



Memorandum

To: City Council
From: Councilor Sangiolo
Re: #313-17 – Reduction in size of City Council
Date: November 9, 2017

Dear Colleagues,

Last night, the Programs and Services Committee held a hearing - as promised - on the proposal to reduce the size of the City Council to 16 - with 8 elected at-large with a residency requirement and 8 elected by Ward - only with a residency requirement. There was public testimony from the many YES on Charter proponents as well as from Sue Flicop, President of the League of Women Voters, and residents who support the proposal.

One resident made the statement that the League had supported a 16 member council which included Ward only elected representatives. There seemed to be disagreement from members of the YES on Charter proponents and League members on whether that was true.

I am including links to documents that show that the League of Women Voters - did in fact, support reducing the size of the Board of Aldermen to 16.

<http://www.newtoncitizens.com/LWV/stands.html>

"Support the reduction of the size of the Board of Aldermen to not less than 16 members while maintaining a balance between ward aldermen and aldermen at large."

<http://lwvnewton.org/charter/CharterStudyReport.pdf> - see page 16.

<http://lwvnewton.org/charter/CharterStudyReportAppendix.pdf> - see pp. 17-26.

In addition, there are two letters that I am attaching:

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Amy Sangiolo

VOTE

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF NEWTON
848 BEACON STREET
NEWTON CENTRE, MA 02159

* 226-99

Newton Board of Aldermen
Programs & Services Committee
1000 Commonwealth Ave.
Newton Centre, MA 02459

Re: Docket Item #226-99 Petition filed 6/1/99 by the League of Women Voters of Newton requesting that the question of reducing the size of the board from 24 to 16 members be put on the November ballot.

Members of the Newton Board of Aldermen:

The dual mission of the League of Women Voters is to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in government and to advocate on selected governmental issues.

The League of Women Voters of Newton is here tonight as part of the open and informed dialogue, and to advocate for our long standing position supporting "a reduction in the size of the Newton Board of Aldermen, to not less than 16 members". We believe that the public interest would be better served by a smaller board, more consistent with city governments throughout the state and nation. A 24-member board is too large for the voters to know as individual candidates, too large for the public to keep track of as elected officials, and too large for the aldermen to work effectively as legislators.

The petition before you is about good government. The LWV believes that responsible government should be responsive to the will of the people. This petition does not ask whether you agree with us that a smaller board of aldermen would be more effective and less duplicative in its committee work. It asks that you trust in the collective wisdom and will of the voting citizens of Newton. It asks that you give your constituents the chance to speak to this issue, by allowing them to cast their vote on this question, in November.

We commend the members of the Board of Aldermen for your willingness to spend so much of your time and effort on city business, and appreciate your work. We urge you now to have faith in the voters' ability to discern what is in the best interests of our community. Put this question on the ballot, and let the voters be heard.

Sincerely,

Deb Crossley

Deb Crossley, President

Carol Ann Shea

Carol Ann Shea, Local Action Chair

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CLERK
NEWTON, MA 02159

League of Women Voters of Newton--Mary Adelstein

For the Administration and Planning Committee, June 27, 1989

Re: Advisory question to reduce *the* size of *the* Board of Aldermen

The League of Women Voters spoke on December 8 in favor of/reducing the membership of the Board of Aldermen from 24 to 16 members. That statement was appended to the report of this committee; we would refer you to it for specific comparisons with other city councils.

A Board of 16 members will serve the city better than a Board of 24. The members of a smaller Board would be more visible, and more accountable. It is difficult to make an informed choice on a local ballot with as many as 52 candidates. And it is especially difficult for aldermanic candidates who are running at large to make themselves known to the more than 40,000 voters. Since the League makes a substantial effort to provide information about local candidates and gives them an opportunity to be heard by the public, we are well aware of this difficulty.

The proposed 1/3 reduction in the Board will increase each member's accountability to the public. If people know who are their Aldermen, they will have more access. Individual Aldermen will bear more responsibility for their votes and their decisions will be better understood.

The League appreciates the time and effort which all of you put into your jobs as legislators--often at a sacrifice for your home or your work. We do not think that 1/3 of you

are expendable. We appreciate you each individually and for the constituency that you seek to represent. We simply think that 16 is a better number than 24 for doing the work of this body.

Some of you have defended the size of this body by saying that "It ain't broke." As longtime observers, we suggest that the Board is somewhat dysfunctional. The problems are exemplified in duplicative committee work, long, unfocused debates, late meetings, and large amounts of time consumed in deliberating administrative details. These problems would diminish with a smaller Board.

The League did not initiate this measure. The impetus for this change comes from within your own group. The concerns about non-productiveness come from Aldermen themselves.

It is appropriate that an advisory question be placed on the ballot in November to ask the people what they think of this proposed change. If the Board of Aldermen were to be reduced, it could only be done by home rule petition through the General Court. Unlike other charter changes, this one would not go through the ballot box. If Board is going to seriously consider such a home rule petition, it would be wise to consult the public now.