

Oneonta Mayor – DS Column – 09-02-2022

I hope you enjoyed yesterday's holiday, and that you've had a happy and memorable summer.

Labor Day is one of America's more unique celebrations. It's a day set aside not in remembrance, or in commemoration of an auspicious event or globally recognized holiday. Rather, it's a national recognition of the contributions, the integral importance, and the respect that should be accorded to those whose daily efforts keep our economy (and by extension, our country) running.

It took the signature of Grover Cleveland to make Labor Day a holiday, and the cap to a three-day respite from work – for many, if not all. However, as with many of our holidays, the point is sometimes obscured by the picnic.

Including those who would aspire to the designation, American workers are the backbone of this country. Their contributions are not just economic, and not restricted to the workday. Not by a long shot.

They are our school board members, our church leaders, our community activists, our volunteers, and the helping hands and life's blood of the service organizations and other groups that impact the quality of life in our neighborhoods.

Their work ethic has powered the American ideal and fostered the progress and possibility that has informed generation upon generation – in the country, and right here in the City of Oneonta.

And it is that labor (of love) that I am asking of you today.

Since the days of Mayor Miller, Oneonta's City government has shrunk by nearly 2-dozen staff. To fill those positions and replace or purchase necessary equipment would require funds that no reasonable tax levy could cover.

Without a doubt, we will need to find new revenue streams.

As has been well documented, and central to my planning, is the addition of 1,000 new, employed residents. Their arrival will jumpstart development of new housing and the repair of our current stock. They will spur the addition of new businesses and an attendant increase in sales tax. With that expanded retail sector, we can expect to see a vital Business Improvement District that ensures a safe, secure, and family friendly downtown. And with the addition of more center-city residents, one can

project more ridership of a hop-on/hop-off transit system in an increasingly connective and pedestrian friendly city.

These are just a few of the many reasons to embrace the recruitment of new neighbors. But, for reasons noted above, the city government cannot be expected to successfully assume that charge – not without help.

And so, I turn to you.

With key players from Oneonta's economic leadership, we have formed a Marketing Taskforce, and I have confidence in their capacity to connect with and make a strong case to our targeted demographic.

What we need – NOW – is a mechanism to track the arrival of new residents, so that we can properly engage them and promote the City's progress toward this important goal.

It will take the creativity, commitment, and work-ethic of half-a-dozen or more of YOU to help us realize this workflow.

I propose the creation of a "Welcome Wagon" packet of discounts, incentives, information, and resources that can be promoted to new residents by Human Resources managers, realtors, landlords, and houses of worship. Additionally, we might have new resident "mixers" and other events. But there are many more ideas, I am sure.

However, the city does not have the resources to take on the planning and implementation of this effort.

In the spirit of the American worker, and the Oneonta citizen, I ask YOU to consider volunteering for our "New Neighbor Taskforce".

It will be a labor that will change our world.