

Newton's Mayor and Council Should Respect the Public's Thoughtful Petition

Greater Voter Participation is a Good Thing
Reducing Special Interest Influence is a Better Thing
Saving the Taxpayer Money is the Icing on the Cake

Submitted to Newton's Mayor and Town Council, on April 18th, was a Faulkner Act Petition that requests the municipal election to be moved to November. This petition received overwhelming support and in a short 11 days, over 400 signatures were obtained (150% of what was needed). Yet lawyers and politicians, credentialed or novices, continue to pretend to know better than the public.

If the Town Council wants to ignore our Petition, to unnecessarily increase costs, they should first discuss this with the Petitioners before seeking a Judge to distort the public's position. For the Council is allowed to negotiate with the Petitioners. However, if the Council and Mayor wish to embrace their lawyer's opinion, we look forward to their legal filing before a Judge, for it is the Judge that is the impartial party who should authorize the final outcome.

To unilaterally change the public's sensible Faulkner Act Petition (which directs that a referendum take place on the better attended, no-cost general election date) requires a Judge's approval. While we will then have to consider how to legally respond to the Council's desire for a special election, there is no reason for the Council to take this path. Just ask permission of the Petitioners who represent the public.

In the meantime, let's not lose sight of why this Petition was necessary. Newton has had 8 years to make the election date change that many other towns have done. Moving the election date to November brings a larger, more representative turnout. And this turnout reduces the influence of special interests and the advantages of a do-nothing incumbency. Empowering the voters is what a governing democracy should want to achieve.

Additionally the argument of insiders, incumbents and the establishment is that moving the election to November removes a non-partisan election process. This is wrong and "False News". Nearby Vernon, Byram and Sparta have long ago moved the municipal election date. Their elections remain non-partisan. There, a party-line vote is still not allowed.

It is time that Newton move forward. It's been years of avoidance to feed special interests. We are a democracy - let us create a voting environment in which the greatest number of voters will participate in our democratic process.

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