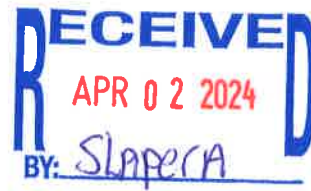


April 2, 2024

Mayor Rossi and
Common Councilors
109 N. Main Street
Oneida, NY, 13421



Mayor Rossi and Common Councilors,

As Department Heads, or rather Executive Team Members, for the City of Oneida, we are collectively writing to express our concerns regarding the decision to terminate the employment of Doug Selby. We all have a vested interest in our jobs and the success of the City of Oneida, wanting the best working environments for ourselves and our colleagues and wanting a City that will serve its residents effectively and efficiently. Doug Selby has, in a very limited time, provided a vital source of unity and direction for the City. While we each oversee individual departments, our mission and visions for the City of Oneida are one. As such, Mr. Selby refers to us now not as "Department Heads" but as "Executive Team Members". This small but meaningful shift is part and parcel to what he brings to all of us.

Since joining our City team and community, Doug Selby has exhibited exemplary leadership qualities that have positively impacted our organization. His dedication to outlining strategic plans provides clear direction and collective vision for Executive Team Members. Not only has he identified areas for improvement but has taken proactive measures to address them. When the City residents chose to transition from a strong Mayoral form of government to a City Manager form of government we did so with the knowledge that the transition would hold changes and adjustments. We knew that like any transition it would take time to adjust but would have great benefits for our City. In what has been the very beginning of this transition period Mr. Selby has introduced a professional municipal administration and has shown the benefits of the City Manager form of government when headed up by someone with vast experience in managing other cities. Under his guidance, our City has experienced a renewed sense of purpose and progress.

From our personal interactions and observations, we can attest to the fact that Doug Selby has consistently acted in the best interest of the City, displaying integrity, professionalism, and a genuine commitment to our community's welfare. His approach, willingness to listen, and proactive efforts to address concerns have fostered a positive work environment and cohesive teamwork among Executive Team Members and city employees.

Given Doug Selby's contributions, and the evident positive impacts they have had on our operations, we were all understandably jolted by the news that his tenure was to be ended. We who write this letter are stakeholders directly involved in the day-to-day functioning of our City. The perspectives of each Executive Team Member is invaluable in assessing the effectiveness of managerial leadership. We write and urge the Council to reach out to us to gain insight into how the City Manager Position and Doug Selby have influenced and improved our operations since the inception of the role on January 1st. The information gleaned will be invaluable not only in the assessment of the newly formed role, but also of Mr. Selby, and indeed imperative to the success of whomever fills this role in the future.

Our understanding is that Mr. Selby's appointment was intended to be at least nine months, with consideration for a longer term. When the previous Council appointed him it was with the understanding that he had a wealth of knowledge which we could and would benefit from but that transitions do not work overnight. The nine month timeframe was intended to afford him to opportunity to get to know all of us, evaluate the budget, as well as familiarize himself with the strengths and needs of the City so as to apply his knowledge and skills to the greatest benefit. By ending his tenure after a mere three months we are cheating him, ourselves, and the community of the knowledge, expertise, guidance, and long-term planning he would implement.

His expertise in water and sewer systems, engineering, project development, budgeting, and other areas of government operations and management is evident. As you are all aware, and what led the previous Council to select Mr. Selby for our City Manager, are his years of experience in the management of a city with a population of 600,000 residents; 3,000 employees, and an approximate annual budget of \$1 billion. Additionally, he served as the Executive Director of the Las Vegas Redevelopment Agency and as President of three city-controlled not-for-profit land development entities, as well as having served as City Manager for the City of Auburn for nearly five years. Let us not discard a qualified and experienced City Manager who has begun laying a path for the City to move forward in a positive direction for the future.

We respectfully request that the Council consider extending his tenure to continue to work with us and aid in the transition to the new form of government we have embarked on. We also respectfully request that future decisions engage a more comprehensive evaluation process that takes into account the input and experiences of all stakeholders involved. This feedback is critical in order to make well informed decisions that will best serve our operations and residents.

As members of this community and members of the City Administration we have benefited from Doug Selby's strong leadership, guidance, and knowledge. Although it is not our decision, we firmly believe that without Doug Selby's wealth of knowledge, guidance, and professionalism, the residents and employees will truly suffer and that retaining such a valuable asset is crucial for the continued progress and prosperity of our City.

Thank you for considering our perspective on this matter.

Respectfully,



Steve Lowell
Police Chief



Scott Jones
Fire Chief



Lee Ann Wells
Comptroller



Jeff Rowe
City Engineer



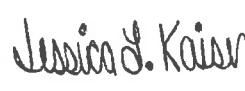
Luke Griff
Director, Parks & Rec



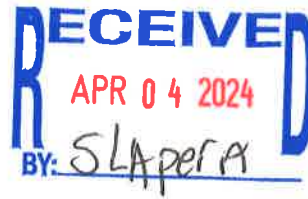
Sandy LaPera
City Clerk



John Monaghan
Water Superintendent



Jessica Kaiser
Executive Secretary to the Civil
Service Commission



Let me start by thanking Councilor Tom Simchik and Mayor Rick Rossi for showing courage and integrity in standing up to an attempt by an unethical, external political faction to subvert the will of the voters on the City Manager issue.

I have some questions for the Common Council, you can consider them rhetorical questions, we understand you have no obligation to answer them in this forum, although I am quite sure you will have to answer for your actions someday.

I noticed in the agenda for tonight's meeting that items 11 and 12 were submitted by "council" with no further indication which councilor or councilors are responsible for items 11 or 12. So, what is the origin of this scheme? Who concocted this plan? Who benefits from appointing an unqualified individual to be our city manager? Maybe a person or persons who can control and direct such an unqualified individual, I'd like to know who.

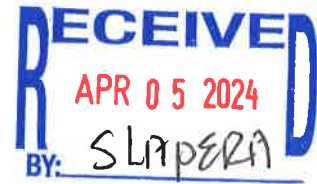
I would like to urge the council to support Mayor Rossi, on agenda item #1, and reject items 11 and 12. I would also suggest the council meet with the city attorney and discuss some specific legal issues. Our city attorney is very capable and experienced in laws that apply to municipal government. She can advise you on the Open Meetings Law. She can also advise you on Article 5 Section 6 of the NYS Constitution, which provides for appointments and promotions in public employment to be made on the basis of merit and fitness. This constitutional provision is the foundation of NYS Civil Service Law. To draft qualifications to suit a particular individual is patronage; contrary to the spirit, intent, and letter of Civil Service law.

And our city attorney can also advise you on NYS Law under Article 78, which is a procedure for challenging the actions of public bodies. An Article 78 proceeding can be very costly to the city and in this case, based on what actions you have already taken, and are contemplating tonight, I believe the outcome would be a certainty, and not in favor of the city.

And so, I ask you to find your integrity and your courage, reject the unethical political pressure being brought to bear on you and reject this improper scheme.

Thank you.

MIKE KAISER



4/2/24

I will provide a timeline of facts as of today:

1. Interim City Manager

- The City Manager position was posted in late 2023.
- When we first met Mr. Selby last year, we asked him what his plan was. He stated he did not really want to work 40 hours a week, which gave us concern. But, he had city manager experience, and we were required to have someone January 1st.
- Due to the timing and job fill requirement, on 12/29/23, the Council appointed Mr. Selby on a temporary interim basis. Knowing he is a relative of Republican Committee members, we appointed him with a plan to find a long term Manager, as quickly as possible, in an effort to avoid any accusations of nepotism.
- By December, out of 13 applicants, one individual was interviewed, one cancelled their interview, and one never called back. The one we interviewed was a fully qualified candidate with a majority consensus to be a top contender, but the mayor was in disagreement, so we compromised. The candidate said he did not feel welcomed in the interview, and since we can only interview together twice a month, the candidate took a job elsewhere.
- I met with Mr. Selby the second week of January for a one-on-one. To my surprise, he stated he wanted to stay 2-3 years.
- We had to push for a formal interview with Mr. Selby on 2/20. Again, we can only meet as a group twice a month. With only 7 weeks on the job, the Mayor suggested we discuss entering into a contract with Mr. Selby. We said no, we want to interview.
- We have received accusations of nepotism, and we did not want this to become an issue down the road.
- Up until now, we have received almost daily complaints from residents, and have our own concerns with performance that cost that tax payers money.

2. Acting City Manager

- Two weeks into the year, Mr. Selby wrote us a letter naming the Comptroller as Acting Manager. It is a conflict of interest to have the person managing the finances be the same person managing the operations and staff. Any effective organization should have a clear separation of powers and checks and balances, which is a fundamental accounting concept.
- The Council is considering naming the Director of Codes as Acting Manager because he has knowledge of the city to keep things moving, managerial experience, and has shown the ability to build a department with a system of checks and balances from the ground up. This nomination would create no conflict with finances, or reduction in priority services the city provides (Police, Fire, Water, Sewer, DPW, etc.). As a reminder, the Acting Manager must work in conjunction with the Council and act as a placeholder until the City Manager position is filled.
- The Council would like to open the job posting back up, as it never should have been removed.
- We are not lowering the qualifications or "dumbing them down." We are requiring a Business Degree or Public Administration plus 5 years management experience, OR at least double the management experience. As currently written, Mr. Selby's degrees do not even fit within the parameters of these qualifications, and he has experience. Expanding these requirements will support the renewed job posting in an effort to get more applicants. For several years, I worked

in Human Resources and I can tell you this is not an A-typical process. I also have job posting examples from both Madison and Onondaga Counties to prove this.

- As a reminder to everyone, from 2005 to 2020 there was approximately \$550,000 stolen from the tax payers because there were no checks and balances in place. There is also an investigation into poor accounting practices and unaccounted for funds dating back to 2020 with the Rec Department. We need tighter policies and more checks and balances.
- As another reminder, the Council fought for and lowered the 2023 tax increase from the proposed 9.5% to 2.4%. One council member voted against this. I say this to prove that we always work in the best interest of the tax payers in mind.

Status quo is easy and comfortable. With change, you are faced with opposing parties, current employees, past employees, relatives of employees, past politicians, current politicians, and current and past union members. Many who have competing opinions.

We need to implement the best strategies for an improved community, so when we do disagree, we need you all to know that our decisions are done with the best interest of the community at heart. We strive not to let personal opinions or relationships skew our objectives.

Remember, WE ALL live here and are affected by the decisions we make. The Council invites YOU to work with us.

COUNCILOR STEVE LAURETI

ATTACHMENT D

Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen. My name is Dan Jones and I live on E Walnut St. I was born in Oneida, bought a house, raised a family and work here. I regret not being able to give these remarks in person but I am currently working at the Kallet Theater polling site for today's NYS Primary Election. Hopefully I saw some of you today when you voted. I find it disheartening the Common Council scheduled Public Remarks on an important issue on a night that conflicts with an election. But that seems to be the theme of the evening...decisions made by our Common Council without proper discourse, process or due diligence.

As I said in an email to my Ward Councilor, Mr. Winchell, earlier today, "allow me to add my voice to the rest of those beseeching you to uphold the majority vote of Oneida residents last November regarding the City Manager position. It appears there was a rush to judgment to fill the position before Jan 1st and I am afraid we are headed to the same result again. There is a process and I believe we should follow the process and not "make it up as we go." Good luck and thank you for your service to the City of Oneida."

One final brief point. In reviewing the job responsibilities for the City Manager position I was struck by how similar they are to another I recently reviewed. Councilman Steve Laureti is a friend, former co-worker and someone I greatly respect. In his position as the Director of Administrative Services for the Madison County Sheriff's Department, Mr. Laureti is responsible for an operating budget of \$17M, writing and managing \$1M in Grants, developing and implementing new programs, overseeing payroll, contracts and all finance related areas. He manages the social media account, websites, community relations and educational outreach programs. Mr. Laureti has a Bachelor's Degree from LeMoyne College and a Master's Degree from Syracuse University. He is obviously qualified for his position.

Given the current circumstances and the limited reasons presented for tonight's resolutions can we assume Mr. Laureti would consider Bob Burnett qualified to perform the same duties but with a much larger budget, more departments reporting to him and considerably more employees under his direction? I think we know that answer, and that is why it makes little sense to even consider lowering the requirements for the City Manager position in my humble opinion. Thank you for your time.

Received April 3, 2024

Sandra LaPera , City Clerk

