

## CHARTER COMMISSION COMMENTS

11/01/2021

Thank you for allowing me to testify before this commission. First of all, I want to review a community wide mailing sent by an organization calling itself "Citizens for a Better Plymouth" seeking votes to become members of this commission. Six of ten candidates were elected. Three other candidates were elected albeit without the financial resources of the "Citizens" group.

The mailing which I have here in my hand promised "we need to improve our current form of government by modernizing it for the 21<sup>st</sup> century". Meanwhile, there have been very few attempts to fulfill this promise as the commissioners continually advocate for the "status quo" town meeting government and dismiss the many citizens advocating for real change to a city or town form of government. This is a very disturbing turn of events.

As an aside the Commonwealth recommends that any town that reaches a population in excess of 35-40,000 should consider changing to a city form of government which comes in four different descriptions. There is not time to discuss those alternative here except for the city council form of government which looks like a hybrid with all the good about both city and town meeting

As meetings continued it was painfully obvious these six commissioners were opposed to any significant change in our town charter preferring the current outdated, inefficient, unproductive, "rubber stamp" behavior of our town meeting members.

Just this past few weeks the Plymouth town meeting members rejected an article to implement additional housing options in order to keep home ownership more affordable and just. Comments like "I don't want these people to live next door to me" and "we don't have enough water and sewer capacity to accommodate this option". A brilliant idea to expand Plymouth's affordable and usable housing stock went down in flames thanks to a number of people on this commission and serving as town meeting members. This behavior is nothing short of embarrassing.

Many of Plymouth citizens think it is time to dispense with the old guard and bring forward new town leadership to guide our community forward, prosperous and successful. As we stood out in the fickle new England weather to ask voters to sign the petition most of the signators commented that changes were needed and a city form of government was the answer. Over 7,000 voters signed the petition and the commissioners sitting here could no garner more than 2000-2100 votes to serve on this commission. These vote counts are hardly a mandate.

After a few months it was painfully evident that change was not welcomed by the commission and the hard work required to rewrite the town charter was verbally expressed by some charter committee members. I would say to you "if you can't or won't do the work, please resign from the commission and go your own way.

Plymouth must change to a more inclusive, representative form of government that is quicker to respond to the challenges of municipal government in a new century. If this does not happen the town will atrophy into an irrelevant, underperforming community. Our children will go off to college and never return due to the lack of opportunities for good jobs and an abundant family life. Their future is in your hands. As Coach Belichick says lady and gentlemen "do your job"