

GREETINGS CITIZENS OF OGDENSBURG!

I hope you are all enjoying the incredible fall weather and the many outdoor adventures that come with this time of year. I am personally looking forward to a few brisk mornings in a duck blind and spending the final days without snow hiking with my family in the Adirondacks.

City Hall is going to be very busy the next few weeks and I want to highlight for your attention some of the key initiatives that we need your visibility, support and positive encouragement to achieve success.

Revenue, Revenue, Revenue.....we must increase revenue in order to STOP cutting from your city staff and services. The first significant opportunity that we have to do this happens very soon in the area of SALES TAX DISTRIBUTION.

The St. Lawrence County Board of Legislators extended an invitation for the City of Ogdensburg to address the Finance Committee (which is comprised of all county legislators) on 26 October 2020 at 5:30pm. I will represent the city and the Mayor's proposal to increase the amount of sales tax being shared with the City of Ogdensburg and all the towns and villages in St. Lawrence County. Over the last three months Mayor Skelly has worked diligently to convince village mayors and town supervisors to support this proposal. The reason he did this is because Ogdensburg is the only municipal entity that the county must negotiate sales tax distribution with. If we don't speak up for the towns and villages, while speaking up for Ogdensburg, nobody will and the county will do as they see fit with all the money. You can see details of the Mayor's proposal by clicking the following link:

<https://ogdensburg.org/DocumentCenter/View/2902/FINAL-sales-tax-proposal>

Some of you may remember when St. Lawrence County was in serious financial stress, and they asked the City of Ogdensburg to support increasing sales tax by 1% (total 8%) and the people of Ogdensburg responded overwhelmingly in the affirmative. Now after getting their financial house in order, and creating a fund balance of over \$37M they want to change the formula so we get less – approximately \$1.1M less annually was there first proposal which represents about 14% of our total general fund annual revenue; there is no way we can accept that. County Legislator James Regan has supported Ogdensburg every step of the way but we need more support, we need your support to send a strong, clear and overwhelming message that Ogdensburg needs the county's help now as we work hard to get our own financial house in order and stop the reliance on property tax. Please read the information at the link above and call or email the Mayor or myself if you are willing to help advance the best opportunity, we have to increase revenue coming to the City of Ogdensburg.

Former Shade Roller Property – We are digging in deep on this parcel of land – literally. In the coming weeks we will be involving everybody and anybody who will listen, support and roll up their sleeves to help us figure out how to clean this property up and get it on the market. There is lots of positive progress on the waterfront in this area and we need to do all we can to support that. City Council voted unanimously to change the zoning on a parcel owned by the Basta Family which now paves the way for the Richardson family to explore a range of possible business ventures to start on the land adjacent to Shade Roller on the waterfront. I want to thank all the city residents that turned out for the public hearing, those for and those against the zoning change. Dignified, respectful disagreement played out in this public hearing and in the end, city council made a decision that they believe will best serve the community. Again, thank you to all that turned out for this public hearing, I hope future debates follow your lead and take the same shape and tone. Democracy is best served when we disagree, and then find a solution.

2021 Budget – In the next week I will deliver the first draft of the 2021 Annual Budget to City Council. We are in tough spot but I am confident we can and we will work our way through the challenges ahead if we dedicate ourselves to working together for what is best for the entire community. Choosing to protect any one organization or function from the manner in which we must restructure our city government will not move us out of the deep hole we find our city in, in fact, it will make it much worse and strangle any chance have for recovery. We will provide all the facts, all the figures, all the proposed ideas, all the proposed solutions and then you need to decide what you can live with and what you can live without. There will be NO easy courses of action, absolutely none but we must do this and we must do it now. If you show up to tell us what you don't want to lose, you need to be prepared to tell us what you are willing to lose. This is no environment for pessimists and critics with no ideas or solutions, we need forward thinking, selfless serving citizens to participate in the revival of this city. And did I mention, we need your ideas now.

Old Cheese Plant – We have partnered with the U.S Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to expeditiously assesses and remove all the hazardous substances and chemicals from the old cheese plant locate at 30 Main Street. After many years of litigation, we are finally free to clean out this facility and prepare it for demolition. Once the EPA completes removal of all the hazardous substances, the city DPW will work on removing all the garbage and loose debris. Once we complete that phase, we will begin the process of assessments and surveys to ultimately demolish the building. We hope this action will be the start of the revitalization of that area of the city.

PLEASE, drop my city hall and see the staff and myself and tell us your concerns, and bring us your ideas. We serve you, and we do that best when we know what you want.

Respectfully,

Stephen