

## **Fear & Fiction Do Not Save Cities – Real Leaders Do**

For many years the City of Ogdensburg struggled financially; that is fact only disputed by those that consistently profited and thrived by the corruption, union control and mismanagement that existed under previous city councils and administrations. Fully transparent, high integrity, decisive leadership arrived in January 2020 and since that time, the City of Ogdensburg's new direction is moving rapidly toward financial stability, economic growth and renewed community vibrancy. Despite the intense actions of a tiny group committed to protecting a singular cause, there is no turning back to those dark days of entitlement for few taking priority of the needs of the entire community. The transformation of the City of Ogdensburg is undeniable, the pace of progress unmatched and the results unparalleled.

In August 2021 the City of Ogdensburg received news that the federal government would provide funds directly to local government entities through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) in the amount of \$1,066,000.00. Mayor Jeffrey M. Skelly immediately reacted to this announcement by requesting city staff create a plan to provide as much assistance to small business, non-profit groups and residents of the City using these funds. Mayor Skelly fully believes that government does not know how best to spend your money, and that true revival of the City will only occur if residents of the City are able to recover from the losses experienced from the impacts of the global coronavirus pandemic. The Ogdensburg Community Support Program was approved by City Council last fall, and since that time Phase 1 (Small Business Support) and Phase 2 (Non-Profit Support) provided \$174,000 in direct payments to those entities that keep the City of Ogdensburg moving forward by providing jobs, essential services and support to those that need it most. The City just closed the application period on Phase 3 (Individual Household Assistance) with the receipt of 384 applications for household projects of which approximately \$260,000.00 is committed for disbursement. Please support Mayor Skelly's request for St. Lawrence County to provide a matching amount to the City from the \$20.9 MILLION it received from the same ARPA funds by contacting your St. Lawrence County Legislator James Reagan and tell him you want matching money for the City of Ogdensburg.

The next meeting of the Ogdensburg City Council is 9 May 2022, and at that meeting City Council will be asked to approve several resolutions to study key initiatives that have potential to forestall consistent increases in property tax, remove duplicative services and consolidate functions that no longer need to be stand-alone between multiple levels of local government. None of these initiatives are new or extreme, in fact, all were championed and presented to the previous city council by former City Manager Sarah Purdy during one of the worst periods of the City's financial distress (2016-2019), yet all were ignored and not acted upon. These initiatives cannot be ignored, they cannot be sidelined and they cannot be disapproved; they all require definitive, forward-thinking action and approval. The City's financial future depends on making significant changes to align the manner it operates with the projected revenue it collects. If City Council fails to take definitive action and change the current operating mode, the City will find itself in near bankrupt conditions again within 3-5 years; that is a verifiable fact that nearly played out in 2020 had the newly elected City Council not acted swiftly to save the City. I am now the second consecutive City Manager to identify that the City must make real change if it desires real financial stability, real economic growth and real community revival. Please plan to attend the City Council meeting (in person or virtually) and support the study of these initiatives.

As always, I am available most anytime to respond to questions or concerns – please call or write.

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Stephen P. Jellie, Ogdensburg City Manager