



Lowell City Council

Special Meeting Minutes

Michael Q. Geary
City Clerk

Date: July 22, 2021

Time: 6:00 PM

Location: City Council Chamber, 375 Merrimack Street, 2nd Floor, Lowell, MA

SPECIAL MEETING (PER RULE 6)

1. ROLL CALL

Roll Call showed 9 present. (C. Rourke, C. Elliott - Zoom).

M. Leahy presiding.

2. MAYOR'S BUSINESS

2.1. Discussion - Various 2021 Municipal Election Issues, Including, But Not Limited To:

1) Amending the Consent Decree to allow for the creation of sub-districts and any other necessary relief.

In City Council, **Motion** "To accept and place on file" by C. Rourke, seconded by C. Samaras. So voted. Solicitor O'Connor outlined the proposed Joint Motion to Amend Consent Decree. Solicitor O'Connor noted that City was in compliance with all laws and that was recognized by the Secretary of State's Office as well being a part of the proposed amendment. C. Nuon questioned time line for amendment to be approved and implemented. Solicitor O'Connor did not have specifics but noted that the Plaintiffs would need to agree to same for easier process. Solicitor O'Connor noted that the Election Commission is the only body with the authority to established sub-districts in the City. Solicitor O'Connor commented on current operations of the Election Commission noting weekly meetings as well as retaining expert opinions regarding sub-districting. M. Leahy noted that the Council has no authority in establishing sub-districts. C. Mercier noted the final goal is voter accessibility. Solicitor O'Connor noted that there was misinformation due to input from various groups involved with voting rights in the City. C. Samaras noted that tasks should be done during the wait time for a Court decision regarding the Consent Decree. Solicitor O'Connor commented on the time constraints and that any locations are dependent on what the decision states. C. Samaras noted the Home Rule Petitions filed on behalf of the City. Manager Donoghue commented on those petitions which sought early voting, drop boxes and mail in votes all of which were approved by State legislature and waiting Governor approval. C. Elliott noted there must be assurances that there be appropriate access for voting for all voters. C. Drinkwater noted that the proposed amendment includes two principles: request to be able to establish sub-districts and request relief from all state and federal



laws. Solicitor O'Connor noted the need for Plaintiff approval but did not foresee that as an issue. C. Chau noted the need for expert assistance to create access path for voters and further noted some districts face stronger challenges. C. Conway questioned current language contained in the Consent Decree. Solicitor O'Connor noted that the Election Commission is allowed to create sub-districts. C. Conway commented on letter from State regarding information provide to the City regarding formulation of plans. Solicitor O'Connor indicated the letter was clear and the position of the State was spelled out. Solicitor O'Connor also identified the robust outreach by the City during this time to inform the citizens. **Motion** by C. Nuon, seconded by C. Samaras to amend the Consent Decree to allow for the establishment of sub-districts within the City. Adopter per Roll Call vote 9 yeas. So voted.

2) Reviewing any current Election Commission sub-districting plan and accompanying timeline for the implementation of two polling locations in each sub-district ("road to 16"), and, the creation of sub-districts in each newly created districts.

In City Council, M. Leahy noted the item and stated that this was solely the responsibility of the Election Commission to establish and that the speakers should be cognizant of that. The following registered speakers addressed the body: Fru Nkimberg; Judith Durant; Mona Tyree; Vanna Theng; Tara Hong; Aurora Erickson read statement of Maria Claudio; Paul Gaudet; Vichtcha Kong; Rev. Heather Prince Doss; Zarais German George; Deb Belanger; Julie Lee; Pam Andrews; Anthony Milisci; Yun-Ju Choi; Kait Lawrence; Mary Tauras; Maria Lopez; Sally Coulter; Geoff Foster; Marty Hogan; Stacey Thompson; and Stephen Malagodi. M. Leahy recognized the speakers. C. Drinkwater commented that the recommendations that Election Commission have representatives from various groups and partners be present at their meetings be followed up on. Solicitor O'Connor noted that the lines of communication are open and will remain so with all the groups. C. Mercier commented that transportation should be made available to all and that information continue to be distributed. Manager Donoghue commented that there is transportation as usual and that the outreach continues through various means and in multi languages.

3) Request members of the Election Commission attend meeting to provide the latest update and answer questions regarding sub-districting plan.

In City Council, Zoe Arthur (Election Commission) provided update of the commission commenting on prior meetings and the action of the Commission as well as the input provided by public and partners. Commissioner Arthur noted the need to resolve some conflicting information as well as retain expert assistance.



3. ADJOURNMENT

In City Council, **Motion** to Adjourn by C. Conway, seconded by C. Chau. So voted.

Meeting adjourned at 7:50 PM.

Michael Q. Geary, City Clerk