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ANSONIA CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION

PUBLIC MEETING

AUGUST 20, 2014

ANSONIA TOWN HALL
253 MAIN STREET
ANSONIA, CONNECTICUT

POST REPORTING SERVICE
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HEARING RE: ANSONIA CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
AUGUST 20, 2014

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 20, 2014, at 7:06 p.m. . . .

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9 CHAIRPERSON CRISTOPHER LISI: -- state
10 your name and address and speak clearly into the
11 microphone please.

12 MS. NANCY VALENTINE: Good evening, my
13 name is Nancy Valentine, I'm the Republican Registrar of
14 Voters for the City of Ansonia and -- do I need my
15 address as well -- 18 Farrell Drive, Ansonia.

16 CHAIRPERSON LISI: Thank you.

17 MS. VALENTINE: Okay factually speaking
18 since we've made our presentation to this group, I just
19 took a little look back of our voting history since 2010,
20 the difference between a primary and an election. In
21 2010 we had a Democrat and Republican primary and for our
22 total voters for that one we only had 4,922 voters of
23 which 1,117 voted, which is a 22.6 percent turnout.

24 For general election in 2010 we had 9,653

HEARING RE: ANSONIA CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
AUGUST 20, 2014

1 voters, of which 6,069 voted, 52 and a half percent, and
2 that's a very good turnout for Ansonia. In 2011 our
3 municipal election, we had -- we would drop down to 9,413
4 voters and only 2,758 voted for 29.2 percent turnout. In
5 2012 presidential election, everyone registers to vote
6 and votes in a presidential election. We rose to 9,822
7 voters, of which 6,991 voted, for a 71 percent turnout.
8 2013, another municipal election. We dropped down to
9 9,790 for registered voters, of which 4,246 voted,
10 dropping us back down to 43.3 percent.

11 We just experienced a Republican primary
12 last week. We only have 1,334 registered voters, 265
13 turned out to vote, for 19 and a half percent turnout.
14 This unanticipated primary that we always have to budget
15 for and we dropped down to a bare bones budget at the
16 request of the City this year, we expended every dime and
17 then some. We actually had to pay for schools this year,
18 something we've never done before because custodians work
19 during the day and our elections went into the evening,
20 so we were over by a few hundred dollars of spending our
21 entire budget.

22 But historically we are losing voters.
23 Our canvas this past year, we had the biggest turnout
24 I've seen and I've been -- as an Assistant Registrar and

HEARING RE: ANSONIA CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
AUGUST 20, 2014

1 then Registrar, I've seen the biggest response to our
2 canvas and right now we're down to 9,302 voters as of
3 today. So we went from a presidential election where
4 everyone registers of 9,800, we're down to 9,300. So a
5 lot of our seniors -- we are a senior community. We've
6 lost a lot of folks and there are so many moving away and
7 we always think they're all going to Florida, but they're
8 going everywhere else.

9 So, you know, that's just a little history
10 of why we think we should reduce our Ward size in support
11 of that, also our workers. We do struggle getting
12 competent workers for a very long day on Election Day and
13 it will really almost cut our workers in half. We go
14 from an average of right now 60 to 62 workers, and we'll
15 go down to about 32 to 36. The only situation right now
16 of hiring more workers would be during a presidential
17 election where we do get a larger turnout, we would bring
18 in more checkers just to keep the lines moving and the
19 flow moving in a polling place.

20 So, you know, those are just a few facts
21 in support of additional information in support of
22 reducing the Wards. It's, you know, fiscally
23 responsible, it's -- I think it would make for good
24 government considering the size of our City and how our

HEARING RE: ANSONIA CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
AUGUST 20, 2014

1 declining numbers are going down, so I thank you for your
2 time.

3 VOICES: Thank you.

4 MR. JOHN IZZO: That's a lot of voters.

5 CHAIRPERSON LISI: Is there anyone else
6 who wishes to speak? Sure.

7 MR. TOM MAFFIO: Good evening, my name is
8 Tom Maffio, 7 Ford Road, Ansonia. And it's been my
9 privilege to serve the good people of Ansonia as the
10 Democratic Registrar of Voters. I'm very much in favor
11 of the Ward reduction proposal that you folks have
12 considered. And I would just like to add a couple of
13 points relative to what other towns are doing.

14 We're not blazing new ground here in
15 Ansonia by going with three Wards or whatever the number
16 may end up ultimately being. If you take a look at the
17 population of Ansonia being roughly 19,000 people and
18 look at all of the other municipalities in the state,
19 there are 12 other towns that would be close to us in
20 population. All of those towns have considerably more
21 square miles that they have to deal with.

22 Only one town, Montville, approaches the
23 number of Wards that we have. They have six. Everybody
24 else has anywhere from two, three, four, and maybe five.

HEARING RE: ANSONIA CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
AUGUST 20, 2014

1 Madison, a town of 36 square miles and 18,200 voters has
2 just two voting districts. I think if these towns can
3 make it work, we certainly can. And if we take a look at
4 our neighbors here in the valley, Derby with a much
5 smaller population of roughly 13,000 people, uses three
6 Wards in their five square miles.

7 Seymour has 16,500 folks, three voting
8 districts and 14 square miles. And our big brother just
9 to the southwest, Shelton, 39,500 voters -- I mean
10 residents, 30 square miles, four voting districts.
11 Making a change from seven Wards to three will bring some
12 issues. I think because we have the benefit of time to
13 prepare for it, we can do this with minimal problems for
14 our voters, okay.

15 And Nancy and I would like very much for
16 -- if this process proceeds and we ultimately go this
17 route, we would develop a little Committee of our own to
18 take a look at the pitfalls that we might encounter by
19 going from seven to three Wards, prepare for it, and make
20 sure that our voters are ready. We can do this. Thanks
21 very much for your time.

22 VOICES: Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON LISI: Is there anyone else
24 who wishes to speak from the public?

HEARING RE: ANSONIA CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
AUGUST 20, 2014

7

1 MS. ELIZABETH LYNCH: Good evening, my
2 name is Elizabeth Lynch. I live at 15 McIntosh Lane in
3 Ansonia. I'm proud to say that I'm a lifelong resident
4 of this City and my grandchildren are sixth generation
5 Ansonians.

6 This Board and the action that it takes
7 means a great deal to me and any changes to our Charter,
8 which has guided our government for so long, is something
9 that I and hopefully everyone here, should take very
10 seriously. We are not talking about quick fixes here.
11 Any changes to how city government operates cannot be
12 made in the best interest of those currently in office,
13 but must be made with the best interest of the City of
14 Ansonia and the generations to follow in mind.

15 I was appointed Assistant Town Clerk in
16 2010 and was elected Town Clerk in 2013, but prior to
17 that I worked in the Mayor's office for 11 years. I was
18 closely involved in the budget process for all of those
19 years and witnessed first-hand the dedication and hard
20 work of many long serving members of the Board of
21 Apportionment and Taxation. Not to mention the countless
22 volunteer hours they put in as a bipartisan Board to
23 formulate budgets that they felt were in the best
24 interest of the citizens of Ansonia.

HEARING RE: ANSONIA CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
AUGUST 20, 2014

1 Many of those long serving members have
2 been replaced and there are currently seven brand new,
3 inexperienced members but their duties remain the same.
4 Keep in mind the budget process currently runs from
5 January to May but the responsibilities of this critical
6 Board do not end upon the finalization of the budget.
7 These dedicated public servants continue to meet monthly
8 to oversee the finances of our City and ensure that every
9 Department other than the Board of Education is adhering
10 to their budget, line item by line item. There is a
11 clear system of bipartisan checks and balances and I
12 commend the tremendous work done by everyone who has ever
13 served on this Board.

14 I don't have to tell any of you that we
15 are in the midst of the worst economic climate that any
16 of us have ever lived through, but as far as I'm
17 concerned this system works and I have serious
18 reservations about politicizing it. The proposed changes
19 being considered will replace the bipartisan tax Board
20 with a politically elected Board that will undoubtedly
21 inject partisan politics into the budget process. We
22 could have an election result where members of one party
23 and our unaffiliated and independent voters are excluded.
24 That is not fair.

HEARING RE: ANSONIA CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
AUGUST 20, 2014

1 We hear a great deal about transparency
2 and I'm all for that, but these changes will result in
3 the complete opposite. It has the potential to take the
4 entire process behind closed doors. I also feel the need
5 to point out that in my 14 years attending BOAT meetings
6 I can honestly say that the topic of this change was
7 never brought up or any discussion was ever made or
8 changes proposed. Thank you.

9 VOICES: Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON LISI: Is there anyone else
11 who wishes to speak from the public?

12 MR. BILL PHIPPS: Good evening, my name is
13 Bill Phipps, I live at 27 Johnson Street. I was reading
14 the information that was on the Valley Independent and
15 the website, and I just made three observations that I
16 would like to bring your attention and ask for your
17 consideration.

18 The first one was wanting to change the
19 majority required to be counted on the vote as the
20 members present at an activity, and I think that's a
21 mistake. I think the majority necessary to pass
22 legislation should be based upon the total membership of
23 the Board in question. And if somebody isn't there, they
24 still have to be counted. But that was one observation.

HEARING RE: ANSONIA CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
AUGUST 20, 2014

1 Another one that I thought is going in the
2 wrong direction is to allow police officers who are
3 residents of the Town to participate in the political
4 process. I think that would be an error. I think that
5 would possibly open us up for situations in the future
6 where the policeman would be required to do his duty and
7 at the same time he happens to be running in the Ward and
8 it would create some conflicts that I think could get
9 very sticky.

10 And the third thing, and I just happened
11 to run across this as I was perusing the documents, in
12 Section 49 it says that the Superintendent of Public
13 Works, and I quote this, "he may not be a resident of the
14 City". And I'm sure that's a typo, but if you have to do
15 something verbatim in a court of law the attorney will
16 probably tell you that says nobody from Ansonia can be
17 the Department of Public Works. And I'm sure you'll want
18 to change that. It looks like they used the wrong
19 preposition when they structured the sentence. Thank
20 you.

21 VOICES: Thank you.

22 MS. JOAN SWEET: My name is Joan Sweet and
23 I live at 49 Mountain View Road here in Ansonia.
24 Thoughts that went through my mind as I read about these

HEARING RE: ANSONIA CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
AUGUST 20, 2014

1 proposed changes, one, some thought given to how these
2 divisions will take place going from seven wards to
3 three. I'll just mention also, I've worked at the polls
4 and I hope if this were to occur there'll be more people
5 in one area and please take into consideration parking
6 spaces.

7 And the only other thing, you're going to
8 have a reduction in order to have a quorum. With now
9 there's 14, I believe the quorum would be eight. And if
10 you have -- well, figure it out. But if you go down
11 you're going to have a quorum of five people. And maybe
12 my math is off, but the concern that I'm trying to bring
13 to point is you're going to have fewer people making
14 decisions for our City. I think you for your time.

15 VOICES: Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON LISI: Anyone else?

17 MR. DAVE KNAPP: Good evening, Dave Knapp,
18 3 Glen Drive, Ansonia, Connecticut. With regards to the
19 Charter Revision going to three Wards from the existing
20 seven down to three, I don't know if I'm adamantly
21 opposed to going to three. I think that may be
22 stretching it a little bit.

23 I remember when I was running for Board of
24 Alderman up in the 7th Ward, that alone was enough just

HEARING RE: ANSONIA CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
AUGUST 20, 2014

1 to get out and see the people up there in the 7th Ward.
2 I heard you guys are talking about combining maybe the
3 7th and the 6th Ward. You'd probably have to start
4 campaigning in January some time to get out there and see
5 everybody. Maybe four Wards, maybe five Wards I could
6 see, but going down to three -- going from 14 to nine, I
7 think you're eliminating five individuals out of the
8 political process.

9 Along the same lines with BOAT, going from
10 12 down to seven. Another five individuals that want to
11 participate in the political process are being removed
12 from the political process. I think with the three Wards
13 I think you may see a reduction in some of the elderly
14 voting, the distances that some of the elderly may have
15 to travel to vote. I know Ansonia is not a big town but
16 as the folks get older, you know, any kind of change in
17 any distance.

18 I don't think a \$5,000 savings per
19 election should be the deciding factor on whether we go
20 from seven to three Wards. I think this is something
21 that needs some lengthy discussion before we go and make
22 a decision like that. The other thing too is
23 hypothetical if you have nine individual, five show up,
24 you have a quorum. You have five individuals making

HEARING RE: ANSONIA CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
AUGUST 20, 2014

1 decisions for the entire 19,000 people in the City of
2 Ansonia.

3 I just don't -- I don't think that's the
4 way it was ever intended. Same thing with BOAT going
5 from 12 down to seven, they do a terrific job BOAT, but
6 it's a thankless job what BOAT does. And to go down to
7 seven individuals, technically you could have four
8 individuals making the financial decisions for the entire
9 town. I just think these two items need to be well
10 thought out and some more time and effort put into it.
11 Thank you for your time.

12 VOICES: Thank you.

13 MR. PATRICK HENRY: Patrick Henry, 16
14 Harris Road. The reduction of Wards into three, I think
15 that's a great idea, or at least some kind of reduction.
16 I -- you know, being a member of a political party, it's
17 not the easiest thing in the world to get 14 candidates
18 to run for office, okay, it's really not on either side
19 I'm sure.

20 I would only go further by saying I would
21 have like to have seen -- I know you talked about it,
22 minority representation where if you had three Wards with
23 three candidates, three Aldermen, you put up two
24 Democrats, two Republicans, the top three get in because

HEARING RE: ANSONIA CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
AUGUST 20, 2014

1 next election when it's all Republicans in, the Democrats
2 are going to say we should have did that.

3 And a few years down the road when it's
4 all Democrats again, they're going to say we should have
5 did that. So this is a good time to do it. All the
6 Boards in this City have minority representation, the
7 Board of Education is a Board that gets voted, and they
8 do that. The Board of Alderman is the only that does
9 not, so that's all I have to say. Thank you very much.

10 VOICES: Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON LISI: Is there anyone else
12 who wishes to speak from the public? Is there anyone
13 else who wishes to speak from the public?

14 MR. CHARLIE STOWE: My name is Charlie
15 Stowe, 1st Ward Alderman, 23 Granite Terrace.

16 I just -- I understand why we're trying to
17 go down to three Wards. I had a lot of concerns about it
18 and I've said some too, but I understand why I think we
19 need to do something like this because we don't seem to
20 have enough people when it's time to vote, we don't seem
21 to have enough money to do it. So if we shrink the
22 amount of locations to vote at, I think it would be very
23 helpful.

24 As far as empowering the Board of Alderman

HEARING RE: ANSONIA CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
AUGUST 20, 2014

1 to override recommendations made by BOAT, I think this
2 has been a long time coming. I think that people who are
3 elected have to be responsible for the budgets of their
4 town or city because it gives the citizens somebody to
5 have responsible that they can go vote for. But we're
6 not eliminating BOAT, we're just -- they're not
7 ultimately responsible. I think that this is a good
8 idea.

9 Changing the approval process so that the
10 Board of Alderman exercise final approval of the annual
11 budget, here again, that's repetitious of what I said
12 already. I have a little bit of a concern about
13 clarification that the Mayor is Chief Executive Officer
14 of the City of Ansonia with the sole ability to hire and
15 fire city personnel. I'm hoping that this Board can look
16 at this some more and tweak it. I know for Public Works,
17 I'll just use that as an example, I think the Mayor
18 brought a candidate and the fellow has been doing a good
19 job and but the Commission reviewed it and the Commission
20 -- you know, I have some faith in humanity.

21 And if the Mayor has a candidate that he
22 wants to use and the person is qualified, I think that
23 the Commission should try to help the Mayor hire that
24 person if that's who he wants. I don't -- I just feel

HEARING RE: ANSONIA CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
AUGUST 20, 2014

1 that any Mayor or any party, if you have a Mayor that can
2 choose too many people by himself you risk the chance of
3 collusion. I just don't -- I would like to see maybe the
4 Mayor have the power to fire people. Maybe he should be
5 able to have the right to hire a Director and the
6 Director have two or three people on the Commission to
7 choose the rest of the people, I don't know.

8 I'd like this Board to give that some
9 thought and consideration. I just -- I'm an old stickler
10 to the old ways of I like the fourth -- the system of the
11 four powers. In Washington, you know, it's kind of
12 broken right now but it keeps a check on everybody so not
13 one person can kind of dictate, you know. I really am a
14 proponent of term limits and we're not talking about term
15 limits here, so we could have another Mayor that's here
16 for 14 years. And when a Mayor -- in my opinion when a
17 Mayor is here that long, by the time that 14th year comes
18 almost every friend and relative of that person is
19 working for City Hall.

20 That's my opinion and that can happen with
21 either party and I don't think it's right. I think the
22 most qualified people should be the people doing the job
23 for the citizens of the City of Ansonia and I believe if
24 you had term limits where you had three terms, that

HEARING RE: ANSONIA CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
AUGUST 20, 2014

1 people that worked here would know in six years there's
2 going to be somebody different here so they would be
3 working for the City instead of maybe personal ideas or
4 thoughts. They would actually work for the citizens and
5 do what the citizens because they knew that that's how
6 their job was secure.

7 That's all I got to say if that makes any
8 sense.

9 VOICES: Than you.

10 CHAIRPERSON LISI: Is there anyone else
11 who wishes to speak from the public?

12 MR. ROBERT TURSCHMANN: My name is Robert
13 Turschmann, I live at 40 Hotchkiss Terrace in Ansonia. I
14 just -- a couple of things is the savings, the \$5,000
15 savings every two years. I mean really, do you think
16 that's going to be a savings?

17 I mean, you're going to go from seven
18 voting places to three. Are you going to keep the same
19 amount of moderators at each place and the same amount of
20 checkers that you have now? No, you're going to have to
21 increase so that cost is not really there of savings.
22 And personally my feeling is I don't want to sell my
23 representation for \$5,000. That's the way I feel. We
24 have 14 members up there and I feel that they represent

HEARING RE: ANSONIA CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
AUGUST 20, 2014

1 each and every citizen not just the people in their
2 Wards.

3 And the other thing I wanted to ask is on
4 the powers of the Mayor. That kind of wasn't really
5 clarified on who you hire and who you fire. I mean, is
6 it at-will employees or appointees or are you talking
7 about right across the board, anybody? I mean, that
8 really wasn't spelled out. So thank you very much.

9 VOICES: Thank you.

10 MR. BARTHOLOMEW FLAHERTY: Good evening,
11 my name is Bartholomew Flaherty, I reside at 28 Pinecrest
12 Avenue. And I just couldn't let that comment go
13 unchallenged.

14 I think it was kind of skirless and I
15 think it was unnecessary at a public hearing for a
16 Charter Revision Commission to take shots at a Mayor who
17 was elected by the people for 14 years, who is a man of
18 honor, who had tremendous integrity, I think by in large
19 a pretty good man. And let's not forget, he was elected
20 by the people. So, you know, to take a shot at him I
21 think is -- I see it of a reoccurring team of the past
22 administration, this, that and the other thing.

23 Guys, it's seven months into your
24 administration, time to stand on your own two feet and

HEARING RE: ANSONIA CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
AUGUST 20, 2014

1 start -- stop looking back. And to say that about Jim
2 DellaVolpe I think was unfair. That's all I have to say,
3 thank you.

4 VOICES: Thank you.

5 MR. FLAHERTY: One more question. This
6 iteration, is this the same that was online or were there
7 changes made to this?

8 MR. JOHN MARINI: There were some
9 typographical changes that were made --

10 MR. FLAHERTY: Just typographical okay,
11 thank you John. Thank you Mr. Chairman.

12 CHAIRPERSON LISI: Thank you. Is there
13 anyone else who wishes to speak from the public?

14 MR. EDWARD ADAMOWSKI: Good evening Board
15 members, my name is Edward Adamowski. I reside at 19
16 Kathy Lane in Ansonia, Connecticut. I also am an
17 Alderman and I was just going to touch on the Ward things
18 really quick.

19 I spend a lot of time walking around my
20 Ward actually speaking with my residents. I think that's
21 going to be very hard to do with a larger Ward if you go
22 down to three. Just for example, if you combined say the
23 1st, 2nd, 3rd Ward just speaking hypothetically which
24 would make sense in area-wise and maybe the hilltop Wards

HEARING RE: ANSONIA CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
AUGUST 20, 2014

1 and the west side Wards. That would give you three Wards
2 which roughly everybody was talking about.

3 Whether that's the plan or not, I don't
4 know, I'm just saying. It would be very tough for
5 anybody to cover all that area, to actually physically go
6 out and speak to the residents. So in my opinion I think
7 we would have a huge disconnect between the public
8 leaders and the actual residents of the City. I mean, I
9 would say probably a good 30 percent of my Ward has my
10 cell phone number. I mean, I really talk to these people
11 and I know my Ward is small just over there on the north
12 end.

13 But you know, this is volunteer, we all
14 know that. None of us get paid as Aldermen and as Dave
15 said, I really think you'd have to start going around
16 talking to these people in January or February to cover
17 every single house in that amount of territory. I've
18 never walked the hilltop and Dave was saying the same
19 thing, it's a large area. He had a tough time just
20 covering the 7th Ward. So I mean, that's something to
21 think about when you're changing the Wards is you've got
22 to have that connection between who's running and who's
23 going to be out there speaking with these people.

24 And I've also -- just to touch on the BOAT

HEARING RE: ANSONIA CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
AUGUST 20, 2014

1 thing, I've been opposed to this since day one and I will
2 stick with I am opposed to it today. I do not believe
3 it's a good idea being on the Finance Committee for four
4 years as Chairman, going through the budget process every
5 year. It's not in the best interest of the City of
6 Ansonia I don't believe, to put all that on the Aldermen
7 for the reason is because when you run for election I
8 don't have to go out and say hey, I'm going to lower your
9 taxes.

10 That's all you have to do is to get
11 somebody in there who is a smooth talker who's going to
12 go out and tell all these people oh listen, I'm going to
13 cut your taxes in half. I'm the best thing since sliced
14 bread. The City services I believe are the ones that are
15 going to be affected by it. So, that's my two cents on
16 that for whatever it's worth. Thank you.

17 VOICES: Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON LISI: Is there anyone else
19 who wishes to speak from the public? Sure.

20 MR. RANDOLPH CAROL: Yes, my name is
21 Randolph Carol. I live at 40 Fourth Street, Unit No. 10,
22 and I've lived in this Town 30 years. I have attended
23 probably 90 percent of the Board of Taxation meetings.

24 I have seen the ups and downs, the

HEARING RE: ANSONIA CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
AUGUST 20, 2014

1 debates, I've been Chairman of Commissions and have
2 attended every single time that my budget came up to the
3 Board of Taxation. There was a Board of Taxation meeting
4 two nights ago, two people were in the audience, myself
5 and one Board of Alderman. I am thoroughly against
6 changing the way that it is now. I have faith in the
7 Board of Taxation. You have dedicated people and I think
8 that's about it.

9 You know, as a taxpayer I'm thoroughly
10 against having the Board of Taxation changed. Thank you.

11 VOICES: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON LISI: Is there anyone else
13 who wishes to speak from the public? Is there anyone
14 else who wishes to speak from the public? Is there
15 anyone else who wishes to speak from the public?

16 MALE VOICE: Motion to close the public
17 session.

18 MALE VOICE: Second.

19 CHAIRPERSON LISI: Discussion? All in
20 favor?

21 VOICES: Aye.

22 CHAIRPERSON LISI: Any opposed? The Ayes
23 have it.

24 COURT REPORTER: Would you mind just

HEARING RE: ANSONIA CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
AUGUST 20, 2014

1 saying your names, I didn't catch everybody's name?
2 (Whereupon, a roll call was taken.)
3 (Whereupon, the hearing was concluded at
4 7:39 p.m.)

HEARING RE: ANSONIA CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
AUGUST 20, 2014

INDEX OF SPEAKERS

	<u>PAGE</u>
NANCY VALENTINE	2
THOMAS MAFFIO	5
ELIZABETH LYNCH	6
BILL PHIPPS	9
JOAN SWEET	10
DAVE KNAPP	11
PATRICK HENRY	13
CHARLIE STOWE	14
ROBERT TURSCHMANN	17
BARTHOLOMEW FLAHERTY	18
EDWARD ADAMOWSKI	19
RANDOLPH CAROL	21