



**City of Saratoga Springs**  
**OFFICE OF COMMISSIONER OF FINANCE**

**DEIRDRE O'DWYER-LADD**  
Deputy Commissioner of Finance

**MICHELE D. CLARK-MADIGAN**  
COMMISSIONER OF FINANCE

474 Broadway – City Hall  
Saratoga Springs, New York 12866-2296  
518-587-3550  
Fax 518-580-0781

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**FROM THE OFFICE OF COMMISSIONER MICHELE MADIGAN**

Contact: Michele Madigan (518) 587-3550, Ext. 3577

**Statement Regarding Mediation Services with Saratoga Black Lives Matter Leadership**

**SARATOGA SPRINGS, NY** – Today at a press conference (live streamed by All Of Us on social media) Lexis Figuereo, a leader in Saratoga Black Lives Matter (BLM), stated that he is willing to "talk" with the City of Saratoga Springs, but that he will not agree to the city paying fees to a mediator.

The city and Saratoga BLM have tried talking to each other, and it has not been productive. All involved parties feel they are not being heard and have grown increasingly frustrated. This is why I suggested we enter into professional mediation, a structured process where an impartial professional third-party can assist us all in resolving conflict and addressing our concerns. Our goal is to make progress, as previous attempts at unmediated dialog have been unsuccessful.

Engaging a professional mediator will cost money - an impartial third-party mediation firm must be paid for their services. The city has already expended significant resources researching mediation firms, interviewing them, and selecting potential mediators for Saratoga BLM's review (those resources are the time and attention of several city employees and elected officials that would have otherwise been dedicated to other city business).

Mr. Figuereo, and other members of Saratoga BLM, had at recent City Council Meetings, indicated to me that Saratoga BLM would agree to professional mediation when I first addressed this idea publicly. I have done my best to keep him and Saratoga BLM informed regarding our progress in this matter. Given Mr. Figuereo's comments earlier today, I need a clear commitment from Saratoga BLM that they are willing to enter into mediation with the City of Saratoga Springs. I and my fellow council members want productive dialog with this organization, and we feel this is only possible through mediation, which will require the expenditure of city funds. Without such a commitment from Saratoga BLM there can be no dialog and no mediation. To be clear, we do not expect Saratoga BLM to share in the expenses of mediation; all we ask of them is their time and good faith efforts to resolving the current conflict.

Finally, I can only speak for myself, but I had no knowledge of the impending arrests, or knowledge about the timing of said arrests, as it pertained to Saratoga BLM on Tuesday, September 7, 2021 just prior to the Saratoga Springs City Council Meeting.