

**The following statement is released on behalf of Mayor Jeffrey M. Skelly**

The Ogdensburg City Council, the majority and the minority, since taking their oaths in January 2020 has not knowingly, willingly or intentionally acted to violate the Charter of the City of Ogdensburg, nor will we ever allow that to occur. The accusations, insinuations and maliciously false statements to the contrary are not facts, they are just plain fiction and untruths being used in an attempt to overturn the 2019 Election and disrupt the definitive progress being made for the city. These efforts are being led by a group of people that obviously do not have the best interest of the city in mind, in fact, a couple of them were ousted in the 2019 Election and they will not stop their disruptive behavior until they irreparably harm the city. They began their campaign of revenge within days following the 2019 Election when they signed irresponsible, unaffordable and financially crippling contracts with each of our employee unions, promising pay raises and benefits the city could not afford then, and cannot afford now. It is truly shameful those individuals used our valued city staff to manipulate public opinion, and even worse some union leaders were convinced these efforts were sincere acts of good faith.

When I was elected Mayor, we knew the city was in a financial crisis and serious distress, however, we did not know that financial crisis was about to get worse as the global pandemic consumed our nation. City council acted decisively to protect the city from further financial ruin and potential bankruptcy when it provided budgetary guidance and policy instruction to then City Manager Sarah Purdy. We did not rely on Ms. Purdy to lead us through this challenging time, based on her resistance to every action we proposed, we knew she would not provide the solutions needed. We made a plan, requested legal review from our attorneys and acted; that is what we are elected to do. As expected, Ms. Purdy resisted and used every possible section, word and phrase in the charter to keep from following the clear instructions provided by City Council; her superiors as indicated by the city charter. These instructions, provided by the city council, not individual members of city council, are legally sufficient and within the authority of city council. The recent opinion of an arbitrator presiding over a matter concerning the police department is wrong. His opinion is not rooted in the law, the city charter or common sense. At no time did the city council provide specific instruction to the city manager about any specific employee and the city council did not provide instruction directly to any employee. The city council acted appropriately in providing direction to the city manager with regard to where the budget was being cut and the policy decision of where positions would be eliminated. At the time, we hoped that if the impacts from the pandemic were not as severe as projected, perhaps we could bring the impacted police officers back to work, so we directed the city manager to use the layoff process, instead of abolishing the positions permanently. We now have a second legal opinion that confirms our actions were correct, legal and within the authority of city council and the intent of the city charter. We stand by those decisions and we are prepared to defend the City of Ogdensburg and the Ogdensburg City Council should either be challenged in a court of law. We won't let the self-serving actions of a few distract us and we will NOT resign from office. We took an oath, we promised the community we would save the city, and we will ultimately revive the city.

Honorable Jeffrey M. Skelly, Mayor  
City of Ogdensburg, NY