

AFSCME Municipal and School Department Workers Endorse Mayor Doenges for Re-Election

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RUTLAND, VT - A union representing more than 130 Rutland municipal and school department workers is backing Mayor Mike Doenges for re-election to a second term.

Leaders of AFSCME Local 1201, alongside other labor unions, shall announce their support for Mayor Micheal Doenges at a joint press conference on Wednesday, February 12, 1pm at the Hub (67 Merchants Row, Rutland). Media is invited to attend.

The endorsement from Local 1201 comes two years after they supported then Alderman Doenges in his successful bid to unseat three-term incumbent David Allaire. "Just under two years ago, our union made the courageous decision to take on an entrenched incumbent mayor," said Local 1201 President Tom Franzoni. "At the time, we said we wanted a mayor who will treat us with the respect and dignity we deserve— not only at the negotiating table but every day on the job, I'm happy to say we found that man in Mayor Doenges."

"I'm honored and proud to have the support of the men and women of AFSCME, one of the oldest and most respected unions here in Vermont and across the nation," said Doenges. "When I was fortunate to receive their support two years ago, I said at the time that they were the backbone of public services here in Rutland. After two years of working with them as mayor, I am more convinced than ever of their value, and I look forward to continuing our work together."

Franzoni, who has worked for the city for the better part of the last 25 years, lauded Doenges for the way he treats and communicates with his workers stating, "I honestly cannot recall a mayor who has greater respect for his workers, a greater love for our city, or who is more committed to solving the challenges we face."

"But it's not just Mayor Doenges' commitment to solving problems and addressing issues," Franzoni continued, "it's how he goes about doing it. He doesn't sit in an office, listening to just a handful of management people. He comes to people like us. People like me. Working class people who know what it's like to labor around the clock in a blizzard, fix a pothole or repair a water line. People who know what's it's like to provide on-the-spot life-saving care to someone who has just been in a car wreck or simply deal with a disgruntled taxpayer at city hall. Mayor Doenges comes to us, to carefully listen and learn, because he respects us and appreciates the important work we do."

Despite an excellent working relationship with the mayor throughout his first term and despite being forced to file an unfair labor practice and grievance against challenger Henry Heck when he served as city clerk in the former administration, leaders of Local 1201 wanted to ensure both declared candidates for mayor had an equal shot at winning their support.¹ As such, they invited both candidates to participate in the endorsement process by completing a detailed candidate questionnaire. Heck received the questionnaire via email and by U.S. Postal Service Priority Mail Express, but he did bother to respond.

AFSCME Council 93 Local 1201 represents approximately 130 Rutland municipal and school department workers, who deliver essential services in multiple municipal departments including the Rutland Department of Public Works; Department of Parks & Recreation, City Hall, the Rutland Housing Authority; the Rutland Free Library; the Regional Ambulance Service; and the Rutland Public School System.

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¹ The Unfair Labor Practice & Grievance is attached to this press packet.