

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
CITY COUNCIL
PUBLIC HEARING: PROPOSED CHARTER REVISION
JUNE 27, 2012**

ATTENDANCE: S. Brannelly (6:20 pm); M. McCarthy; L. Colon (6:15 pm); D. Taylor-Moye; J. Olson; T. McCarthy; M. Lyons; R. Bonney; W. Blunt; A. DePara, Jr.; C. Silva; M. Ayala; L. Martinez; R. Paoletto, Jr.; R. Curwen, Sr.; A. Baker, Jr.; J. Holloway.

Public Hearing was opened at 6:11 p.m. Roll was called by the City Clerk's Office.

President T. McCarthy reviewed the rules of order for the public hearing and asked anyone who wished to speak to make sure they add their name to the sign-up sheet located on the table at the front. Each speaker is given three minutes. There will be no comment from the City Council members and no question and answer period.

1. Beth Lazar – resident of Bridgeport. She stated the Charter Revision is coward, radical and undemocratic. The appointed Board of Education robs the residents of the City of Bridgeport their right to vote for the Board of Education. Also, the power given to the Mayor to remove elected or appointed officials is objectionable. This pressures the City Council members who also work for the City to rubber stamp anything the Mayor wants in order to keep their City jobs. She said the Charter Revision is undemocratic and urged the citizens of Bridgeport to vote no to the Charter Revision Referendum.

Council President McCarthy stated that the public hearing is about the proposed Charter Revision Report 97-11.

2. Clyde Nicholson – resident of Bridgeport. Came forward to speak against the takeover of the Board of Education by the Mayor. The Mayor appointed the Charter Revision Commission. He should have allowed the citizens to elect members to the commission just like the City Council. This Mayor reminds him of a dictator, he must control everything. By his taking over the Board of Education he is saying that we are smart enough to vote for him but not smart enough to vote for Board of Education members. It is time for the City Council to stand up to the Mayor. This is not about education; this is about him controlling the dollars over the past four years. The mayor is a fraud. Time for the citizens to take this to the Supreme Court if necessary and let the court rule.

3. Amos Brown – Mr. Vallas did not speak the truth about his accomplishments. The Mayor can take over the Board of Education but he can't even run the City. People are being murdered, young men cannot find jobs. If the Mayor wants to take over and run the Board of Education he should resign as Mayor.

4. Mary Pat Healy, Executive Director of Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition, BCAC – speaking on behalf of BCAC Board of Directors. She thanked the Charter Revision Commission members for their work and time in this effort. BCAC remains concerned about the proposed change to a fully appointed Board of Education. She cited vagueness of language regarding accountability, ethics, and conflicts of interest. She also said the proposed clauses regarding school governance, specifically an appointed Board, do not allow the public to meaningfully engage in the selection of the Board of Education members nor hold them accountable for their actions.

They recommend the following: the right to vote at the local level helps ensure impartiality and believes the children of Bridgeport would be best served by a fully elected Board of Education; it is important there be an open, transparent, democratic election process to allow qualified residents with a passion for education to run as candidates for the Board of Education; they remain concerned about the lack of clarity in many clauses of the proposed Charter, specifically those relating to conflict of interest and recommend stronger language as relates to these issues.

She restated their position that the children of Bridgeport would be better served by an elected Board of Education, and their concern relative to the vagueness of language in the proposed revision. A copy of her testimony was presented to the Council.

5. Carmen Lopez, lifelong resident of Bridgeport, practiced law in Bridgeport and a Retired Judge for the State of CT. She stated that she never thought the day would come that the City Council would consider changes to its Charter that would disenfranchise, disrespect and demean the very people it was created to protect. She attended the recent meeting of the Ordinance Committee and hoped to see the members asking legitimate questions about the proposed Charter.

She said there is a city position- Legislative Liaison - that serves as a confidential employee and serves at the pleasure of the Council President. Another change is the City Council no longer needs a 2/3's vote to approve the annual budget; they now need a simple majority.

She urged the City Council to please read the proposal and send it back to the Charter Review Commission for changes. She suggested that our neighbors are laughing at the City Council because of this proposal.

6. Maria Pereira – city resident, elected member of the Bridgeport Board of Education and the parent of a child in the city’s schools. She got involved after her daughter had 9 different math teachers in the 7th grade. She started attending the Board of Education meetings and asking questions on behalf of the students in Bridgeport. The Qualification Board created in the revised charter is a farce. If the Board of Education is in such bad shape who is to be held responsible. This charter revision is not about the children, it is about power, money and greed.

7. Helen Olga Losak – city resident. She believes Bridgeport residents need to elect their Board of Education members. She previously worked for the school district and saw that parents were right there, involved and they need to be able to vote for Board of Education members.

The City needs tighter control; the head of the Civil Service Commission does not even live in Bridgeport, uses her business address to qualify her. She has applied to serve on a number of commissions in the city and always gets a letter indicating someone else was selected.

She commented on the raise in taxes this year as well. She will be watching and the city will be held accountable.

8. John Marshall Lee - resident of Bridgeport, thanked Ms. Losak for speaking, thanked the Charter Revision Commission for their hard work. He attended meetings along the way and thought the dialogue was helpful. Would like the City Council to standardize the amount of time a member of the public gets to speak, sometimes it is 5 minutes, sometimes it is 3 minutes. He has previously spoken out on financial accounting matters in the City and the failure, in his opinion, of open, accountable and transparent government. The revised charter provides for monthly submission of financial reports but with no oversight if it does not happen.

9. Maria Zambrano – Executive Director of Excel Bridgeport. The reality of the Bridgeport City Schools is that they are the worst performing schools in the state, with a Board of Education that was not getting the job done. She said the city needs a Board with members dedicated to making changes. She believes change is achievable with the changed in the proposed charter revision. The children of the City of Bridgeport have a right to a quality education, and she urges support of the Charter Revisions.

10. Crystal Mack – does not support the change to an appointed Board; says there are enough qualified, competent people in Bridgeport that know what our children need. We do not need to go around the globe; there are people in Bridgeport that know our children, care about our children. We have some good schools in Bridgeport, Park City Magnet, Thurgood Marshall School. Our kids in Bridgeport can’t even fill out a job application. Men are not nurturer’s, women are. Who is in the school system to protect

the kids? We want parents in the schools to look out for the kids, protect them. It is not about education, it is about money. Children need education in a safe environment

11. Peter George – resident of Bridgeport, retired school teacher. Urged the Council to look carefully at the Charter revision, must critically look at it. Elected members must be required to recuse themselves from voting if needed. City of Bridgeport residents are looked at as victims of local politics. This impression is the residents are not intelligent, not loyal. The welfare of the city is at stake. Please look at the changes with a critical eye and make the changes that need to be made.

12. Karen Jackson – resident, 3 children in the city schools. When the Mayor allowed the state takeover of the Board of Education he made it very clear that the parents and citizens of Bridgeport were ignorant, illiterate, uneducated and were not capable of voting for members of the Board of education. She was very hurt and angered by this. Now that they have won the lawsuit to return the right to vote to the citizen's he is circumventing the process by changing the charter to allow for an appointed board. That is taking away her right to vote. What else can be taken away? Also, would like the charter to not allow young men, and women, to walk around with their underwear showing. She was told that it would require a change to the charter.

** MEMBER CURWEN MADE A MOTION TO ADJOURN
** MEMBER PAOLETTO SECONDED
** VOTE WAS UNANIMOUS IN FAVOR.

Meeting was adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jill Kuzmich
Telesco Secretarial Services