



County of Onondaga  
Office of the County Executive

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[ongov.net](http://ongov.net)

**Media Release**

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## **County Executive Joanie Mahoney Announces Creation of “Consensus Fact Check” Website**

### **Community Deserves To Have Complete & Accurate Information**

ONONDAGA COUNTY- County Executive Joanie Mahoney announced today the creation of a “Consensus Fact Check” website. The website will serve as a resource to find good and accurate information as the community discusses the Consensus Commission report and the future of our community. The website address is [www.ongov.net/consensus](http://www.ongov.net/consensus).

To date, there has unfortunately been a lot of misinformation surrounding the Consensus debate. When the source of the misinformation is a public official, it is particularly harmful because it is likely to be accepted as fact. Members of the public are encouraged to read the Consensus Commission report for themselves. This website is intended to supplement the report and assist the public in easily discovering for themselves whether they are receiving the information they need and deserve in order to make an informed decision.

County Executive Joanie Mahoney said, “Throughout the Consensus debate I have committed to offering complete and accurate information to the public. Questions about local government are important and we should respect the public enough to be straight with them. The reactionary fear mongering and purposefully misleading rhetoric do nothing to support a healthy debate.” The County Executive also added “The people of Syracuse are residents of Onondaga County and we will continue to provide the services and representation the people of Syracuse and all of Onondaga County deserve.”

The website will make reference to the inaccurate information given publicly and then provide documents for the public to access to read the facts for themselves. In some cases the inaccurate information falls into the category of “incomplete” and in some cases it is simply wrong. The goal is to provide not only “technically correct” information but also complete information. Telling half a story when it results in drawing the wrong conclusion is as bad as speaking outright untruths.

The website will use the following format:

**Background:**

In January 2017 Onondaga County government consolidated its water department (Metropolitan Water Board or MWB) with the Onondaga County Water Authority (OCWA) which, despite its name, is not part of Onondaga County government. OCWA is an independent authority governed by a board of directors and it sells water to county residents outside the city of Syracuse.

**Inaccurate Statement:**

“It’s all fluff. There is no savings of OCWA and MWB right now...It was salesmanship to get it passed in the budget. Period. Nobody wants to talk about it though.”

*Comptroller Robert Antonacci April 12th, 2017 Maxwell School of Citizenship*

**Facts:**

During the presentation of the proposed 2017 budget, County Executive Mahoney explained that OCWA had projected budgetary savings of \$1 million from combining the wholesale water operations of the County's Metro Water Board (MWB) with OCWA's retail water business. You will see on page 55 of the 2017 Onondaga County adopted budget that total appropriations for the Metropolitan Water Board went from \$11,347,023 to \$3,019,780 and specifically, the total salaries line went from \$1,651,781 to \$0.

Significant savings are realized by reduced headcount. Both OCWA and Metro Water Board held positions vacant during 2016 in anticipation of the merger of the two workforces. These vacant positions will not need to be filled due to the efficiencies gained by combining the two workforces without any layoffs.

In addition to the spending reductions in Labor and Employee Benefits achieved by reducing headcount in the consolidated organization, the combined operation will also achieve spending reductions by moving all of MWB from the Alexander F. Jones Administrative Center (the headquarters for MWB until December 31, 2016) to existing OCWA facilities. This will reduce the Maintenance, Utilities and Rent expenses for the consolidated operation.

OCWA will also drive down its expenses by combining back office systems and operations, such as budgeting, financial operations, information technology, and law.

OCWA also expects to realize efficiencies by purchasing equipment, goods, and services (including professional services such as architecture and engineering) as a single entity, rather than as two organizations with different procurement systems, policies, and procedures. These efficiencies will be realized within the annual operating and capital budget, which now exceeds \$50 million on a consolidated basis. Efficiencies are also expected in the fiscal management of the MWB capital projects that were also transferred to OCWA along with the MWB workforce.

In addition, contrary to the assertion that "nobody wants to talk about it" the topic has been discussed publicly on many occasions. For example, please see the 2017 State of the County found online at [www.ongov.net/ongovlive](http://www.ongov.net/ongovlive). Starting at 1:14:29 you will hear the County Executive discuss the merger of MWB and OCWA. The merger was also covered by the local media. Links can be found under supporting documentation. Lastly, as with all budget hearings, the Comptroller had a representative present during the conversations taking place at the Ways and Means committee of the Onondaga County Legislature.

**Supporting Documentation:**

2017 Onondaga County Budget (see page 52)

2017 State of the County

[http://www.syracuse.com/news/index.ssf/2016/09/onondaga\\_county\\_is\\_getting\\_out\\_of\\_the\\_water\\_business.html](http://www.syracuse.com/news/index.ssf/2016/09/onondaga_county_is_getting_out_of_the_water_business.html)

The website will be updated regularly. If people have a question or suggestion for a future "Fact Check" they are encouraged to send an email to [contactex@ongov.net](mailto:contactex@ongov.net).

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