

Oneonta Mayor – DS Column – 02-18

Respect. In these difficult first decades of this century, it's been our most damaged human connection. So many of the other societal ills that plague us can be traced to a growing lack of respect for one another, and a disinclination to engage with each other as equal partners in our shared community.

Respect will be the heart of my tenure as Oneonta Mayor, and it will be central to every action and initiative. We will be respectful of every opinion that seeks to move the discussion of problems closer to solution, regardless of whether that person has previously been seated at the table. We will advocate for many voices, and we will make their access to the conversation easier and more convenient.

I will be asking many groups, agencies, businesses, and citizens to look for the part that they might play in helping turn this great ship around. It is - and will be – “all hands on deck.”

It is my intention to identify new avenues of discussion and dialogue, and new partners in that process. Through the embrace of our neighbors and with respect for their input, we will solve our issues, and tear down our roadblocks. We'll identify and set in motion opportunities to enhance every aspect of life.

I have confidence that our Council and government leadership will keep an open mind, judge every initiative on its merits and details, respectfully offer critique and suggestions for modification or improvement, and that we will have a transformational four years together.

I understand my job. As Mayor, I will continue to provide an example by my actions.

I came into this office as the victor in an issues-oriented and respectful campaign.

You may be surprised that I've made my chair of the highly important Economic Development Committee and my right-hand in financial affairs, my competitor in that race, Len Carson.

Republican or Democrat. Progressive or Conservative. The affiliation doesn't matter when all are committed to the same goal.

During the last decade our City Manager form of government had become a community embarrassment in its disfunction. Through continuing dialogue with our City Administrator, (himself hired less than 8-months ago), we are developing a respect-based, communication-driven partnership. Together, and day-by-day, we are creating a “best practice” example for other City Manager-led municipalities in the state.

With an engaged, informed, and empowered Council, we will ensure that department heads and City staff enjoy a new level of support and respect for their significant and sometimes underappreciated efforts.

Respect is being paid to our two colleges, whose collaboration with our community and between campuses is a paramount and strategic goal. The colleges' potential benefit to our City has been a great unseized opportunity. And the engagement and recruitment of graduating seniors and alumni into our city's future is among my priorities.

Collaboration. Understanding. Empathy. Respect.

That equation is the mission of the Town-Gown initiative. As Mayor, I will be a nurturing agent in its growth and its long-term rooting in the soil of our community's ideal and identity. As an example, we're

working with Hartwick and SUNY staff and students in the creation of a program of support for Oneonta's increasing elder population.

Additionally, and respecting the unique concerns of each, the Mayors of Cooperstown and Milford have been brought into partnership and planning for the mutual benefit of our communities and economies.

Otis Redding first recorded the song that was popularized by Aretha Franklin.

Does its authorship matter to those who love the song?

It doesn't.

The song transcends.

Let's all sing it together... R-E-S-P-E-C-T