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Mr. Jim Kevlin  
Hometown Oneonta  
21 Railroad Avenue  
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Dear Jim,

As one who has benefitted from your support, I have known that when it comes to editorials, the sword cuts both ways. I write to correct errors in your piece in today's edition of Hometown Oneonta and to give you my perspective on the subjects you addressed, which varies greatly from yours. Now to the facts, and the process to date.

A small thing, but you state that I only have two more years in office. The fact is that I have three and a half more years in office.

The Council could choose to exclude me from the search committee. But whether or not I am on the committee, only Council members will vote on the appointment of the new City Manager. I will vote only if there is a tie. Interestingly, the Charter prepared by the original Commission states "the Common Council shall conduct the search."

As to the process, on April 7 the Human Resources Committee of the Council conducted a wide-ranging conversation, in which Laurie Zimniewicz participated. You and Denise Richardson from the Daily Star were present at the meeting. Laurie was the only member of the public, besides the press, who chose to attend. The outcome of that meeting was that I was asked to make a recommendation to the Council, which they then accepted at their meeting on April 15. The recommendation was public, and the process thus established has been faithfully followed and is on schedule.

At the same meeting I informed the Council that I was asking members of the original Charter Commission to reconvene with a specific charge to review the document, reporting back to me by June 30. That action did not require Council approval and came upon the recommendation of your newspaper and Laurie Zimniewicz (who, incidentally, had worked hard on my re-election) The charge to the Committee specifically excluded involvement in the search process, and as I understand the likely content of some of its observations, I expect the Council to act promptly to embrace many of them.

More on the facts. While it is true that I believe Meg Hungerford is an excellent candidate, I stated clearly to you on Monday afternoon, July 7, after the Human Resource Committee at which Steve Londner delivered his letter, that she could not possibly be my first choice because I did not know who the other candidates were at that point. In the end, I want the best possible candidate appointed to the position. Anyone who questions that doesn't know me.

Paul Scheele raised the issue of the MPA as a qualification, which started an immediate email discussion among Council members as to whether it was an inviolate requirement. The exchange of ideas among people of various opinions required, in my judgment, legal input. City Attorney Merzig's interpretation, which, by the way, is consistent with minutes of original Charter Commission meetings at which the subject was discussed, supports the view of many that while an MPA is desirable—unlike a position that requires a license as in the case of a physician—a candidate could be appointed without such a degree if his or her experience was indicative of future success in the position. On the advice of our search consultant, a bachelor's degree requirement was stated in the advertisement in order to cast the widest net and thus bring the greatest number of candidates into the pool.

Steve Londner's letter was addressed to the Council, which meets on Tuesday night and may consider the matter, if it so chooses, under the Correspondence section of the meeting. It came almost three months after the search process was announced. On July 21 our consultant will be presenting to the Council, in executive session, a suggested list of the best candidates from which finalists may be selected. Steve's letter suggests that token involvement late in the process would not be acceptable, and while the Council can do as it wishes to adjust the process in place, his request thus seems to immediately disqualify itself. His letter is the first on the subject since the process was announced on April 15. I had a call from Laurie Zimniewicz at the time the process was being designed and another from her last week, asking for more public involvement in the process. But I have heard from no one else on the matter over what is now almost a 90-day period.

More to the point, Steve's letter demeans the breadth, experience, intelligence and the independence of Common Council members. Members of the Council subject themselves to the election process; each member attends at least four to five meetings per month—12 months per year. Council members have to live with their decisions and criticism of them on a day-to-day basis. To suggest that they constitute a "good ol' boy network" governed by "personal whim" is simply inconsistent with my experience with them individually and collectively based on chairing, to this point, 109 Council meetings since becoming Mayor.

Commission members are appointed to accomplish specific tasks, and unless they comprise a body permanently established by the Charter of the City, they are discharged after they have accomplished their goals. The original Charter Commission did a splendid job in preparing the new Charter and in convincing the public to approve it. I ran in 2009 in part on a platform that recommended a new Charter that includes a City Manager, on the basis that I felt we needed full-time professional leadership. The group that reconvened at my request to review the Charter is made up of individuals whom I consider friends. The group was not asked, as indicated earlier, to review the search process, and I have only heard from three members on the MPA issue or the make-up of the Search Committee. To my knowledge the group has not taken a formal position on either matter, which would be, in any event, outside the charge of the responsibility they agreed to undertake.

Your paper's disclosing the name of a specific candidate and taking a position obviously in opposition to the possibility that she might be appointed is unfair to her and, for that matter,

residents of the City. If she is the best candidate, she should be appointed. If she isn't, she won't be. Meg Hungerford is an extraordinary public servant who has the confidence of the Common Council and department heads of the City. If she turns out not to be the best candidate, I am confident that she will work diligently with whomever is appointed. You have compromised her candidacy and in doing so may be depriving residents of the City of Oneonta of the value of contributions she might bring to the position if she was to be the next City Manager. In doing so you have done this community a great disservice.

Finally, it has been and will continue to be the Council's decision as to how this search is conducted and who will be chosen as our next City Manager. While it is true that I advise and guide the Council, please be assured that each member is certainly capable of making thoughtful, independent decisions which I, as the City's Mayor, will fully respect.