



**Town of Oneonta
TOWN BOARD
Regular Meeting
October 08, 2025
07:00PM**

The regular meeting of the Oneonta Town Board was held on October 08, 2025, with the following members present:

Interim Supervisor:	Brett D. Holleran	(BDH)
Town Board Member:	Patricia Riddell Kent	(PRK)
Town Board Member:	Kim Fierke	(KF)
Town Board Member:	Joseph M. Camarata	(JMC)

Others present: Ryan F. Pereira, Town Clerk; Hyde Clark, Attorney to the Town; Chris Maby; Teresa DeSantis; Tirusha Dave; Prashanth Gorantala; TJ Ruane; Walter Schmitt; Michael Morgenfroh; Tanya More; Josh Garufi; Caitlin Liberati; Vince Rowan; Carrie Rowan; Michelle Clapperton; Emily Brennan; Cindy Brennan; Eamon Hinchey; Nan Ferris; Hunter Grace; David Frame; Rachel Dotey; Jeffery Feinberg; Dave Collyar; David Bullock; Naomi J. Schneider; David Foster; Ellen Blaisdell; Peter Exton; Breck Tarbell; Liz Cramer; Jason Ballard; Chris Johnson; Sean Lewis; Lara Frankl; Rick Meyers; Mary Ellen Hoffman; Julia Del-Pozzo; Nancy Smalley; Walt Nagel; Kimberly Botti; Rebecca Ryan; Tmara Miller; J. Caroline Williams; Dale Webster; L.K. McTaggart; Eric Jervis; Melissa Jervis; Patricia Jacob; Ramona Lichter; Will Rivera; Lauren Radwan; Maiya King; Andrea Lister; Rachel Soper; Michelle Schneider; Courtney Murphy; Ericka Ericson; Christopher Gilbertson; Dylan Avery; Madison Edward-Wright; Jillian Conover; Ellen Murphy; Rhea Nowak; Tim Ploss; Kate Simeon; Justin Dawson; Mike Faber; Jacquelyn Christensen.

§ "Privilege of the floor" §

Tirusha Dave, who identified herself as the applicant behind the Eco-Yotta project, delivered a prepared statement addressing threats and racist messages she had received since first attending a town board meeting. She stated that at her first appearance, she was subjected to a direct public threat from Jim Hurtubise that was "not only inappropriate, it was frightening." She documented receiving numerous racist messages through her company's website, including "go back to your country" and "This town doesn't want you."

Ms. Dave criticized the spread of misinformation about her project, particularly false claims made at the August 13, 2025 meeting that her company was "a subsidiary of a subsidiary of a company based in Mumbai, India that has a 600-acre data center operation." She stated this was "completely false" and that "Eco-Yotta, Inc. is not a subsidiary of a foreign company, and there is no connection whatsoever to any operation in Mumbai or Delhi." She asked the board and community to "rise above fear and misinformation, look at the facts, and ask yourself if you want to be remembered as a community that resisted innovation and allowed harassment or one that had the courage to uphold integrity and embrace a future grounded in facts."

Will Rivera, speaking next, thanked Ms. Dave for sharing her experience and acknowledged the racial bias she faced, stating "I do not condone that". Mr. Rivera then asked the board to "reject the PDD rezoning, publish the full application, and adopt a short moratorium while the code is being reviewed in public." He expressed concern that "the proposal by Eco-Yotta has undergone two changes... from a data center to an AI research facility, and now we will learn what is next." Mr. Rivera argued that rezoning 150 acres of residential and agricultural land into a PDD would give the developer "the keys to expand if they choose."

Pat Jacobs provided an update on the Climate Smart Community Task Force, noting the town hall insulation was completed with spray foam and the solar panels installed were generating 5.6 megawatts at no cost to taxpayers. Ms. Jacobs then weighed in on the Eco-Yotta project, stating "that's residential agricultural land, zoned residential agricultural land, and when someone buys it knowing that, with a plan that involves rezoning, I mean, it just shouldn't be. There's so much industrial property in this town that if you want to build a project that requires an industrial or PDD, go buy the land in that area."

Board member Riddell Kent acknowledged Pat Jacobs' legacy on the board and efforts to protect quality of life. Mrs. Riddell Kent also mentioned the Climate Smart Community's heat pump initiative, asking residents who installed heat pumps in 2025 to notify the town to help earn additional grant money.

PRESENTATION: ALEXANDER BENJAMIN, DIRECTOR, HUNTINGTON MEMORIAL LIBRARY

Alexander Benjamin presented to the board and thanked them for the \$50,000 in annual funding the library receives from the town. He reported that 1,272 town residents hold library cards, roughly 25% of the town's population. On a per capita basis, the town provides \$9.87 per person, compared to \$42.31 per capita from the City of Oneonta. Among 40 libraries in the four-county system that receive tax funding, the Town of Oneonta ranks 39th in per capita funding.

The library had approximately 80,000 visitors last year and circulated roughly 60,000 materials. Staff answered 10,395 information requests, which Mr. Benjamin explained range from helping find lawyers to answering trivia questions. Over 11,000 people connected to the internet through the library. The library conducted over 146 early literacy programs with over 1,700 children attending.

Mr. Benjamin emphasized the library's role as an access point providing technology, information, and opportunities at no cost. The library partners with Hartwick College to provide free tax filing services for low-income and elderly individuals, completing over 300 returns annually. He expressed interest in building more partnerships with the town, noting "the library can tend to focus on the city because we're in the middle of there, but we want to represent the town equally."

Board member Fierke asked about the 11,000 internet connections, and Mr. Benjamin clarified these were connections including both desktop computers and Wi-Fi, with Wi-Fi available outside the building as well.

PRESENTATION: LIZ CRAMER AND NICHOLAS WEIR, ZONING AMENDMENT APPLICATION FOR 4377 NY 7, PDD INTO RA-40

Nicholas Weir explained they were requesting to change the zone from PDD back to RA-40. The property was previously zoned PDD for a senior living development that was never built in conjunction with The Plains of Parish. It is now a single-family home and they want it rezoned back to RA-40.

The board discussed that if the applicants were seeking a subdivision, they would need to go to the Planning Board first for that approval before the Town Board could act on rezoning. Interim Supervisor Holleran explained that parcels need to exist before they can be rezoned. The board agreed to refer the matter to the Planning Board for their input before setting a public hearing.

RESOLUTION 2025-0126 (07:56) Motion by BH, seconded by JMC;

Whereas the Town Board votes to refer to planning;

Whereas Zoning Amendment Application for 4377 NY 7, PDD into RA-40;

Whereas will respond with recommendation;

Now therefore be it resolved;

Whereupon the resolution was put to a vote and recorded as follows:

		AYE	NAY
Patricia Riddell Kent	Board Member	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>
Kim Fierke	Board Member	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>
Joseph M. Camarata	Board Member	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>
Brett D. Holleran	Interim Supervisor	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>

The foregoing resolution was thereupon declared duly adopted.

VOTE AYES (4)

MOTION CARRIED

PRESENTATION: TIRUSHA DAVE DBA ECO-YOTTA, INC., ZONING AMENDMENT APPLICATION FOR 357 COUNTY HIGHWAY 9, RA-40 INTO PDD

Attorney T.J. Ruane presented for Eco-Yotta with Prashanth Gorantala and Tirusha Dave. He explained this was a revised application addressing concerns raised by the board and public. He stated "when they talk about data center, there are computer components to what is being proposed, but this is by no means an industrial or commercial data center where a large warehouse has server racks from one end to the other that consumes large amounts of energy or even requires water or produces noise."

The project was described as an agricultural research project to answer "how do we lengthen the growing season in New York State." The research center would use computer servers to produce heat for hydroponic systems in indoor greenhouses. Ruane emphasized this was "an entirely closed loop system" with "no water being drawn" and "no massive energy use being pulled."

The project would utilize only existing structures - the garage attached to the house and one barn approximately 10,000 square feet. Most of the barn would be grow operations, with "a few racks of computers" for the server space. The goal was to enter contracts with local Universities to provide space for students to research indoor growing integrated with computer technology.

Board member Fierke asked about the relationship with SUNY Oneonta and Hartwick. Prashanth confirmed they have an MOU with SUNY already.

J. Caroline Williams, MPA, Director of Community Affairs & Government Relations; then read a statement from SUNY Oneonta's president clarifying their MOU "maps out how the addition of new technology companies in our community could provide our students with research, internship, and workforce opportunities." The statement emphasized the University was "not involved in the site selection, capital construction, property development, or zoning related aspects."

Board member Fierke questioned the heat calculations and power consumption, noting the application estimated 3,000,000 kilowatt-hours per year, which at 2.45 kilowatts per pound of produce would yield 600-700 tons of produce. This seemed excessive for the space described.

Board member Camarata expressed skepticism about the return on investment, asking why not use heat pumps instead of servers for heating. Prashanth explained they would use the same amount of electricity either way, but servers provide dual benefits - computing power for research plus heat generation.

Board member Riddell Kent raised several concerns, noting "agri-business" is not defined in the town code and therefore not a permitted use. She stated "This PDD would allow a data center down the line. This would also be opening the door for that." She called for a moratorium on "AI related infrastructure until we can update our zoning code and our comprehensive plan."

The board extensively discussed whether to pursue a moratorium. Board member Fierke stated "I would consider that. I think it behooves the town to slow down and better understand what is happening. I'm not sure if this proposal in front of us is data center related or not." However, she felt data centers and agri-business "should not be connected into one moratorium."

Interim Supervisor Holleran expressed caution about rushing into a moratorium just "to get a good round of applause," stating "We're here to be thoughtful and intensive about what we're doing and understand what they want to do."

After lengthy discussion, Mr. Holleran made a motion to adjourn the presentation so the board could "do some fact finding and gather information and provide you with questions." He indicated they might schedule a special meeting to discuss the matter further. The motion was seconded.

Mr. Ruane offered to have the board tour the property to better understand the scale and layout, which he had done that day and found "really enlightening."

Board member Riddell Kent read a prepared statement:

I have clear questions and concerns about this proposal. This proposal references Page 12 of the Town's 2014 Comprehensive Plan. "Agri-business" was NOT and still is not defined nor is it a use listed in our zoning code. Therefore, it is not a permitted use. Our current zoning code isn't updated to even review a proposal like this.

It's an AI research facility with data center component to control greenhouses.

The proposal is a manufactured use of the term "Agri-business", so it should be prohibited.

As far as I can tell, this PDD would allow a data center. There's no evidence that NYSEG was consulted. This EAF anticipates 3 GW hours of energy per year which could power 400 homes... an approximate estimation. Therefore, is not environmentally friendly.

This proposed project is a 153-acre development proposal with intense Ag use. It is a substantial development proposal. We don't know how they are they're paying for this project, no mention of a timeline, project cost, schedule, is financing in place? Future expansion plans? This would fundamentally change a neighborhood. I'm just trying to get a better sense of this project. How could the existing water well serve as an adequate water supply? The EAF says no impact. Their Letter to Code Office requested confirmation that use of the property for the "Agri-business" constitutes a "home occupation." A home occupation is for one person only such as a hair dresser. Employees (plural) are not allowed in RA-40 zones.

I feel we need a Moratorium on AI data centers and related infrastructure until we can update our zoning code and Comprehensive Plan. I would like Mr. Rivera's input during the process if the board will agree to a moratorium. At last month's meeting, he offered a draft of a zoning amendment to regulate data centers for the Town Board's consideration.

RESOLUTION 2025-0127 (08:45) Motion by BH, seconded by JMC;

Whereas the Town Board votes to adjourn the presentation;

Whereas Eco-Yotta, Inc., *Zoning Amendment Application for 357 County Highway 9, RA-40 into PDD*;

Whereas will stay pending further review;

Now therefore be it resolved;

		AYE	NAY
Patricia Riddell Kent	Board Member	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>
Kim Fierke	Board Member	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>
Joseph M. Camarata	Board Member	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>
Brett D. Holleran	Interim Supervisor	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>

MOTION CARRIED

The public hearing continued from the previous month. Chris Maby, the engineer for the project, clarified that the subdivided property does not extend to Emmons Hill Road due to a strip owned by the Hotaling family and land controlled by NYS DOT. He emphasized "There is no access to Emmons Hill Road from this property" and NYS DOT would only allow access at the existing intersection. He stated this meeting was only about the zoning change, with "no contract" and "nothing on the table for any type of business."

Jeffrey Feinberg, representing the Price Chopper Plaza, explained they had tried for years to put a convenience store with gas at their location but were restricted by Price Chopper's lease preventing food sales. He asked the board to defer the decision so he could negotiate with Price Chopper's new leadership, stating "If we're going to be across the street and it were zoned to have it at our property and the traffic light is there, let us go."

Pat Jacobs stated "people want to see residential areas remain residential. And if you come into the town with a business in mind, welcome. But go where the businesses go. Don't take the land that's residential and agricultural and force that change on the community."

Whereupon the resolution was put to a vote and recorded as follows:

		AYE	NAY
Patricia Riddell Kent	Board Member	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>
Kim Fierke	Board Member	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>
Joseph M. Camarata	Board Member	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>
Brett D. Holleran	Interim Supervisor	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>

MOTION CARRIED

Board member Fierke read a prepared statement outlining five areas of concern: 1) Lack of alignment with the comprehensive plan which prioritizes townhouses and condominiums; 2) B-2 zoning allowing inappropriate uses like auto showrooms and mobile home sales; 3) Environmental impact concerns about a gas station near a stream flowing to the Susquehanna River; 4) Traffic and safety concerns; 5) Lack of community consultation. She voted to deny.

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Board member Fierke’s Statement on Rezoning at Emmons and County Road 7

The proposed rezoning at the corner of Emmons and County Road 7 has weighed on my mind. While I see potential benefits—such as a gas station on the east side of Town and a new building site—there are several unresolved issues that lead me to vote **against** on the zone change at this time.

I outline five key areas of concern:

1. Alignment with the Comprehensive Plan

The Town’s 2014 Comprehensive Plan, though outdated, prioritizes the development of townhouses and condominiums along this corridor (see p. 11). Given the rise in short-term rentals and the shortage of affordable long-term housing, this site presents an opportunity to address a pressing community need. While I understand infrastructure concerns, housing still warrants a serious conversation. More broadly, County Road 7 is showing signs of distress: vacant and overgrown properties like the old Sunoco station, the Pizza Hut, the former 20th Century Pool & Spa (also known as the illegal pot dispensary), and now the vacancy where Walgreens once occupied. These issues call for a comprehensive, community-driven plan—not isolated development.

2. Concerns with B-2 Zoning

The B-2 Business District is intended for heavier commercial uses separate from those uses which are primarily oriented toward the highway traveler. (Ch. 130-30 of Code). While some B-2 uses—such as restaurants or a gas station with an SUP—might fit, others do not. Permitted uses like auto showrooms, truck or farm equipment dealers, mobile home sales, snowmobile sales, car washes, among others (see Town Code Ch. 130) are not appropriate for this location and raise concerns about future development.

3. Environmental Impact

Even with modern protections, the environmental risks of a gas station remain. And I would like to note that we had a representative from Delta Engineering at our July meeting show us plans for a gas station on that property. The nearby stream flows directly into the Susquehanna River, and runoff from vehicles and pumps poses a real threat to water quality.

4. Traffic and Safety

If the Department of Transportation creates a direct in/out access via the existing stoplight, I worry about increased congestion, altered traffic patterns, and safety risks for drivers and pedestrians.

5. Community Input

Residents—especially those near Emmons Farms—have expressed concerns about the zone change and its impact. Too often, I’ve seen projects move forward with little to no community consultation and this must change. The people deserve a voice in decisions that affect their neighborhoods.

For these reasons, I am voting **no** on the proposed zone change. I am deeply concerned about the deterioration of the Farmhouse property, which has stood vacant for 18–24 months. However, I am committed to working with local business owners, including Marty Patton, to explore thoughtful, comprehensive development for the east end. I would gladly host a community-wide gathering to bring together residents and business leaders to discuss a shared vision for the area.

*Public notice published in The Daily Star, August 28, 2025.

RESOLUTION 2025-0129 (09:20) Motion by KF, seconded by PRK;

Whereas the Town Board votes to deny;
Whereas Zoning amendment application made by Martin Patton and Christopher J. Maby, CPESC, Director of Transportation/Civil Services, Delta Engineering, Emmons Farmhouse parcel 289.00-1-44.01.;
Whereas seeking to convert to B2 from R10;
Now therefore be it resolved;
Whereupon the resolution was put to a vote and recorded as follows:

		AYE	NAY
Patricia Riddell Kent	Board Member	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>
Kim Fierke	Board Member	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>
Joseph M. Camarata	Board Member	<u> </u>	<u> X </u>
Brett D. Holleran	Interim Supervisor	<u> </u>	<u> X </u>
The foregoing resolution was thereupon declared duly rejected.			
VOTE	AYES (2)	NAYS (2)	

MOTION FAILS

Whereas the Town Board votes to approve;

Whereas Zoning amendment application made by Martin Patton and Christopher J. Maby, CPESC, Director of Transportation/Civil Services, Delta Engineering, Emmons Farmhouse parcel 289.00-1-44.01.;

Whereas seeking to convert to B2 from R10;

Now therefore be it resolved;

Whereupon the resolution was put to a vote and recorded as follows:

		AYE	NAY
Patricia Riddell Kent	Board Member	_____	<u> X </u>
Kim Fierke	Board Member	_____	<u> X </u>
Joseph M. Camarata	Board Member	<u> X </u>	_____
Brett D. Holleran	Interim Supervisor	<u> X </u>	_____

The foregoing resolution was thereupon declared duly rejected.

VOTE AYES (2) NAYS (2)

MOTION FAILS

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Highway, Water and Sewer Committee

Board member Ridell Kent reported that brush and leaf pickup was scheduled for the last three Mondays in October.

The V-plow purchase for the water department vehicle was discussed, with quotes ranging from approximately \$6,900 to \$10,000. The board decided to go with the lower quote.

The revised sweeper rental quote was tabled to next month pending clarification, as the price had increased from \$9,150 to \$11,500.

Cody Schmitt, the new highway superintendent, reported on switching truck #173 from rear to front discharge. Parts were already purchased and quotes for labor ranged from \$9,270 to \$10,210, with the board approving the lower quote from a more local vendor.

Board member Camarata reported on the swimming pool project progress: gutters were welded in place, bracing installed for steps, with concrete to be poured October 17th at 10 AM. Work continued on plumbing in the pump house.

Pete Andrews was thanked for bringing more Southside businesses into the water district.

Discussion occurred about potentially reducing speed limits on Gifford Hill Road, as the Town of Milford had reduced their portion to 35 mph.

Board member Fierke expressed "sincere thanks to Brett for taking over the highway superintendent" position along with supervisor duties, calling it "really incredible." She also thanked JMC for helping and welcomed Cody Schmitt to the position.

Whereas the Town Board votes to approve purchase of V-plow for water department vehicle;

Whereas the cost \$10,247;

Whereas 'best value' selected of three quotes;

Now therefore be it resolved;

Whereupon the resolution was put to a vote and recorded as follows:

		AYE	NAY
Joseph M. Camarata	Board Member	<u> X </u>	_____
Patricia Riddell Kent	Board Member	<u> X </u>	_____
Kim Fierke	Board Member	<u> X </u>	_____
Brett D. Holleran	Interim Supervisor	<u> X </u>	_____

The foregoing resolution was thereupon declared duly adopted.

VOTE AYES (4)

MOTION CARRIED

Public Safety Committee

Waiting on a new constable vehicle, with the current one having ongoing problems.

Facilities Technology Parks

Nothing to report.

Legislative Committee
Board member Fierke provided an update on the Short-Term Rental Ad-Hoc Committee. The committee finalized their work and presented to the full board. A community presentation about their findings was planned for November.

Committee member Melissa Jervis stated that short-term rentals owned by non-primary residents make up under 3% of total housing inventory. She argued this small percentage wouldn't solve housing availability issues if curtailed. She noted there were no formal complaints in 2024 or 2025 and that regulations were working. Her full report will be made available at the end of this document.

Human Resources and Public Benefit
Nothing to report.

Attorney
Nothing to report.

Code Enforcement
Clinton Rearick, the new code enforcement officer, was reported to be doing an excellent job, beginning to address blighted properties with numerous complaints. Progress was noted on the property abutting Reinhardt Home Heating in West Oneonta, with grass finally being mowed.

Miscellaneous

RESOLUTION 2025-0132 (09:57) Motion by BH, seconded by KE;

PROPOSED ACTION: COOPERSTOWN ALL-STAR VILLAGE WATER SYSTEMS IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT

WHEREAS, the Cooperstown All-Star Village is proposing the Cooperstown All-Star Village Water Systems Improvements Project (Project), located in the Town of Oneonta, Otsego County, New York; and

WHEREAS, the Project has been classified as an “Unlisted Action” as defined by the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) in 6 NYCRR Part 617.2(al); and

WHEREAS, it is the intent of the Town of Oneonta Town Board to assume the role of “Lead Agency” for purposes of conducting a SEQRA assessment of the Project; and

WHEREAS, Part I of a Short Environmental Assessment Form (SEAF) has been completed, reviewed by the Town of Oneonta Town Board, and will be circulated to all Involved and Interested Agencies for purposes of establishing the Town of Oneonta Town Board as “Lead Agency” in accordance with 6 NYCRR Part 617.6(b).

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT

RESOLVED AND DETERMINED, that the Town of Oneonta Town Board will send said Part I of the Short Environmental Assessment Form and associated site figure to the attached list of “Interested/Involved Agencies” under cover of a “Notice of Intent to Establish Lead Agency” letter for purposes of establishing Lead Agency status under SEQRA; and it is further

RESOLVED, that the Town of Oneonta Town Supervisor, together with the Town of Oneonta Attorney and B&L, are hereby authorized to take all actions, serve all notices, and complete all documents required to give full force and effect to this determination.

The question of the adoption of the foregoing resolution was duly put to a vote, and upon roll call, the vote was as follows:

		AYE	NAY
Patricia Riddell Kent	Board Member	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>
Kim Fierke	Board Member	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>
Joseph M. Camarata	Board Member	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>
Brett D. Holleran	Interim Supervisor	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>
The foregoing resolution was thereupon declared duly adopted.			
VOTE	AYES (4) AIF		MOTION CARRIED

RESOLUTION 2025-0133 (10:00) Motion by PRK, seconded by BH;

Whereupon the resolution was put to a vote and recorded as follows:

		AYE	NAY
Joseph M. Camarata	Board Member	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>
Patricia Riddell Kent	Board Member	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>
Kim Fierke	Board Member	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>
Brett D. Holleran	Interim Supervisor	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>

The foregoing resolution was thereupon declared duly adopted.

VOTE AYES (4) AIF

MOTION CARRIED

RESOLUTION 2025-0134 (10:01) Motion by PRK, seconded by JCM;

Whereas the Town Board votes to approve payment of the bills;

Now therefore be it resolved;

Whereupon the resolution was put to a vote and recorded as follows:

		AYE	NAY
Joseph M. Camarata	Board Member	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>
Patricia Riddell Kent	Board Member	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>
Kim Fierke	Board Member	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>
Brett D. Holleran	Interim Supervisor	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>

The foregoing resolution was thereupon declared duly adopted.

VOTE AYES (4) AIF

MOTION CARRIED

§ “Privilege of the floor” §

Greg Andrew of 6319 State Highway 7 questioned Eco-Yotta's business model, stating "it's not a business to have interns come from a college" or "to grow lettuce with a million-dollar heating equipment." He argued the real business was a data center, estimating \$30 million investment based on their square footage proposals.

Ramona Litcher reiterated concerns about available property already zoned appropriately and impacts on neighborhoods. She questioned power consumption, future growth plans, and wanted guarantees that utility costs wouldn't be passed to residents.

Prashanth Gorantala from Eco-Yotta responded that they purchased agricultural land to do agriculture through hydroponics, which is considered agriculture. He emphasized they were "not a data center" but "just utilizing the technology" sized only for what's needed to heat the building. Mr. Gorantala stated there were community benefits including year-round employment and technology sharing with local farmers.

Board member Fierke commented that the narrative had "completely left" Eco-Yotta, with misinformation spreading online about a huge data center coming to Oneonta.

David Koehn noted that if the applicants only wanted to do agriculture, they wouldn't need a zoning change, questioning why the rezoning was necessary.

RESOLUTION 2025-0135 (10:25) Motion by BH, seconded by JCM;

Whereas the Town Board votes to adjourn;

Whereas the Town Board having no further business;

Now therefore be it resolved;

Whereupon the resolution was put to a vote and recorded as follows:

		AYE	NAY
Joseph M. Camarata	Board Member	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>
Patricia Riddell Kent	Board Member	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>
Kim Fierke	Board Member	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>
Brett D. Holleran	Interim Supervisor	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>

The foregoing resolution was thereupon declared duly adopted.

VOTE AYES (4) AIF

MOTION CARRIED

Respectfully submitted,

Ryan F. Pereira
Oneonta Town Clerk

§-PUBLIC STATEMENTS-§

SUNY Oneonta – ECO-YOTTA Memorandum of Understanding Statement

As the Town Board works with the owners of ECO-YOTTA to determine compatibility between its business vision and the community's needs, the University has been asked about its MOU related to this project. The statement below is to offer clarity on the agreement between SUNY Oneonta and ECO-YOTTA.

As many in this room have experienced, SUNY Oneonta is committed to building a community beyond our campus. One of the hallmarks of President Cardelle's administration is the development of the Regional Innovation Council to provide a space for higher education, healthcare, business, human service, and public officials to connect and support community and economic development opportunities.

In the spirit of supporting economic investment and workforce development in the Oneonta area, SUNY Oneonta has welcomed the opportunity to engage with ECO-YOTTA on ways to collaborate, should this project proceed.

While in its early stages, the Memo of Understanding maps out how the addition of a new tech company in our community could provide our students with research, internship, and workforce opportunities. To be clear, while the University is eager to support the next generation of innovators and entrepreneurs in our community, we are not involved in the site selection, capital construction, property development, or zoning related aspects.

This type of collaboration reflects the University's dedication to strengthening academic programs, opening new career pathways for students, and promoting innovation to benefit both the campus and the broader community.

Good evening members of the Town Board:

My name is **Tirusha Dave**, and I am here tonight as the applicant behind this project — but more importantly, as a woman, a minority, and a professional who has faced hostility, misinformation, and prejudice throughout this process.

1. Safety & Security

At the very first Town Board meeting I attended, I was subjected to a **direct public threat** made by Jim Hurtubise. That moment was not only inappropriate — it was frightening.

No person, regardless of background or profession, should ever fear for their safety while participating in a lawful and transparent community process.

That incident has stayed with me, and it has made me question how welcoming this community truly is to anyone who looks different, thinks differently, or brings new ideas forward.

My right to feel safe, while participating in a lawful public process, is **non-negotiable** and **must be protected by this Board**.

2. Racism & Harassment

Since that night, I have received a number of **racist, hateful, and threatening messages** through my company's website. These messages were not about the project's facts or scope — they were about me. About the color of my skin, my ethnicity, and who I am.

The words used were cruel and dehumanizing. I have **documented every one of these criminal messages** and have **already begun the process of sharing them with local and federal law enforcement**.

It is heartbreaking to experience this kind of hate in 2025. What should have been a discussion about zoning and progress has instead become a **platform for racism and personal attacks**.

That is unacceptable, and it reflects far more on the individuals spreading this hate than it ever will on me.

3. Misrepresentation of My Project

Throughout this process, I have watched my project be **misrepresented and distorted** by those who refuse to understand it. It has been repeatedly and falsely labeled a "data center."

The Obligation of Leadership

Before I close, I want to make a broader point—one that extends beyond this specific project.

When someone seeks or holds any position of public leadership, there is an obligation to speak from a place of **truth, integrity, and responsibility**. Public statements— especially about projects or issues that impact a community—should be based on **facts**, not personal interpretation, or political convenience.

Leaders should **educate, not incite**; they should **clarify, not confuse**; and they should never use their platform to spread fear for personal or political gain.

When individuals who aspire to lead a town contribute to misinformation, they don't just mislead—they **divide**. And division is the very opposite of leadership.

In closing, I want to say this:

I came to Oneonta with good intentions — to build something forward-thinking, rooted in education, sustainability, and collaboration. I have shown transparency at every stage, opened my doors, shared my plans, and welcomed dialogue.

What I did not expect was to be met with **threats, hate, and prejudice.**

Yet, I am still here — because I believe in truth, fairness, and progress grounded in integrity.

I ask this Board, and everyone listening, to **rise above fear and misinformation.**

Look at the facts.

And ask yourselves whether you want to be remembered as a community that resisted innovation and allowed harassment—or one that had the **courage to uphold integrity and embrace a future grounded in facts.**

Thank you.

Introduction and Record Request

Good evening, I'm Prashanth Gorantala, husband of Tirusha Dave, applicant for the EcoYotta project on tonight's agenda. I request that my statement be entered into the official record, as my family's safety and well-being are at risk.

Hurtubise's Threatening Remark:

We've faced a direct threat from Jim Hurtubise, our neighbor, who said at a past meeting, 'You have about 2000 feet of property adjacent to mine, how do you plan to secure that?' This wasn't a question—it felt like a warning of potential harm, given our proximity. We've reported this to police, and it's left us fearing for our safety.

Racial Comments:

Worse, we've received racist messages like 'go back to your country,' targeting Tirusha's identity as a minority woman. These are documented and under investigation with authorities. This hate isn't just personal—it reflects a community challenge we must address together.

Misinformation and Rivera's Role:

Misinformation has fueled this hostility. The August 13 claim that EcoYotta is a 'subsidiary of a subsidiary of a company in Mumbai, India' is false—our project is a U.S.-based sustainable agriculture initiative. Will Rivera's social media posts, mislabeling us as a

'data center' and urging mass emails/messages, have incited this harassment, threatening our security further. Received a message on our website after Will Rivera's post yesterday on social media: 'go to hell and stay out of Oneonta, NY.' This isn't leadership—it's reckless division.

Demand for Responsibility:

My family asks: Who will take responsibility if anything happens to us tonight or afterward? We've sought police protection, but the Board and community leaders must act. We need public condemnation of threats and racism, and a commitment to our safety.

Community Appeal and Project Vision:

Despite this, we remain dedicated. EcoYotta offers jobs, innovation, and sustainability for Oneonta. I urge the Board to correct the record, ensure our protection, and lead us toward a future where truth and inclusion prevail. Stand with us, not against us—thank you.

.....
Eamonn Hinchey

295 Emmons Hill Rd

October 6, 2025

To the Members of the Oneonta Town Board:

Let it be known that I am a strong supporter of a gas station in Emmons. I believe it is needed and could serve the community well. However, I am deeply concerned about the location currently under consideration.

With Walgreens gone from the Price Chopper Plaza, we have already seen a blow to that commercial space. Are we now just aiding in the shutdown of yet another plaza that could remain commercially viable? To move forward with building a Stewarts on the proposed parcel, we are talking about demolishing a potential owner-occupied building and creating a new traffic light, one that could severely alter traffic at Emmons Hills Road. All of this is being proposed without fully exploring the possibility of placing the very same gas station across the road, in the existing plaza that already has multiple vacant and appropriately zoned parcels.

With just a little research, I contacted Jeff Feinberg, who manages those parcels. He explained that the past obstacle to gas stations in that plaza was a non-compete clause in Price Chopper's lease. I then called Golub Corporation, the owner of Price Chopper, and they told me that this past practice of barring competition has relaxed under new leadership. That means the roadblock that existed before may no longer stand in the way.

It would be unreasonable and irresponsible to allow rezoning for a gas station without first ruling out the possibility of locating the very same business across the street, on land already zoned for commercial use, with an existing traffic light, and existing parking.

Finally, I want to remind the board that the original owners of the Emmons farm always intended to keep a separation between their northern parcels, meant for housing, and their southern parcels, meant for commercial use. Rezoning this property would disregard that legacy of thoughtful land use.

In closing, I am not opposed to a gas station in Emmons, in fact I welcome it, but I urge this board not to approve rezoning until all existing, viable, and appropriate alternatives have been fully and transparently explored.

Respectfully submitted,

Eamonn Hinchey

Members of the Town Board,

I want to express my appreciation for the contributions of the committee in preparing the Final Report on Short-Term Rentals. While I understand that the majority of the committee may support the recommended policy changes, I want to be clear about my position, outlining what I support and what I do not.

In summary: the proposed policy changes specific to zoning changes for non-owner-occupied short-term rentals are a disproportionate and ineffective solution to our housing challenge. The community survey, while an important source of sentiment, is not statistically representative. Furthermore, the true cause of our low housing inventory is a lack of new construction and other macroeconomic factors, not the small fraction of homes used as short-term rentals. A policy that restricts STRs would cause more harm than good by removing significant economic and social benefits without providing a real solution to housing availability. Instead of sweeping changes, I recommend we build on our existing, effective regulations and focus on policies that encourage long-term development.

Understanding the Survey Results

The survey's results must be interpreted with significant caution. First, the responses show a mix of opinions and concerns, not a unified voice calling for significant change. Second, the data is not statistically representative. With a response rate of just 0.9% (46 completed surveys from a population of 5,065), the findings are insufficient to be the sole basis for a major policy decision that would affect the entire town.

The True Cause of Our Housing Challenges

While short-term rentals are a factor in our housing conversation, a proper analysis shows that the low inventory is primarily a result of broader macroeconomic issues and a lack of new construction. Out of a total housing stock of 2,338 units, only 63 are non-primary residence short-term rentals, accounting for just 2.70% of the inventory. Attributing the housing shortage to this small fraction of homes is an oversimplification. Instead of providing an effective solution, a policy to restrict STRs would have the unintended consequence of removing significant economic and social benefits from our community.

The Economic & Social Benefits of Short-Term Rentals

A full picture of the issue also includes the significant economic and social contributions that short-term rentals provide to our community.

- Economic Impact: Otsego County tourism generated \$21.6 million in tax revenue in 2024, helping to reduce the tax burden on residents. Data shows that tourism-generated state and local taxes saved the average Otsego County household an additional \$1,835 in taxes.
 - Social Impact: Our community has a demonstrated need for furnished, temporary housing. The concern that these properties sit vacant in the off-season is simply not true; for example, short term rentals have provided crucial furnished housing for various members of our community and their guests, including:
 - Medical and travel professionals working on local infrastructure and in our hospitals.
 - Families displaced by unforeseen events like house fires who need a place to stay with their family and pets.
 - New residents who are waiting for their home purchase or construction to be completed.
 - Visiting family of local residents who need more space than a hotel can offer, particularly during holidays and special occasions.
-

A Proposal for Community-Wide Solutions

Our existing permit and regulation processes are effective. The committee's own report found no formal complaints regarding STRs in either 2024 or 2025. This success demonstrates that our policies work to ensure responsible hosting and good neighbors. I am fully supportive of policies that build on this success and ensure our community remains vibrant.

I support most of the proposed changes, but draw the line at sweeping zoning changes for non-owner-occupied rentals. I recommend the following actions to further support our community's growth and the character of our neighborhoods:

- Strengthen Existing STR Regulations: Uphold and strengthen regulations that ensure safety, transparency, and responsible property management. I also believe that we should improve these regulations by incorporating the best practices of reputable hosts and owners, whose effective management already ensures positive experiences for both guests and neighbors.
- Allow ADUs: Allow Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) to increase the housing supply in general.
- Encourage Long-Term Development: Direct our focus and resources toward creating an environment that encourages new residential development, which is the true root cause of the housing shortage.

I am confident that we are all committed to a strong and vibrant community. The evidence is clear: short-term rentals are not a significant enough factor to warrant sweeping changes. Building on the effective policies we have is the right way to go.

Melissa Jervis

Data Sources

- New York State Tourism Industry Association (NYSTIA) and Destination Marketing Corporation for Otsego County (DMCOC)
- The Final Report of the Community Ad-Hoc Committee on Short-Term Rentals
- U.S. Census Bureau data, specifically the American Community Survey (ACS) 2023 5-year estimates, as compiled by [Census Reporter](#).

(Presented and submitted in hard copy at the meeting on 10/8)

October 8, 2025

Over the past three months, this issue has been brought to the Town Board and discussed at the August and September meetings. It is now October. There is no justifiable reason to rezone this property — whether for a gas station or any other business. Doing so opens the doors to unfavorable traffic congestion, likely negative environmental impact, and the possibility of repeated changing of hands from business to business. The variance is over. It has plenty of potential as a residentially-zoned property and should remain as such. No necessity has been demonstrated to justify rezoning in this instance.

As I mentioned before, I'm an evaluator. I'm data-driven. In looking over the Town's 2014 comprehensive plan, residents support commercial growth in appropriately zoned areas AND "want to protect their quality of life." My review of the past three months of meeting minutes shows that roughly **95% of all public comments oppose the rezoning**. That alone should speak volumes.

But tonight, I want to focus on the **process** — and what I've observed. I'm deeply concerned about the **lack of transparency** surrounding this project. Monday, I attended the Planning Board meeting where the **Farmhouse subdivision was approved** — disappointingly so. They acknowledged the **lack of transparency** but noted that, procedurally, given *only* a subdivision request, they had no grounds to deny the request. In reviewing the July through September minutes for this Town Board meeting, I found **clear inconsistencies**. In July, the record notes "Stewart's Convenience Store." Yet in September, midway through the meeting, we were told that was merely a rumor — and that since those words weren't in the application, we could disregard it. As recently as Monday, the Delta engineer **denied any knowledge** of what was planned.

Last month, several board members appeared to **make statements in favor** of the rezoning — suggesting how a gas station might "blend in" or defending why other parcels weren't suitable. Shouldn't the only people making a persuasive argument for a project be in the audience? To quote *The Big Lebowski*, "This is our concern, Dude."

Why are we here tonight? Why even go through this charade if some members may have already made up their minds to ignore the overwhelming voice of residents in favor of prearranged outcomes? It makes it a farce.

People are losing faith in government for many reasons, even at the local level. When **money and property interests exploit bureaucratic loopholes** to override community needs and community voice, that is a problem. When officials allow it, that's not just a policy failure — that's a breach of trust.

You are **elected representatives**, here to serve the people who live and work in the Town of Oneonta. They are asking — begging — to be heard.

Please — be on the right side of this decision.

Jacquelyn Christensen
Oneonta, NY

..... (Submitted in hard copy at the meeting on 10/8)

October 7, 2025

To: Town Board
Re: Emmons Farmhouse rezoning and AI data center rezoning issue

My name is Faith Tiemann, Oneonta resident, and I'm writing in opposition to the proposed zoning amendment for the Emmons farmhouse property and the AI data center rezoning in the Town of Oneonta.

Approving these changes would set a dangerous precedent for future development in our community. Once one property is rezoned, it becomes much harder to say no to the next, and soon the unique character and balance of our area could be lost.

I'm also concerned that many residents have not had a real opportunity to understand or weigh in on this proposal. Decisions of this magnitude should not move forward without broad, transparent community input. Additionally, changes to these two zoning areas could result in compromising vegetation and water access for local residents.

Thank you.

Faith Tiemann
.....

(Submitted in hard copy at the meeting on 10/8)

October 8, 2025

My name is Kate Hoffman, and I work as a school counselor at an elementary school here in Oneonta. Having lived in this community my whole life, I care deeply about the safety, stability, and close-knit spirit that make our town such a special place to call home.

I'm opposed to the proposed rezoning of the Emmons Farmhouse property because this decision extends far beyond a single lot—it sets a precedent that could reshape the entire neighborhood. Converting residential land to commercial use opens the door to development that may permanently change the area's character and sense of safety. Increased traffic, light pollution, and strain on local waterways will inevitably impact nearby families, including many of the children and parents I work with every day.

Zoning laws are in place to safeguard residents and preserve the livability of our neighborhoods. Making an exception for one property weakens those protections and diminishes community trust in our local decision-making.

I urge you to listen to the strong and unified voices of Oneonta residents. Please prioritize the long-term well-being of our families and neighborhoods over short-term gains or convenience.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kate Hoffman
Oneonta, NY

Abstract #	10	Dates 9/12/25-10/8/25			
		Friday - Wednesday			
General Checking					
Fund		PrePaid	To Be Paid	Total PrePaid/To Be Paid	
General	1	\$ -	\$ 152,175.02	\$ 152,175.02	
Highway	3	\$ -	\$ 72,626.22	\$ 72,626.22	
St Lights #1	7	\$ -	\$ 2,251.51	\$ 2,251.51	
St Lights #2	14	\$ -	\$ 247.56	\$ 247.56	
St Lights #3	15	\$ -	\$ 870.39	\$ 870.39	
St Lights #4	16	\$ -	\$ 50.86	\$ 50.86	
St Lights #5	17	\$ -	\$ 251.87	\$ 251.87	
Butler Creek-Blanchard Capital	28	\$ -	\$ 21,948.16	\$ 21,948.16	
Butler Creek-Winney Hill Capital	29	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
Fire Protection	25	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
Subtotal		\$ -	\$ 250,421.59	\$ 250,421.59	
District Checking					
WESD	8	\$ -	\$ 1,104.76	\$ 1,104.76	
WSSD	9	\$ -	\$ 570.91	\$ 570.91	
SSD	10	\$ -	\$ 2079.94	\$ 2079.94	
WWD	11	\$ -	\$ 1,253.83	\$ 1,253.83	
PWD	12	\$ -	\$ 317.49	\$ 317.49	
SSWD	21	\$ -	\$ 3,290.54	\$ 3,290.54	
District Subtotal		\$ -	\$ 8,617.47	\$ 8,617.47	

Trust and Agency Checking					
T & A	99	\$ 61.24	\$ 238.64	\$ 299.88	
		\$ 61.24	\$ 238.64	\$ 299.88	
CDBG					
CDBG Grants	26	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
Totals		\$ 61.24	\$ 259,277.70	\$ 259,338.94	
Clerk:		Approved Expenses / Voucher # 2025-539 to 2025-587			
		General	\$ 152,175.02		
		Highway	\$ 72,626.22		
		St Lighting	\$ 3,672.19		
		Blanchard Ave-Butler Crk	\$ 21,948.16		
		Fire Protection	\$ -		
		WESD	\$ 1,104.76		
		WSSD	\$ 570.91		
		SSD	\$ 2,079.94		
		WWD	\$ 1,253.83		
		PWD	\$ 317.49		
		SSWD	\$ 3,290.54		
		T&A	\$ 299.88		
		CDBG	\$ -		
			\$ 259,338.94		