

PHYSICAL SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING July 20, 2026

Chairman Myer called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Myer, Councilor Plunkett, Councilor Ashline, and Councilor Kennedy.

OTHERS PRESENT: Councilor FitzGibbons; Councilor Lautensack; Mayor Robert A. Corradino; Fire Chief, Paul Conzone.

MEDIA PRESENT: No media present.

OLD BUSINESS: There was no old business.

A motion to approve the minutes of the July 6, 2026, Committee Meeting was made by Councilor Plunkett and seconded by Councilor Ashline. Minutes were approved unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. **The Office of Economic Development received a request for Use of Public Space from Collin Seeley of the Oswego County OASAS to host the Community Health Outreach Fair on August 26, 2026 from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.**

Councilor Myer stated that he had attempted to contact the applicant for additional information but had not received a response and expressed uncertainty about the request, particularly the proposed \$400 trash removal fee waiver, due to the lack of details about the event. Councilor Plunkett recommended tabling the request until the applicant could be contacted. Councilor Myer agreed, stating that additional information about the event was needed before acting.

COMMITTEE DECISION: Councilor Plunkett made a motion to table the request from the Office of Economic Development. Councilor Kennedy seconded the motion, motion to table passed unanimously.

THE RESOLUTION THAT WAS PART OF THE MEETING WILL BE TABLED BEFORE PRESENTED TO THE FULL COUNCIL.

2. **Discussion and Determination by the Common Council of the 988 Sign Placement Locations.**

Councilor Myer opened discussion on the proposed 988 sign placement locations and invited comments from council members and the public.

Councilor Kennedy read a statement from a constituent who wished to remain anonymous. The constituent described experiencing a recent suicidal crisis while overlooking the Oswego

waterfront and stated that seeing a 988 sign at that location may have encouraged them to seek help sooner. The statement urged the City to install the donated signs, emphasizing that suicide prevention resources can save lives and that the signs would demonstrate the City's commitment to supporting individuals experiencing mental health crises. Councilor Kennedy also noted that the City of Fulton had previously installed similar signs through the same coalition and expressed support for moving forward with the installation.

Carol Thompson addressed the committee as a member of the public. She clarified that she was speaking only on her own behalf and does not discuss City business with her son, a council member. She objected to claims that she opposed the signs or suicide prevention efforts and shared that she had lost a close family member to suicide approximately 50 years ago, making the issue deeply personal. Carol stated that she supports any effort that could save lives but believes the signs should not be installed without meaningful public input and a public education campaign. She questioned whether many residents, and even some elected officials, were familiar with the 988 Lifeline and emphasized that effective suicide prevention requires education, outreach, collaboration, and planning in addition to signage. She recommended that placement decisions involve the Police Department, Fire Department, Department of Public Works, mental health professionals, and representatives of the Suicide Prevention Coalition. Carol also expressed concerns that placing signs at locations associated with past suicides could be difficult for surviving family members, commented on the design and visibility of the proposed signs, suggested considering additional locations such as the skate park because of safety concerns, and encouraged respectful public discourse and adherence to First Amendment principles. She concluded by stating that reducing suicide requires thoughtful planning, transparency, education, and community engagement beyond installing signs.

Karen Burke, a member of the Oswego County Suicide Prevention Coalition, introduced herself and explained that the black background of the proposed signs was selected to improve the visibility of the white lettering and the purple and aqua suicide prevention colors, not to create a dark or morbid appearance. She described the Coalition's ongoing efforts to educate the community through public events, library displays, and outreach initiatives promoting kindness and suicide awareness. Burke stated that the Coalition did not initiate the request for the signs but was asked to assist with the project. She emphasized that signs are only one component of suicide prevention and that suicide is one of the most preventable causes of death. She explained that contacting 988 connects individuals with trained crisis counselors who can provide immediate support and confirmed that the Coalition is willing to assist with education, outreach, and implementation. Burke clarified that Fulton has five signs installed and explained that state ownership of certain bridges affected their placement.

Councilor Plunkett asked how long the 988 system had been in operation.

Karen Burke responded that she was unsure of the exact time or year.

Councilor FitzGibbons stated that the national transition to 988 occurred approximately in 2023.

Councilor Myer asked whether calls to 988 are handled nationally or locally.

Karen Burke explained that 988 is a national system that connects callers or those who text the service with trained crisis counselors while also coordinating with available local resources.

Councilor FitzGibbons provided additional background on the 988 system, stating that federal funding began in 2022 and that New York State has dedicated funding to support the program. He explained that 988 uses geographic routing to connect callers with the appropriate local resources while avoiding automatic law enforcement involvement unless necessary. He agreed that additional public education is needed and noted that the New York State Office of Mental Health provides guidance for educating schools, congregations, and communities about the service. He shared that he had visited Fulton to observe the existing sign installations and emphasized that the proposed signs represent only one part of a broader effort to improve mental health and substance use services within the community. He stated that the signs follow New York State Office of Mental Health standards and encouraged moving forward with the installation while continuing broader education efforts.

Karen Burke offered the Coalition's assistance with suicide prevention training for council members, first responders, and community organizations. She explained that training opportunities range from basic awareness to more comprehensive instruction and stated that the signs provide an opportunity to begin important conversations about mental health and suicide prevention.

Councilor Myer suggested that council members work with representatives of the Suicide Prevention Coalition to determine the most appropriate locations for the signs based on professional guidance. He stated that the goal should be to place the signs where they would provide the greatest benefit to the community.

Councilor Lautensack recommended including Gina Vaughn in discussions regarding sign placement because of her experience working directly with individuals in crisis.

Councilor Kennedy noted that Gina Vaughn had previously provided a list of ten recommended locations and asked whether those recommendations had changed.

Gina Vaughn explained that she was speaking as a community member with approximately six years of crisis intervention experience. She stated that the proposed locations were not chosen arbitrarily but were based on her experience responding to crises, conversations with individuals experiencing mental health emergencies, and discussions with Sergeant Lummis regarding locations of concern. She noted that some locations remained open for additional discussion with community stakeholders. Vaughn also explained that 988 works in coordination with local Mobile Crisis services, allowing callers who need in-person assistance to be referred directly to local crisis teams. She emphasized that 988 and local crisis response services complement one another and work together to provide appropriate mental health support.

Councilor Thompson asked that the proposed sign locations be read into the record.

Councilor Kennedy read the proposed locations as the west and east sides of the Utica Street Bridge, the west and east sides of the Bridge Street Bridge, East Linear Park, West Linear Park

near the Veterans Stage, Lakeside Park near East Tenth and a Half Street, Liberty Loop at Breitbeck Park, Sheldon Beach Park, and Fort Ontario Scenic Overlook. He noted that, due to concerns about placing a sign at Fort Ontario because of its historic designation, the pedestrian rail trail bridge had been discussed as a replacement location.

Gina Vaughn explained that she had included the pedestrian rail trail bridge because it was a location where she had frequently responded to individuals in crisis.

Councilor Thompson questioned whether signs could be placed on state-owned bridges.

Councilor Kennedy clarified that the Utica Street Bridge is City property, while the Bridge Street Bridge is part of State Route 104.

Councilor FitzGibbons explained that the signs would not necessarily be mounted directly on the bridges but could instead be installed on nearby City-owned poles or property, similar to the placement of signs in Fulton, where they are positioned adjacent to bridges in pedestrian areas.

Karen Burke addressed concerns that discussing suicide or displaying signs could encourage suicidal behavior. She explained that research shows talking openly about suicide does not increase suicidal thoughts and that directly asking someone if they are considering harming themselves is considered an appropriate and effective intervention.

Councilor Thompson agreed that conversations about suicide are important but suggested that displaying the message on signs may be different. He proposed additional locations for future consideration, including the hospital, police department, areas near Walmart, and the County Mental Health facility, stating that these locations may better serve individuals seeking assistance. He agreed that Fort Ontario was likely not an appropriate location.

Councilor Kennedy made a motion to recommend installation of the ten donated signs at the following locations: the west and east sides of the Utica Street Bridge, the west and east sides of the Bridge Street Bridge, East Linear Park, West Linear Park near the Veterans Stage, Lakeside Park near East Tenth and a Half Street, Liberty Loop at Breitbeck Park, Sheldon Beach Park, and the pedestrian rail trail bridge in place of Fort Ontario Scenic Overlook.

Councilor Myer questioned whether it was the chair of the committee that ultimately calls for a motion.

City Attorney, Kevin Caraccioli, advised that committee members were permitted to make motions during discussion and explained that, if approved by the committee, the recommendation would proceed to the full Common Council for consideration.

Councilor Myer requested additional discussion before proceeding with the motion.

Councilor Thompson expressed concern that his suggested locations had not been discussed before a motion was introduced. He stated that he believed additional public input was warranted and suggested tabling the matter for two weeks to allow further discussion.

Councilor Myer proposed creating a small subcommittee consisting of council members, the Suicide Prevention Coalition, and the City's mental health professionals to review the proposed locations before bringing the matter back for approval.

Councilor FitzGibbons responded that the committee had already sought recommendations from qualified professionals, including the City's mental health clinician, first responders, and department heads. He expressed concern that delaying action could disregard the professional recommendations already provided and asked whether there were locations on which the committee could reach agreement.

Councilor Kennedy reiterated that he had made a motion and emphasized that the recommended locations were developed by Gina Vaughn, Fire Chief Paul Conzone, Police Chief Phillip Cady, and the Department of Public Works. He stated that delaying installation would unnecessarily postpone making an important mental health resource available to the community. Kennedy stressed that the signs represented only ten donated signs, not a widespread expansion of signage, and noted the City's recent experiences with suicide-related tragedies. He renewed his motion to approve the ten recommended locations. Councilor Ashline seconded the motion.

Carol Thompson asked whether bilingual signs could be considered because of the City's Spanish-speaking population.

Councilor Lautensack suggested creating double-sided signs with English on one side and Spanish on the other.

Councilor FitzGibbons explained that 988 services are available in English, Spanish, TTY, and more than 240 languages through translation services. He stated that the signs themselves follow New York State Office of Mental Health standards and acknowledged that additional outreach would be necessary to reach non-English-speaking residents. He agreed that broader education efforts should continue alongside installation of the signs.

Carol Thompson reiterated that she believed the City was moving too quickly without sufficient public education and outreach. She again shared how a sign placed at the location where her cousin died by suicide would be emotionally difficult for her and emphasized the importance of considering surviving family members, vulnerable populations, and non-English-speaking residents. She urged the City to partner with the Suicide Prevention Coalition to educate the community before relying on signage alone.

Councilor Myer reminded the committee that a motion was pending to approve the ten proposed locations.

Councilor Plunkett stated that while the proposed locations near waterways made sense, he also believed Councilor Thompson's suggested locations, including police and fire stations, deserved future consideration. He suggested additional signs could be added later if needed.

Councilor Kennedy explained that ten signs represented the maximum number available at no cost to the City and that additional signs could be obtained in the future for locations such as the

hospital, police stations, fire stations, or Walmart if the Council chose to expand the program.

Councilor Plunkett stated that he had become more familiar with the 988 program during recent discussions and appreciated the work of Gina Vaughn and the City's department heads.

Gina Vaughn clarified that she serves as the licensed mental health clinician assigned to the Police Department and was speaking as a community member with professional experience. She explained that the Office of Mental Health also provides posters, magnets, stickers, and other educational materials that could be placed inside public buildings such as police and fire stations, making reflective outdoor signs unnecessary in those locations. She encouraged the committee to view sign installation and public education as complementary efforts that could proceed simultaneously. Vaughn stated that the signs serve as visual reminders for individuals experiencing overwhelming mental health crises while broader community education continues through organizations such as the Suicide Prevention Coalition.

Councilor Myer asked whether the City could produce additional signs through the Department of Public Works if more were needed in the future.

Gina Vaughn stated that she was unsure whether copyright restrictions applied to the sign design but would research whether additional signs or translated materials were available through the Office of Mental Health.

Councilor Lautensack noted that downloadable files appeared to be available online for printing additional materials.

Councilor Myer suggested that creating additional or bilingual signs for indoor locations might be possible at minimal cost if permitted.

Gina Vaughn agreed to research the availability of multilingual versions of the signs and report back to the Council.

Councilor Plunkett asked about the anticipated timeline for installation should the committee and the full Council approve the proposal.

Councilor Myer explained that the recommendation would first require approval by the full Common Council, after which installation would be scheduled by the Department of Public Works. He anticipated installation would likely occur after Harborfest, depending on departmental workload.

Councilor Plunkett noted that the timeframe would allow additional opportunities for community education before the signs were installed.

Councilor Myer concluded by stating that he intended to invite representatives of the Suicide Prevention Coalition to a future community meeting to continue educating the public about the 988 program and available mental health resources.

COMMITTEE DECISION: Councilor Kennedy made a motion to approve the request for the Determination of the 988 sign placement locations. Councilor Ashline seconded the motion, it passed unanimously.

THE RESOLUTION WILL BE PREPARED AND FORWARDED TO THE FULL COUNCIL.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made at 7:34 p.m. by Councilor Kennedy. A second was made by Councilor Ashline, resolution passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'EGOR' followed by a stylized surname.

Egor Golubchikov