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Councilman James Rogowski will not resign following weekend arrest



Rogowski

James Rogowski, a Democratic town councilman in Cheektowaga, will not resign his position on the board, he told members of the media on Tuesday night between the governing body's work session and regular meeting.

According to West Seneca police, Rogowski was arrested over the weekend for violating an order of protection following an alleged domestic incident in the town and is facing charges of first-degree criminal contempt and second degree menacing.

A teary Rogowski told reporters he looked forward to his day in court, and when asked if he would be staying on the council, he said yes, adding that "there is no reason for me to resign."

Rogowski was first elected to the Town Board in 2005 and was re-elected to another four-year term this past November.

Supervisor Diane Benczkowski said she did speak with Rogowski privately but declined to comment, citing respect for the councilman and his family.

Cheektowaga Democratic Committee Chairman Matt Janiszewski said he has discussed the alleged incident with the Town Board, as well as party leadership.

"These are very serious charges, and I think we're just waiting to see what is done in the court of law," Janiszewski said. He added that while the party has not asked Rogowski to step aside, it was a possible action down the road.

Janiszewski did not defend Rogowski when asked whether he still had confidence in the councilman, who had received the committee's endorsement during his re-election bid last year, instead, repeating that the allegations were serious and that party leadership is waiting for more information and to see how the case plays out in court.

According to West Seneca police, the incident occurred around 6 p.m. Feb. 23 on Orchard Park Road, and Rogowski was picked up approximately two hours later in Cheektowaga by Cheektowaga police.

Cheektowaga police officials said they took Rogowski into custody for violating an order of protection at the request of the West Seneca Police Department. Cheektowaga police had responded to a domestic trouble call at Rogowski's Messer Avenue residence on Feb. 16.

Rogowski was held in custody Friday night, arraigned on the charges and released.

In addition to his career in town politics, Rogowski is a high school technology teacher in the Lockport City School District. He is also a mentor for Warlocks 1507, a competitive robotics team for students and young adults, as well as the co-founder and president of Lockport Robotics Inc., the nonprofit, educational charity that operates the team.

According to Lockport Robotics' website, the setup allows the team "to operate autonomously from the school and sponsors, while still receiving their support."

When reached by email for a statement regarding the arrest, Lockport Superintendent Michelle Bradley wrote, "The district is unable to comment on personnel matters such as the one referenced in your email message."

In his full statement to the media, Rogowski said:


"Let's not forget, this is a family matter. Accusations have been filed against me and my character. I look forward to the opportunity to have my day in court. All questions at this time may be addressed to my legal counsel, [attorney Patrick Stafford].

I want to thank everybody. God bless each and every one of you. God bless my family that's at home right now, my kids. I love you. Thank you."

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