

Oneonta Mayor – 05-16-23
600 words

Problems? Challenges?

You mean opportunities.

Oneonta, we've got ourselves some opportunities.

During the last several months we've been working on a bunch of good ideas, and they're just about to "activate." I've confidence that they'll impact the fortunes of our Downtown, and Chestnut, River, and East Main Streets. Because of them, there will be many more people enjoying our city in these next few months. I expect it to be one of the best summers in memory, and it should transition into a nice fall.

On Friday night, our 8th ward Council Member, Emily Falco, flipped the switch on a project she's spent months working on. And with that, the first of our two "Alleys off Dietz" was lit by strings of newly installed miniature lights, and a new congregate space was created. It's a space that sparkles with possibility. You can easily imagine music and food carts, and a place to enjoy a summer evening with friends.

Another opportunity for new and renewed connections to Oneonta's charming downtown will begin just a few weeks from now when we reintroduce Muller Plaza as a cozy and inviting setting for intimate entertainment and other diversions. A shade-canopy with twinkling lights will lend a vastly different look to the plaza. Scattered chairs, tables and colorful shade-umbrellas will ensure that many more people will be able to enjoy the art, music, classes, performances, and more that will be on tap 8 hours a day, 6 days a week.

We have an Engagement Marketing Taskforce that has the plans and the partners to bring thousands of Cooperstown All Star Village families to our city. (Talk about opportunities.)

The City of Oneonta is poised to have a memorable next several months. But we need to embrace our current challenges for the chance they give us to shine.

I am certain that this is news to no one, but we've recently been forced to close our parking garage. We anticipated closing the third level and were prepared for that reduction in parking, but we did not plan on closing all the garage levels – at least not yet. The bottom two levels of the garage were typically home to 150-200 parked vehicles. Those spots need to be

accounted for, and we need to identify more spaces to accommodate our visitors.

That's a challenge. But we're up to it.

We have already identified over 80 potential parking spots.

That includes many that will line Dietz and Market Streets.

I am having productive conversations with businesses, institutions, and churches about ways that we can creatively use their surface parking.

We're instituting a trolley service from the lots in Neahwa Park to Main Street that will run every 5-10 minutes. And we have more planned.

Now, here's YOUR opportunity.

We plan to promote a QR Code that will take folks to a "map-style" app. It'll depict lot locations and report their general availability. With volunteered help we can provide updates three times a day. If you would like to join the group who'll be assisting, please contact me.

Beyond that, we will create signs that offer easy wayfinding to parking lots.

We'll provide maps to merchants, and to our ambassadors in Muller Plaza and the Cooperstown All Star Village.

It's my hope and expectation that during these important next few months, residents and visitors will say, "There's a lot going on in Oneonta, the parking is inventive but convenient, and the community's working together to be welcoming."

Let's seize this opportunity.

We have a challenge... and we will embrace it.

This is, after all, Oneonta.