

## A Method to My Madness

There is nothing I enjoy more than collaborating with other creative people on a grand plan. Strategizing. Critiquing. Modifying. Building and rebuilding. It is truly fun.

I am lucky to have married someone just like me, at least in that regard. Betsy is my co-conspirator, and partner in dreams of what could be.

Now, as Mayor, I have – we have – the opportunity to work with many more people. It's exciting.

This past week marked our first foray into a collaborative discussion with a mix of non-profit, college-supported, and private sector leaders.

Frankly, the result of that effort was baffling and disheartening. It took a couple of days to understand the dynamics and my mistake. But I do. I understand.

My long history of involvement in successful community collaborations has generally been with neighborhood folks and rarely with organization hierarchies. So, there are a lot of people – decision makers – that may not have an idea how I operate.

As Mayor for these next four years with plans to get a LOT done, I realize that I need to make my process clear to avoid a repeat of this first attempt.

There is a method, and it's worked for me with success over many years.

- To start, I bring as many interested parties or stakeholders as possible to the conversation.
- I present the concern or opportunity to be addressed.
- I offer my vision to address the issue, including an assessment of the hurdles.
- Then we talk.
- In the process, the vision changes but the goal remains unchanged.
- We accomplish great things.

I have many examples of this...*so, here's one.*

The Mayors of Oneonta, Milford and Cooperstown are collaborating on a campaign to entice visitors to consider relocation of their families or businesses to new homes within a 30-mile swath from Oneonta to Cooperstown.

As you know, I am on-record as having the challenging goal of dramatically growing our population with new and well employed residents. Even if these

folks settle outside of the City of Oneonta, we will still benefit from their patronage of retail and restaurants, as well as by their contribution to our tax base.

We're going to start with a well distributed brochure, and a connection to an informing and resource-linked web landing page.

I offered a layout for the brochure. Acknowledging Cooperstown's name recognition, it was incorporated into the branding. However, as the Mayor of Oneonta, I wanted to reference our City in the branding too. But Oneonta isn't a household name or always pronounceable. (Hence, our new logo.)

Ultimately, my mock-up trumpeted: "*Cooperstown to O'Town.*"

Those in attendance, including the Chamber and IDA presidents and Cooperstown's mayor, spent some time discussing it.

Guess what? The new title is: "*The Cooperstown Corridor.*"

I'm working up the brochure now. It'll be different and better than it might have been. It will accomplish the same goal. But because the marketing effort is collaborative it has a much better chance of being effective.

The takeaway should be this.

Together, we are going to tackle several major issues. Housing. Child Care. Homelessness. As we do, I may very well reach out to YOU, because I want your voice in the discussions and planning.

And I look forward to the exchange of ideas.

A note: Among the many initiatives gaining traction is the development of Market Street as an entertainment district in which we cater to every age demographic.

There WILL be children's entertainment.

It could be something like Chuck E Cheese, or something we collaborate on.

But we will have something. (Including discussion.)

With respect, we are all in this together.