

**A Citizen's Report**  
on  
**A Meeting of the Corning City Council**

**February 2, 2026**

The Council for the City of Corning, New York held its regular meeting at 6:30 p.m. at Council Chambers, Civic Center Plaza, Corning, New York.

All Councilmembers attended the meeting. Counting City of Corning employees, 25 members of the public were in the audience.

**City Manager's Report – Status of the Administration**

City Manager Mark Ryckman gave his 29<sup>th</sup> annual review of the City. The following is from Mr. Ryckman's report, with edits made for context only.

*The City's finances, which remain central to its operations, are stable. Long-standing financial planning practices have positioned the City to manage periods of uncertainty and disruption. The City Council's continued investment in modernizing the City's financial systems, including the computerized accounting system implemented in 2021, has strengthened transparency, accountability, and internal controls.*

*Despite this progress, the City continues to operate within several structural constraints. State revenue sharing remains a significant long-term challenge. Aid and Incentives to Municipalities (AIM) funding was reduced 7.5% approximately 15 years ago and has never been restored. While the Governor's Proposed Executive Budget again includes Temporary Municipal Assistance, this funding is non-recurring and has not increased. Similarly, arterial reimbursement rates for State highways local governments maintain (Denison Parkway) have not been updated since 1987.*

*At the same time, the City faces ongoing cost pressures. While inflation has moderated from recent peaks, costs for wages, health insurance, supplies, vehicles, and infrastructure components remain elevated relative to historical norms. Successor labor agreements with CSEA and the Crystal City Police Benevolent Association, along with upcoming negotiations with the Fire Department, will also influence future budgets as the City works to remain competitive in the labor market. These pressures are compounded by the State's two percent property tax cap, which increasingly does not reflect the impact of actual cost drivers facing local governments.*

*Staffing levels continue to limit the City's operational capacity. In 1990, the City employed 167 full-time employees. By 2003, that number had declined to 131, and today the City operates with only 101 full-time employees. While these reductions have contributed to long-term financial stability, they have also limited the City's ability to absorb additional responsibilities amid increasing regulatory requirements, aging infrastructure, more complex technology systems, and heightened public expectations.*

*A related challenge is the City's capacity to implement an expanding portfolio of grant-funded projects. While external funding opportunities remain essential, they also bring increased project management, compliance, and reporting demands. In an organization with limited capacity, these responsibilities fall to department heads, reducing the time available for daily operations, workforce development, and long-term planning. This underscores the importance of aligning project scope and pace with internal capacity to deliver projects effectively while sustaining core services and meeting our statutory and regulatory obligations.*

*Maintaining the City's financial stability requires the continued ability to generate sufficient revenue to support local services through fair taxation and fees, supplemented by State aid, while exercising discipline on the expenditure side.*

### **New Business – Mayor's Term of Office:**

The Council unanimously approved the Mayor's appointment of Councilmembers to a special committee on the term of office of the Mayor:

#### **Mayor's Term**

**Purpose:** To determine the timeline, develop talking points, and recommend a communications plan for a ballot measure proposing to change the mayor's term of office to four years, and to bring these considerations to the City Council no later than June 1, 2026.

Deputy Mayor Clark, Chairperson

Councilmember Bacalles

Councilmember Hunt

Councilmember Paterson

*Background: On March 7, 2022, the Corning City Council created a Citizens "Representation" Committee (Citizens Committee) of five Corning residents to (among other things):*

*"Evaluate and recommend to the City Council any changes to the Mayor's Term of office."*

*The Citizens Committee recommended to the City Council that:*

*The term of Office of the Mayor be four years, effective for the mayor's term starting in January of 2026, and that a Local Law be developed for City Council consideration to change the City Charter to effect these changes.*

*At its meeting on August 7, 2023, the Corning City Council approved a resolution asking that the City Attorney develop a local law to implement the Citizens Committee's recommendation.*

*Proposed Public Law #7 of 2023 was the result. This Public law was before the electorate at the general election on November 5, 2024. It asked the question of whether the Charter of the City of Corning should be amended to change the length of the mayor's term from two years to four years.*

*The electorate answered, "No." The ballot measure failed by a vote of 2171 to 2580.*

*On June 2, 2025, by a vote of 7-2 (Councilmembers Hunt and Resue voting "No") the Council set July 7, 2025, at 6:15 p.m. in Council Chambers as the date, time, and place of a public hearing on proposed Local Law #3 of 2025.*

*Had the Council adopted the proposed law, the question of whether the Charter of the City of Corning should be amended to change the length of the mayor's term from two years to four years would have again been on the ballot for a vote at the general election in November 2025.*

*However, At the July 7, 2025 Council meeting, Councilmember Hunt moved to table consideration of this issue until June 1, 2026. Councilmember Hyde seconded the motion.*

*The Councilmembers who spoke on the motion said that it will allow the Council more time to provide education and messaging concerning the issue. The delay would also ameliorate the feeling that the Council is rushing to try to undo the vote of the people taken only eight months before. Further, should the Council schedule the term change for a vote in November 2025, there would be potential confusion because the city will also elect a new*

*mayor then. On the other hand, if the issue is on the ballot in 2026, there will be no confusion because no mayoral candidate will be on the ballot in that election.*

*The motion passed unanimously and now the Council Committee on the Mayor's term will report its findings to the full Council on or before June 1, 2026.*

### **New Business -McKinney Park:**

Supported the preparation and submission of an application and, if approved, execution of all needed documents, for money from the New York State Municipal Parks and Recreation Grant Program for improvements at McKinney Park. It also authorized the City to be the lead agency under the New York Environmental Quality Review program to conduct an environmental review of the project.

*Background: According to The Leader of September 22, 2022, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) says environmental cleanup is necessary at Corning's McKinney Park (and at other city parks), after initial soil sampling showed chemical contaminants alongside ash, brick, and glass materials.*

*According to the article, when the DEC discovered the contamination, it was unclear who would foot the bill for cleanup.*

*At a Council meeting held on April 7, 2025 the City Manager explained that DEC came to the city to offer remediation of the McKinney Park and other city parks at no cost to the city. After the DEC finishes its soil characterization survey it will remediate the park down to two feet. And, if the city has a demonstrable need, documented by an approved park design, DEC will excavate further at no cost to the City to implement the design. There is also a possibility that the DEC will provide some hardscape, like cement pads, if the plan calls for them.*

*At this April 7 meeting the Council unanimously authorized a transfer of \$50,000 from the contingency fund to the fund for consultants to enable the city to engage in park planning and to put the City in the best position to take full advantage of DEC's offer.*

*Thereafter the City hired a landscape architectural firm and began a process of obtaining neighborhood input to decide what is most important to do when rebuilding the park. The landscape architect worked on schematic designs for these improvements.*

The DEC has completed its soil survey and will begin remediation later this year.

If the City is successful with this grant application, the State of New York will fund up to 90% of eligible project costs of improvements to a limit of \$900,000. Because of the work of the landscape architect and the local residents, with the grant money it is now applying for, the City hopes to install a new playground at Mckinney Park with safety surfacing. It also hopes to install stormwater improvements, improvements in the fields, and new walking paths.

If successful, the City will begin the build-out of the new park in 2027, after DEC finishes its remediation work.

**New Business – New Pay Stations for Parking Lots:**

Authorized transfer of \$95,500 from the IT & Public Safety Improvements line item to the Parking Meters Line item for the purchase of eight new centralized parking machines. At the same time the Council authorized the City to give a 25% discount for the next year to those current parking permit holders who buy an annual parking permit in a centralized metered lot.

*Background: These actions are because, in recent months, the City's centralized parking meters have failed periodically, making it impossible to collect parking fees from those using the lots without permits, while at the same time annual permit holders paid full rate for their parking privileges.*

**New Business - the Council Unanimously:**

- Approved the Mayor's appointment of Alison Salisbury Iturralde as an alternate member of the Planning Commission to serve until December 31, 2030.
- Approved the Mayor's appointment of Alison Hunt as the Council's representative to the Corning Intown District Management Association (CIDMA) for a term ending June 20, 2027.

*Background: CIDMA is a 501(c)3 entity with the same Board of Directors as the Gaffer District. The CIDMA is the "public facing entity" of the District tasked with the enhancement of many aspects of the one-square mile that is downtown Corning.*

- Approved the Mayor's appointment of Councilmembers to the following City Council committees:

**Strategic Executive Review**

Mayor Walker, Chairperson  
Councilmember Hunt  
Councilmember Paterson

**Code**

Mayor Walker, Chairperson  
Councilmember Coccho  
Councilmember Hyde

**Councilmember Pension Reporting**

Councilmember Telehany, Chairperson  
Councilmember Coccho  
Councilmember Hyde

- Closed Parking Lot # 9 from August 14 to August 16 for the Rotary Club of Corning's 2026 SummerFeast, declared it a special event for purposes of the City's code governing public events, and authorized open containers for alcohol within the approved event space from 1:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. on August 15, 2026 upon proof of complying insurance coverage by each vendor of alcohol.
- Accepted a donation of \$45.00 in the name of the Sunday Football Watchers.

*Background: Sunday Football Watchers is a program at the Corning Senior Center which gets people together at the Center to watch football.*

- Accepted a State of New York Department of Environmental Quality's engineering planning grant for \$50,000 to find sources of stormwater inflow and infiltration into the City's wastewater treatment facilities. This grant requires a 20% local match, which the Council has already included in the City's budget.
- Transferred \$33,000 from the Building Alteration Reserve line item to the line item for Equipment Repair and Maintenance to replace the main water line to the City Hall.
- Authorized the City Manager to sell surplus vehicles, equipment, and supplies by auction, sealed bids, or intermunicipal transfers during March, April, and May 2026.

*Background:*

*While sales of surplus equipment are common, inter-municipal transfers are not. These are not internal transfers among the city's departments. Intermunicipal transfers are ones which occur between municipalities or other governmental entities, like the Community College, to help each other. Intermunicipal transfers do not happen often.*

The meeting adjourned at 7:58p.m.

**NOTES**

- The writer of this report has presented items in an order different than the order at the meeting.
- The writer has, except as specifically noted, amended, or cut comments and attribution for them. Unless the writer uses quotation marks anything reported is not verbatim.
- For brevity, the writer has not included all items on the agenda of the meeting.
- The writer has added material for context or clarity and where it is extensive, is in italics and labeled "Background."