

Power to the people.

In my life I've joined many different protests, and I've carried my share of picket signs. All the demonstrations had two things in common; a desire to have our voices heard and frustration that it wasn't happening.

My campaign for mayor promised a new connection to Oneonta's government, and an unprecedented ability to help shape the discussions and decision making. In a small city with big challenges, I pledged that I would give those who haven't previously had a place at the table, a chair and voice.

Having won nearly two-thirds of your votes, I've taken that as my mandate. I am committed to a partnership with you. In this moment, your help, your experience and expertise, and your voice added to a respectful dialogue is necessary to our success.

To be clear, decision making is not on the agenda. (That's why we have government committees, boards, and commissions, and it's why you've elected Common Council members.) I am looking for proposals.

For housing, for parking, deer management, increasing tourism and foot traffic, and bringing new neighbors to town...

The benefit of all of us working together is inarguable. In Oneonta, during my term as Mayor, your participation in our plans and actions are not only welcomed, but they're being solicited.

To this end, I have created or helped facilitate several "ad hoc" committees of community volunteers. Over one hundred of your neighbors have joined various workgroups. If you've an interest in helping too, please take this as your invitation.

You can see the full list of groups and track their progress on All4Oneonta.com.

There was another campaign promise I made that was meant to be similarly empowering. The OCI. The Oneonta Community Initiative.

As a long-time promoter and volunteer for some sizeable community events, I know the difficulties faced by those whose passion often outstrips their ability to fund their efforts.

There are only so many open wallets, and just a few who can financially support the wide array of worthy endeavors that regularly benefit our community. Some of our most beloved events and services have needed to cut back or discontinue programs and end traditions.

It's everyone's loss, and it compromises our ability to market our most attractive asset - quality of life.

As I am sure everyone is aware, we are in the early stages of a marketing effort to grow our population. We cannot afford to offer less. We need to offer MORE. More celebrations of community. More neighborhood connections, landscape improvements, cross-generational collaborations, and more service of neighbors.

Over the years, I've heard many people offer ideas of things that they and their friends could do... if only. Efforts that would benefit their neighborhoods.

Four months into my term, and after a lot of resistance, the OCI became an official city program. It's funded by the remnants of two grants. (Their combined 50-thousand dollars would have transferred to our \$8-million general fund had they not been used for this.) While that money wouldn't have budged the needle of City finances, it will have a huge impact for those who would add to the fabric of Oneonta.

In its first eight months there have been twelve grants awarded. That's about a third of our monthly capacity.

We need to take better advantage of this.

There are some on Council that don't see the merits of the program, and NONE of my initiatives are guaranteed.

I promised you a real voice, a seat at table, and the ability to put your good ideas to work. I've delivered. Now it's up to you.

All4Oneonta.com. Power to the people.