

VERBATIM PROCEEDINGS

ANSONIA CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION

PUBLIC MEETING

AUGUST 13, 2013

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ANSONIA, CONNECTICUT

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HEARING RE: ANSONIA CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION  
AUGUST 13, 2013

1 . . . Verbatim proceedings of a public  
2 meeting before the Ansonia Charter Revision Commission  
3 held at the Ansonia Town Hall, 253 Main Street, Ansonia,  
4 Connecticut, on August 13, 2013, at 6:00 p.m. . . .

5  
6  
7  
8 (Whereupon, the Pledge of Allegiance was  
9 recited.)

10 (Whereupon, roll call was taken.)

11 CHAIRPERSON JOHN MARINI: Thank you.

12 Seeing a quorum, I'd like to call this public hearing of  
13 the Charter Revision Commission to order. This public  
14 hearing is obviously for the public, so I really want to  
15 get right to the comments, but I see a lot of new faces in  
16 the room. So just to orientate everybody as to what this  
17 hearing is all about and what we've been working on, this  
18 is the Charter Revision Commission of the City of Ansonia,  
19 and we've been -- we essentially are tasked with making  
20 changes to the city charter. And so -- at the outset of

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1 this it's our intention to make the changes that would  
2 make the city run more efficiently and more effectively  
3 for the residents. So we've met for about six, seven  
4 months and, uh, we've talked about a large variety of  
5 different topics, and at this point we've come up with  
6 essentially three recommendations, and there's a sheet out  
7 there that you can take a look at that's a draft report.  
8 We're going to have an opportunity to make changes to that  
9 draft report, revisions, corrections, after this public  
10 hearing. That report then gets submitted to the Board of  
11 Aldermen. They, in turn, have to have a public hearing  
12 because public input is very important to this process. I  
13 mean, they are ultimately gonna decide whether or not to  
14 send those changes to the ballot or not.

15 Now in terms of what the proposed changes  
16 are that stand right now, you could take a look, but very  
17 briefly, we propose that the charter, be amended to  
18 increase solicitation of bids or proposals by advertising  
19 by publication from \$5,000 to \$25,000, that the charter be  
20 amended so that the city can put abbreviated notices into

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1 the paper rather than spending the full amount to put them  
2 into the -- in print paper, and also that an attendance  
3 policy be adopted for boards and commissions.

4 This Commission also had a lot of  
5 discussion about the budgetary system in Ansonia and what  
6 changes, if any, would be prudent to make. Six months  
7 ended up really not being enough to discuss those changes,  
8 and so the final recommendation of this Board was that  
9 charter revision really be continued and reopened so that  
10 the Commission can continue to work on the budgetary  
11 system.

12 Now, obviously a lot more was discussed  
13 during the six months of meetings. This public hearing is  
14 to hear from you, because ultimately this Commission and  
15 the rest of the city work for you. And if we're doing any  
16 work for you, we want to know from our employer, you know,  
17 are we doing the right thing? So, with that being said,  
18 open the floor to public he -- uh, public comments. We  
19 have no sign-up list, so I'm going to take just the first  
20 hand that I see, and I'm going to try to be fair. Randy.

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1 MR. RANDOLPH CARROLL: Good evening. My  
2 name is Randolph Carroll, 44th Street. I've come before  
3 this Board, most -- a lot of you are new -- um, since the  
4 very first meeting. About number three, I'm on three  
5 commissions; I'm chairman of the Historical Commission,  
6 I'm on the Conservation Commission, and I'm also on the  
7 Historic District Commission. I serve on Commissions that  
8 people haven't shown up three or four years. I serve on  
9 another commission that there hasn't been a meeting in two  
10 years. And, um, it's a waste of -- personally, as a  
11 volunteer, it's a waste of my time and the rest of the  
12 Board to show up month after month at a meeting, wait a  
13 half an hour and, because of no quorum, we leave. I have  
14 better things to do with my life for three weeks, three  
15 times a day -- month -- than to come to meetings and then  
16 go right home. So, I, uh, 100 percent support number  
17 three. I've been asking for it from the very beginning,  
18 and, uh, I hear things like it's very hard to find people  
19 that -- to get on Commissions. Well, I'm chairman of the  
20 Historical Commission and I filled every single blank

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1 place, the six years that I've been the chairman, with no  
2 problem at all. You can find volunteers. You're  
3 volunteers, and look at how many of there are you. So,  
4 I'd, uh, I'd like to support this, uh, number three.  
5 Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON MARINI: Thank you. Any other  
7 members of the public wish to address? In the back.  
8 Remember everyone that comes to the stand please state  
9 your full name and your address for our record.

10 MR. KEN PLAVNICKY: Hi. Ken Plavnicky, 15  
11 Mountain View, Ansonia. Um, I've been coming to the  
12 meetings of the Charter Revision Commission, and you guys  
13 been doing -- and ladies -- been doing very good at it.  
14 Uh, there's one thing that I would very much like in favor  
15 is the -- not 1.5 but I believe there should be a one  
16 percent increase, uh, referendum. So when the budget goes  
17 over one percent, we should have a vote on that. This way  
18 it's more democracy and the people get to vote their  
19 opinion on yes or no. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON MARINI: In the back. I see a

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1 hand.

2 MS. JOANNE CZECZOT: Hi, I'm Joanne  
3 Czczot, 37 Morningside Drive, and I'd like to kind of say  
4 a little bit more what Ken said on item number four about  
5 the budget process. And mostly the reason that I would  
6 like that to be going to referendum is I always kind of  
7 look at the numbers, and on the city website if you pull  
8 some of the numbers from the C.E.R.C. town profile, we  
9 have a poverty rate of 9.7, about fourteen percent of our  
10 residents are 65 and over, which means that they're  
11 basically fixed income, and the unemployment rate is 10.2  
12 percent -- now I know some of these figures are from 2011,  
13 although it's a 2012 survey -- when the state is 8.9. So,  
14 just looking at the total population, I think Ansonia has  
15 a fiscal responsibility to the citizens that pretty much  
16 one-third are living on some type of fixed income or  
17 strained cash means, and I just think it would be  
18 beneficial to the residents to look at that process as a  
19 referendum.

20 CHAIRPERSON MARINI: Thank you. Any other

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1 comments from the public? Right there.

2 MR. MIKE EVANS: Hi, my name is Mike  
3 Evans, 16 High Acres Road. Sorry about my dirty  
4 appearance, but I work. Uh, I don't understand this, I  
5 buried three family members this year, you know what I  
6 mean? And, uh, and I haven't had a raise, and I really  
7 work. I haven't had a raise in nine years, and I don't  
8 drink or drug or nothing like that, and I'm telling you,  
9 this to me -- and I never went to high school, there was a  
10 draft when I was a kid, I went in the army. I mean, uh,  
11 and I could tell you, heh, the way it's -- this tax is  
12 going up, uh, it's crazy. Uh, my house taxes went up, my  
13 car taxes went up, and I see, you know, people with  
14 retirement that we're paying for, and I don't have no  
15 retirement because we have a liberal in the White House,  
16 and I ended up losing I -- twenty year's worth wasting  
17 went belly up. I mean, you know, I'm not good -- I never  
18 went to high school, but I know common sense, and I did do  
19 a lot of volunteer service in this city for many years  
20 with the fire house and everything else, and I just don't

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1 like what I see, uh, such a big increase. My boss has got  
2 a house that's twice the size of mine, newer, with four  
3 acres, and he's paying a -- up in White Hills -- and he's  
4 paying a lot less than I am. And to me it's not, it's not  
5 fair. I mean they're going up and the economy's bad, and  
6 nobody's going to tell me the economy's improving. I made  
7 more money 25 years ago than I'm doing now, you know. And  
8 I have no retirement, or vacation. So, I'm just, you  
9 know, I'm just a little upset about it, you know.

10 My sister was worried that I would -- she  
11 called me up -- it's my baby sister -- called me up at six  
12 o'clock. Every morning my baby sister, Colleen, calls me  
13 up. She's worried about -- oh, I don't want you getting  
14 out of hand. Well, I come home and I'm exhausted. I take  
15 my pills, I try to do a little night work if I got the  
16 energy, you know, but it's -- it's like I see all the  
17 houses for sale in Ansonia. Why can't they put it up to -  
18 - I'm not going to take up any more time -- why can't they  
19 put it up to a referendum vote like the other cities do?  
20 (Clapping.) The heck with the one percent or one-and-a-

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1 half percent. I mean, I would love to have a retirement,  
2 but then I'm paying for it. These people have retirement,  
3 and they don't have to worry about whether they're keeping  
4 their job with the public sector. I would love to have  
5 that kind of benefits and stuff. I really work, you know  
6 what I mean? (Clapping.) It just bothers me. You know, so  
7 I'm so -- I'm very sorry I took your time up. You know, I  
8 love Ansonia. I don't want to leave, but with the way  
9 it's going, if it keeps going up I'm gonna have to sell  
10 the house, do something, I mean, you know. It's like I  
11 said, I could never retire. I'm sorry. I believe in God.  
12 (Clapping.)

13 CHAIRPERSON MARINI: Do we have some  
14 space? If anyone wants to come in, we have some room on  
15 the side here. You can slide down, and if you could  
16 stand. It may be better to stand here so you could hear.  
17 Any other members of the public interested in addressing?  
18 Right there.

19 MR. MICHAEL EGAN: My name is Michael  
20 Egan. I live at 103 Benz Street, and I am a disgruntled

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1 taxpayer. Evidently you have, uh, three or four questions  
2 of proposed changes to the city charter. It is with much  
3 disappointment that I speak. The taxpayers of this city  
4 is ignored for some reason. One was we ran out of time to  
5 explore the issue. I think there was eight months or  
6 more. The unreasonable tax increase that we're dealing  
7 with should be reason for you to get something in the  
8 charter to permit us, the taxpayer and voter, to have a  
9 vote. You have an opportunity to do something. Please do  
10 it. We get very little for what we are paying for.

11 One example is our underperforming school  
12 system. Why isn't a lot size an item that you're  
13 considering? The small lot sizes attract families that  
14 put additional burden on our school system and other city  
15 services. The backyard lots that we have in Ansonia are  
16 another item that helps bring Ansonia down. All public  
17 notices should appear on the city website. Some no longer  
18 receive newspapers, such as myself. I go to the Internet,  
19 the -- the papers from New Haven or Waterbury or  
20 Bridgeport, they don't carry local news. We're interested

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1 in local news. Someone has to be designated responsible  
2 for the minutes, the agendas, and any public notices,  
3 having the input put into the website for the city.

4 Another area that should be addressed is  
5 timing for public hearings. For example, this meeting  
6 tonight, 6:00. The Commission meeting is 6:30 to discuss  
7 the public input, and then I guess they turn it over to  
8 the Board of Alderman at 7:00. How much consideration is  
9 given to the public comment?

10 Thank you for this opportunity to speak,  
11 especially on the tax issue. Stick with me and you'll be  
12 alright is not the answer. Thank you. (Clapping.)

13 CHAIRPERSON MARINI: Any other members of  
14 the public wishing to address? (Indiscernible.) I just  
15 saw a hand right up before you and then I'll call you  
16 next.

17 A VOICE: Okay.

18 MS. JOSEPHINE REUTTER: Oh, it doesn't  
19 matter. Let me be short and sweet. Basically I have  
20 lived in the valley for forty-so --

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1 A VOICE: State your name, please.

2 MS. REUTTER: I'm sorry? I'm sorry.

3 Josephine Reutter. I live on 2 Beechwood Terrace in  
4 Ansonia. Been here forty-something years. We came when  
5 my boys were very little. We raised them and -- and then  
6 I had a daughter, but now it's coming to the point we're  
7 not going to be able to live here. So, I think we -- I  
8 don't even know if we're going to be able to sell our  
9 house, truthfully. With the mill rate going up and all of  
10 the -- this is just horrible. Other cities and towns,  
11 from what I understand, they pay lower car taxes, lower  
12 house taxes, they have a lot more for their money. You  
13 know, Milford has beaches and state park -- we have  
14 nothing. We have a walk. Okay? From what I understand,  
15 nobody walks on that side of the walk because of the geese  
16 from the dump. So, what do we offer our citizens? Okay?  
17 You see people walking on Derby's side, because they don't  
18 have the geese -- not that I'm all that much on the walk,  
19 but the taxes. I'm retired. My husband is retired and I  
20 can't afford to live in this town. Thank you. (Clapping)

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1 MS. VERONICA KUDEJ: Veronica Kudej, 256  
2 Wakelee. I just want to say that I checked back 15 years.  
3 My house taxes have doubled. My house value has dropped  
4 40 percent. Is that fair? I don't think so. I mean, to  
5 sell my house today, I couldn't get the money that I put  
6 into that house and spent on that house. It's a two-  
7 family and it's very sad, but we have got to, as  
8 taxpayers, have something to say about the budget process.  
9 We keep on putting money into Board of, um, Board of Ed.  
10 Where's the improvement? I don't see anything. When that  
11 new high school was being built everything was supposed to  
12 be, "Oh, kids were gonna do great." Well, kids haven't  
13 done great. Why? Where's the answer. I don't know, but  
14 I'm not in the Board of Ed. I'm not on -- up on  
15 education. My kids did not even go to school in Ansonia,  
16 yet, I have supported. I've lived in this town for over  
17 70 years, and gotten zip out of it. I mean, we need to do  
18 something. I mean, we're complaining about Healey Ford.  
19 What about Farrels and American Brass? They look a heck  
20 of a lot worse than Healey Ford. Yet we do nothing. Thank

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1 you. (Clapping.)

2 CHAIRPERSON MARINI: Any other members of  
3 the public wish to address the Commission? Go ahead.

4 MS. ELIZABETH GAUDET: Hello. Elizabeth  
5 Gaudet, 202 Prospect Street. I have four children. They  
6 go to the school system. It's horrible, absolutely  
7 horrible. If I could afford it -- which I can't because  
8 my husband and I are putting in eighty hours a week each,  
9 busting our asses to live here. I don't know if I'll be  
10 able to ever retire here, because everything has gone up,  
11 from the water pollution tax, to water itself, to the  
12 property taxes. We are buried, completely buried. I  
13 expected better when I came here. I expected more  
14 economic growth; it's not here. I expected Gateway to  
15 come; it's not coming. This is pathetic. The crime in  
16 this town is high. It's higher than it's ever been, and I  
17 even see it on my own street. It's gotta stop. Things  
18 have got to change. You are not going to bring the type of  
19 people you want, Fairfield people that can't afford it  
20 there anymore, you're not bringing them here because they

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1 don't want to be in a town with all this crime and nothing  
2 that -- nothing to offer. That's it. (Clapping.)

3 CHAIRPERSON MARINI: Any other members of  
4 the public wish to address? Over there.

5 MS. PATRICIA YOUNG: Patricia Young, 54  
6 Woodbridge Avenue. I'm a third generation person that has  
7 lived here. My grandfather -- my great-grandfather came  
8 over from Lithuania. My father had the home. I have the  
9 home. Now I feel I have to sell my home because I can't  
10 afford the taxes. That's just wrong. There's water tax --  
11 there's three taxes on the water; the sewer tax, the new  
12 pollution center, and our regular water bill. That's  
13 ridiculous. I mean, I just can't afford to live in  
14 Ansonia, and it kills me that I have to leave it. And  
15 that's what I'm looking for. I own a two-family home. My  
16 daughter lives upstairs. I can't afford \$600 a year more.  
17 I'm out of work, my husband's out of work. It's -- I --  
18 I can't make it anymore. So, what do we do? Could you  
19 answer that?

20 CHAIRPERSON MARINI: Well, that's --

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1 that's what we're here to hear --

2 MS. YOUNG: -- thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON MARINI: Any solutions you'd  
4 have to offer us. (Clapping.) Any other members of the  
5 public like to address our Commission?

6 MS. PHYLLIS RIVERA: Hi, uh, Phyllis  
7 Rivera, Prospect Street, Ansonia. Um, we're all getting  
8 older. Years ago when we were younger, my kids did not go  
9 to Ansonia High School system, either. We paid and went  
10 to Assumption. However, nowadays, you know, me and my  
11 husband had gotten injured. My husband had gotten sick.  
12 Your paycheck's gone down, has not gone up, if anything  
13 everything is going down. We just can't keep up and  
14 sustain this amount of the bills. We can't even afford to  
15 live anymore here. And -- and the crime has gotten real  
16 bad on Prospect Street. It's -- the cars are going by, I  
17 mean, doing 50 to 60 miles an hour. You could actually  
18 feel it when they go by. I mean, it's just unbelievable,  
19 and we do not know -- you know, we're not getting any  
20 raises, if anything we're going down. My neighbor, her

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1 husband died. She lost his Social Security. So, we're  
2 dropping financially. Thank you. (Clapping.)

3 CHAIRPERSON MARINI: Any other members of  
4 the public? Any other members of the public like to  
5 address the Commission?

6 MS. NATALIE BIASUCCI: Natalie Biasucci,  
7 57 Rockwood Avenue, Ansonia. Um, I just feel that  
8 anything that will give the people of the town more say,  
9 do it. And as far as voting on -- on issues that come up  
10 and, um, the recommendations that I have saw here I wish  
11 they be addressed also, as soon as possible by the mayor  
12 and the other Commission and also the Board of Aldermen  
13 because I feel that if I have to pay taxes, everybody else  
14 should be paying taxes. And, um, and if you're gonna hold  
15 an office, I think you should be up on your taxes and not  
16 fall behind.

17 CHAIRPERSON MARINI: Thank you.

18 MS. BETH CONNELLY: My name is Beth  
19 Connelly, 209 Prindle Avenue, and as I look around I don't  
20 see too many seniors, but I'll represent the seniors.

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1 It's a very, very difficult pain -- living in this town,  
2 now. Our pensions do not go up, our Social Security does  
3 not go up; it's a very difficult. The money is coming  
4 from nowhere else and the taxes go up every year. Thank  
5 you.

6 CHAIRPERSON MARINI: Thank you.

7 (Clapping.) Any other members of the public wanting to  
8 address the Commission tonight? Any other members of the  
9 public wanting to address the Commission tonight? Anybody  
10 else at all? (Indiscernible.) Sure, go ahead.

11 MR. CHARLIE STOWE: My name is Charlie  
12 Stowe, 23 Granite Terrace. I'm an Alderman and at this  
13 time in the second ward. Um, I believe that we should  
14 have a referendum for one-and-a-half percent. Anything  
15 over one-and-a-half percent, uh, the public should have  
16 the right to vote for that. (Clapping.) The system that  
17 we currently have is not working anymore. You know, if  
18 this referendum was only for a five-year period, I think  
19 it would be helpful. There's a lot of people that don't  
20 like the idea of the public having a say over the budget

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1 because they feel that if they do that every budget will  
2 be voted against, and then we won't have a good Board of  
3 Education or the people that work here may not be taken  
4 care of in the proper manner. I feel, being in a business  
5 for 44 years and running it for 20, I believe that we have  
6 to sacrifice to have a better community, and that means  
7 everybody has to sacrifice. And in my opinion the public,  
8 the citizens who pay the taxes and who don't -- are not  
9 employed by the City of Ansonia have already done their  
10 fair share for the last four or five years in this town.

11 (Clapping.)

12 Being that we have an unelected board that  
13 makes the final decision, I offered a suggestion which I  
14 don't -- do not want to see happen, but I believe that if  
15 that doesn't happen that the Aldermen should have the  
16 final say in the budget because at least they're elected  
17 officials, and if you're not happy with your elected  
18 official does, then you have the right to replace him.

19 (Clapping.)

20 I have a letter in my pocket that I got

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1 from somebody, and it was, um -- they wanted to remain  
2 unanimous(sic), and I'm not going to read it because we  
3 don't really have the time. I'm just gonna abbreviate. I  
4 don't know if it's true. I'm gonna have to do research,  
5 and at the Aldermen meeting I'm looking forward to reading  
6 it and finding out. Hopefully maybe the mayor could tell  
7 us tonight right now what's going on. Uh, this person  
8 wrote to me and said they pa -- they live week to week  
9 paying their bills, just like, uh, basically everybody  
10 here said, and that this last tax increase that the, uh --  
11 all the Board Ed members that were making over 100,000  
12 just took a three percent raise. Now, I was here. Now,  
13 there's con -- I want everybody to understand -- there is  
14 contracts that we cannot avoid. You know, collective  
15 bargaining is ruining the country. Anybody that pays  
16 attention knows that. Um, however, I was here with my  
17 fellow Aldermen, democrat and republican, and watched  
18 people come in here and say that the sports programs were  
19 gonna be eliminated if this -- if this extra 500 and  
20 change thousand dollars wasn't given to them. Both felt -

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1 - right or wrong -- both felt that they needed that money.

2 I disagreed. I really disagreed with the increase that  
3 the Board of Aldermen gave, but I voted with it because I  
4 knew it was contractual, right Ed?

5 VOICE: Right.

6 MR. STOWE: Okay, so there were -- even if  
7 I had voted against, I would have looked good politically  
8 but it didn't matter. It was gonna happen anyway. So as  
9 trying to be a team player, I voted with it. Now, if this  
10 is true, what this woman says, it's a disgrace to me. To  
11 take people, young people, and bring them in here and do  
12 something like that and then take raise. And this is -- I  
13 believe we all have to sacrifice. I believe this city can  
14 come back. I be -- the mayor just has hired a director  
15 for economic development, wh -- and I was on the vetting  
16 team, and he is a real director. I believe that if our  
17 grant writer and our Aldermen work together that we can  
18 make this happen, that we can change this city. And we  
19 have to increase the grand list and bring business back to  
20 this city. If we don't, your taxes are gonna continue to

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1 go up. Uh, I just -- I understand completely your pain.  
2 You're in a situation where you can't even sell your  
3 house. Your young people who bought a house in the past  
4 15 years, most of them are upside down in their houses, so  
5 they can't even sell them and walk away. So, I really --  
6 I don't know what this committee can do. I'm not trying  
7 to embarrass anyone or intimidate anyone in either party,  
8 but this issue, in my opinion, has to be dealt with before  
9 this up -- next upcoming budget, because if we don't,  
10 we're going to have unelected officials deciding our fate  
11 again and that is not right. (Clapping.) That's all I  
12 have to say. (Clapping)

13 CHAIRPERSON MARINI: Any other members of  
14 the public interested in addressing the Commission? Go  
15 ahead.

16 MR. CHRISTOPHER WAUGH: Uh, my name is  
17 Christopher Waugh. I live at 83 Prospect Street. I just  
18 thought like, um, if you really can't afford to be here  
19 just -- you should be able -- you should try to look for  
20 somewhere else. I know that the taxes are high, just --

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1 it's hard -- and it's hard to be here. I go to s -- um,  
2 Ansonia High and it's -- so many, like, my last, my last  
3 school, so many people were fired or, um, I guess replaced  
4 by volunteers. I really think that they shouldn't ha --  
5 do that. Instead of us, us, um, you people, like  
6 taxpayers paying to, like -- for the library, you should  
7 try to get volunteers with the union so it might lower the  
8 tax rate. (Clapping.)

9 CHAIRPERSON MARINI: Any other members of  
10 the public wishing to address the, uh, Commission tonight?  
11 Any other members of the public wishing to address the  
12 Commission tonight? And, third and final time, final  
13 opportunity, would any other members of the public like to  
14 address us at the public hearing tonight? Seeing none --  
15 none, right? Seeing none I am going to close the public  
16 hearing. Thank you very much. We're going to continue  
17 into our regular --

18 (Whereupon, the recording stopped.)

19 (Whereupon, the hearing was concluded at  
20 6:27 p.m.)

HEARING RE: ANSONIA CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION  
AUGUST 13, 2013

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