inpatient and outpatient services, spoke in strong support of Haven of Hope, emphasizing the critical role the organization plays in the community. She shared her experience collaborating with Rachel and the Haven team over the past year, highlighting how they provide safe, welcoming spaces, nourishment, and transportation support for individuals in need. Laurel recounted a specific example of a client transitioning from Oswego County Jail to inpatient treatment who, without court-mandated services, would have struggled to access care. Haven of Hope provided immediate support, including food, clothing, and emotional encouragement, enabling the client to successfully complete the program. Laurel underscored that this level of dedicated, consistent support happens regularly, demonstrating the organization's resilience and its vital role in offering hope and life to vulnerable members of the community. She concluded by thanking the committee and expressing hope for continued community support for Haven of Hope. Councilor Kennedy responded to Laurel, expressing gratitude for her work at Conifer Park and noting the personal impact of her program, sharing that his brother, a recovering addict, benefited greatly from the services provided, which helped him reach a better place. He thanked Laurel for both her professional contributions and the difference they make in people's lives.

Another speaker, Ryan Lance, a city resident and neighbor living about a block from Haven of Hope, spoke in support of the organization. Although he has not yet volunteered with Haven of Hope, he emphasized his desire to see their work continue and encouraged the city and zoning committee to support their efforts. He stated that, as a neighbor, he stands with the organization and wants them to remain active in the community.

Another speaker, Jordan Russell, a credentialed alcohol and substance abuse counselor with Farnham Family Services, spoke in a personal capacity about the importance of Haven of Hope. Drawing from Jordan's own experience of homelessness in Seattle in 2016, when Jordan endured months sleeping outdoors in cold and unsafe conditions, Jordan emphasized that programs like Haven of Hope provide essential spaces where individuals can be treated with dignity, regardless of sobriety or mental health challenges. Jordan noted that recovery often begins with being treated as a human being and highlighted the need for the community to offer safe spaces for people to start rebuilding their lives. Jordan also raised a question about zoning laws, observing that current codes do not address homelessness and suggesting that this issue warrants attention. Jordan concluded by thanking the committee for their time.

Another speaker, Wendy, shared her personal experience with homelessness, explaining that she came to Oswego while fleeing an abusive relationship and faced significant challenges

accessing safe shelter. She described being sent to a hotel with inadequate conditions, including bugs and lack of basic necessities, and emphasized that homelessness affects people for a variety of reasons, including domestic violence, mental health issues, and financial instability. Wendy praised Rachel and Haven of Hope for providing critical support, including protection from the elements, care, and a sense of dignity. She urged the committee to create more sustainable solutions, including emergency funding, zoning for temporary shelters or tiny home communities, and policies that accommodate individuals with pets or mental health needs. Wendy emphasized that Oswego has a caring community capable of helping people, and she called for coordinated efforts to provide safe spaces and pathways to housing and employment, stressing that these solutions could transform lives quickly if properly implemented.

JT also publicly acknowledged the support of Trinity United Methodist Church, saying that the church gave them a home to help them get through the winter.

Councilor Ashline thanked everyone for attending and emphasized the importance of addressing homelessness, especially given the severe weather conditions. He stated that there should be no unhoused individuals in the community and expressed his commitment to continuing the work alongside Councilor Kennedy, other council members, and service providers. Ashline also proposed scheduling a future meeting focused specifically on providers to discuss the best strategies for addressing the issue.

Councilor Kennedy concluded the meeting by thanking everyone for attending and emphasizing that the discussion was an important first step in bringing stakeholders together to address the issue. He expressed appreciation for the participation and noted that additional meetings would be planned in the future to continue the conversation and work toward solutions.

**COMMITTEE DECISION:** Councilor Ashline made a motion to close the discussion at the request of Councilor Kennedy. Councilor Kennedy seconded the motion, it was approved 2-0-1.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made at 8:25 p.m. by Councilor Ashline. A second was made by Councilor Kennedy, it was approved by a vote 2-0-1.

Respectfully Submitted,



Egor Golubchikov