



CITY OF ANSONIA BOARD OF ALDERMEN Public Hearing – August 20, 2013

Call to Order

The Public Hearing of the Ansonia Board of Aldermen was called to order at 7 p.m. by Aldermanic President Gene Sharkey. All those present rose and pledged allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

Roll Call

The secretary called the roll:

Edward Adamowski, D1- present
Peter Marcinko, D1 - present
Charles Stowe, R2 - present
Philip Tripp, R2 - present
Kevin Mott, D3- present
Joseph Jeanette, D3 - present
Jerome Fainer, D4 - absent

Anthony DeLucia, D4 - absent
Howard Madigosky, D5 - present
Joan Radin, R5 - present
Scott Nihill, D6-present
John Marini, R7 - present
David Knapp, D7 - present
Gene Sharkey, D6 - present

President Sharkey declared a quorum of 12 present, 2 absent.

Notice of Public Hearing

The Board of Aldermen of the City of Ansonia, Connecticut will hold a public hearing on the recommendations for changes to the Ansonia City Charter on Tuesday, August 20, 2013 at 7:00 PM in the Aldermanic Chambers of Ansonia City Hall, 253 Main Street, Ansonia, CT.

At said hearing all parties will be given an opportunity to be heard. The recommended drafts of recommended changes that are being proposed for November Election Ballot is on file in the Office of the Town and City Clerk, 253 Main Street, Ansonia, CT, 06401.

Dated at Ansonia, Connecticut this 17th day of August, 2013.

James T. Della Volpe, Mayor
City of Ansonia

Alderman Adamowski MOVED to accept the call of the meeting; SECONDED by Alderman Radin. A voice vote was taken and the MOTION PASSED 12-0.

Public Hearing

Theresa Falkowski, 9 Sobin Drive

I would like to see the voters of this town have a say in the taxes that we are all being forced to pay. Thank you.

Louis Angelucci, 30 Martin Terrace

I am a senior citizen and I have lived in Ansonia all my life. I feel that it's about time for us voters to have a say in what's going on with the spending in this town. After this last tax increase which makes it doubly hard, people like me, people that are laid off, whatever, I don't know what they were thinking, but it's making it very hard on myself, my family and my neighbors. Also, just for a point in fact, I am paying more in taxes on two vehicles than my sister is paying for a home in Florida. It's ridiculous. We have to put a stop to this nonsensical spending. Thank you.

Edward Musante, 21 Castle Lane

I think they should just freeze on the taxes right now. People are out of work, they end up losing their jobs. They keep going up. You know the single parents. They keep going up and up. I don't care which way this is going to go. I believe they should just freeze the taxes right now.

Ed Sabatini, 26 Martin Terrace

The only thing I really want to say, I think it's about time that our elected officials quit voting on party lines and vote for what's best to this City. [Inaudible]. We got 10 Democrats voting against it and one Republican voting for it. You're not voting for the City, you're voting for your party. {Inaudible} ...what to do. When you get elected you are no longer Republican or no longer a Democrat. You are our representatives to do the best job you can for us. And if you can't do it [Inaudible].

Michele Palmer, 18 Hoinsky Way

I've had to pull my three kids out of Assumption due to taxes under one income. Unfortunately it's sad for me, they'll be going to Mead School. With the signs being changed and whatnot, I've seen still green signs for Ansonia with blue. Where's our money going to? Thank you.

Michael Egan, 103 Benz Street

I've been down here a few times, not quite as often as I'd like to. But the City is in definite and dire needs for change. One of the changes has got to be that the individuals that vote on this listen to what the public has to say. I think the public has spoken loud and clear not just at this meeting but at previous meetings, and still we don't get an overwhelming support for the public. Our taxes are ridiculous. We don't get the services equal to the taxes. We have a town right next to us in Seymour. They vote on their, they have a referendum on their budget. One of the members of the committee was complaining because it costs so much for a referendum. How much money has Seymour saved over the years by expending that little bit for the referendum? This City has got to follow suit. I think that the tax problem is only one of our problems. I thank the people that had been on this the Economic Development Commission and are starting to make a move on that. We've had people that have been in charge of that for years. Until recently nothing has been accomplished. We thank the group that are doing it now and hope they continue.

There's a number of items that should be supported by the Board that is before you and you'll have an opportunity to vote on. One of the things is to continue a Committee to revise our Charter. There are a number of areas that have to be considered. The lot sizes in Ansonia are much too small for the area that we have. Back yard lots are ridiculous. They look terrible.

All public notices should appear on the City website. A number of them are, you are able to get ahold of, but it doesn't have the details. So I heard explained that the details for what we're here tonight on are available at the City Clerk's Office. Why isn't it online so that everybody can have an opportunity to see it, not just ones that are able to get to the City Clerk's Office to see what is there? Another area that must be considered is these public hearings. There should be adequate room for everybody to sit down. I think there's fire code violations when you have people standing up in a room this size.

I think one of the areas that has to be considered in the future is reports by the various departments. On the website it lists 23 different departments in the City of Ansonia. I've come to a number of the Board of Aldermen meetings and only one report is available for the public. And that one report I think is probably from the smallest department with paid staff on it. The Fire Marshal's report is extensive and goes into detail. Some of the other areas do give a verbal report but nothing in writing. It should be in writing and should be from all 23 or more boards. Last month...

President Sharkey interjected, Mr. Egan, I'm going to have to stop you. I'm going to ask if you would address your questions to the recommendations that are before us. All of what you're bringing up are good things; those can be brought up at any Board of Aldermen meeting. However we're here tonight and

there are numerous people that are waiting to speak. I'd like to address it to the five recommendations that we have before us.

Mike Evans, 16 High Acres Road

I don't know everything but I'm a simple person. I've lived in Ansonia all my life - for at least 60 years. I thank you Mike, good job. I don't like what I see and I have to cut out the wasteful spending. I've never known a Democrat to improve the economy. They only ruin the economy from what I've seen. I never went to High School I had to go in the Army. I work hard for a living. I live simple. I can't live any more simpler. I believe in God; I don't drink or drug. I haven't drank in 30 years. You know you drive by, you've got to cut this wasteful spending out. I mean, like I said, I don't know everything. But you drive by Prendergast School, such a little, puny school. I do mechanic work on other schools that are much bigger and they only have a few cars. You go by Prendergast, you'll see over 250 cars there on a school day. I can't believe it. Both sides of Finney Street, all the way up, all the parking lots filled with cars. What do they got a teacher and aide per student? It's such a small school. I don't understand that. Is it a jobs program? Why do they have so many cars? Is it that many workers you pay for? It's a shock. And you got dead wood in this City that should have been replaced. You know. Maybe I make some enemy but I don't care. I've lived a miserable two years of life with all the family deaths. I've been through a living hell the past two years. Like I said, I believe in God. I love my country. I was in the Army and everything, and the National Guard. I don't need to see waste because I work too hard for my money. I work really hard and I don't know of any City worker that would take the job that I got. And they got it pretty made. It's a shame when a school janitor can make \$10 more an hour than a good mechanic with better benefits. That breaks my God-darned heart. I promised my sisters that I would behave. I'm always behaved. I'm always a gentleman. I help a lot of elderly people in my neighborhood. It just bothers me when I see waste. We should have a referendum. None of this 1 percent of 1.5 percent. I mean, I don't have any brains when it comes to this politics stuff but I'm sure I could do a little better job of saving the taxpayers money and giving them a better bargain for their buck, you know what I mean, if you want to put it that way. Know what I mean? And Mike you did a great job - I've known you all my life. Like I said, I grew up in the firehouse. My father had nearly 60 years. I watched the City grow. I watched guys sacrifice for free for this City. And they were all nearly in divorce court, their health and everything else. I see freeloading. We are paying for some freeloaders. It's time to start getting rid of the dead wood. I'm sorry, I've heard it from a lot of older people too and they tell me. A lot of senior citizens. My mother, which I hope she is wrong and I'll end it, I lost my mother at the end of February. We had her home hospice care. My father, my brother, my cousin. She said to me on her dying bed, she said Mike, I was sitting in the portable wheelchair. She said Mike, there's going to be a revolution in this country but I won't live to see it. And I hope she's wrong. That was her exact words on her dying bed. Like I said, I love Ansonia. I definitely believe in God. I don't believe about this political correctness or nothing like that. All I know is simple life, hard work.

Liz Vannostrand, 5 Clark Street

I've lived in this town almost all of my life. I think it's a good starting point to have a vote at 1.5 percent. It's a reasonable request. Our taxes are too high. We haven't even seen the street cleaner on our street and there's grass growing all over our road. It's just not a sustainable system. Most of us have our co-pays being raised, our medical expenses are going up. Jobs are getting laid off. Sooner or later this town is going to go into bankruptcy if we don't change. I say a good starting point is the 1.5 percent and we should have a right to vote on it. Thank you.

Pat Henry, 16 Harris Road

I am a member of the Charter Revision Commission. I urge you all to pass all four issues we put before you. The one people seem most interested in is the referendum if the budget is going to be increased 1.5 percent or higher. I think this is a good thing. This goes back to Americanism 101, I think. Right now we are living with taxation without representation. The Board of Aldermen does not vote on the final budget, the Mayor doesn't vote on it, the people don't get a vote on it. It's very simple; we should be able to vote for that. Some of the discussion we had on this was, what are the costs of a referendum. Someone's made the point already. We could actually be saving money if the people get a vote. If you look at Seymour as an example. Another point to having to vote on it and it costing money, you have to go back two or three times is, can you really put a price on the right to vote for something. That's what America is all about - having the right to vote. For 237 years people have been paying for that right to vote with life and limb. If you go to the Woodbridge Avenue Memorial and read the names and ask, I wonder what those people would think about having the right to vote for this, okay? And actually I don't have to wonder I know what they would say. It really a basic no brainer. Someone's brought up, well, if we have to vote two or three times, it could look embarrassing for us. I think having the highest mill rate in the Valley is already embarrassing. This is a way to head that off. This could be a stepping stone or temporary measure because this is something we can do right now, tonight, because we have the language there. We've even put the language in, we've given more detail really than we had to give. If there are any I's to dot or T's to cross we have between November and the budget time for the Board of Aldermen to iron out those details. All we really have to say is, if it's over 1.5 percent it goes to vote. So we can vote on this and do this now. Again, come next year or the year after if there is another Charter Revision, the Charter Revision Commission can say, okay, we're going to move this, we will change this system so the Board of Aldermen has the vote. And if that happens, going to referendum can go away. It doesn't have to stay forever. We can do one, or we can do the other. This is something we can do now. Having the Board of Aldermen vote, we talked about that. It is very complicated - we'd have to change the organization. There are a lot of mechanics involved. We didn't have the time to do that. We didn't have the time to do a lot of things. There are a lot

of issues. The way I look at it, we can have Charter Revision every year. There are a lot of issues out there that we could go into every year. As far as I'm concerned we can do this every year. So I think that covered costs, embarrassment, why we're doing it. Again I urge you to consider it. I'm waiting actually to hear, I didn't hear it at the Charter Revision Public Hearing, you know a lot of people, there's not as many, I'm waiting for one person to get up and say why we shouldn't do it. That person never showed up. Maybe they'll be here tonight and I'll get to hear that. One more thing, a 1.5 increase has been said to be arbitrary. We had to pick a number and draw a line somewhere. 1.5 percent I think that most people have, and that's the good thing about this referendum, if you don't go to vote on it every year, like Seymour does, only if it goes above that. So 1.5, we picked that number, you have to pick some number. Most people would say well, I can understand there have to be some increases somewhere. When you start getting over that number it's going to be hurting people even more. There's a lot of people on a fixed income, underemployed, seniors don't have the money. I understand that, we heard that. We have to be considerate of those people. So that's what the 1.5 is all about. If next year the Charter wants to change it to 2, or 1, fantastic. But right now we've got a number to work with, let's use it, let's do it. Thank you very much.

Richard Sturges, 25 Crestwood Road
Chairman, Board of Apportionment and Taxation

First off, I would like to address the absentee policy. I agree with it. We need it. We need to have members of these boards show up at these meetings. My questions are, as this is stated right now, it is all duly noted meetings, does this include special meetings? We have some special meetings going on right now that if someone who is on vacation for two weeks could miss three in a row. Also, does it affect Aldermen appointed to special boards? The Retirement Board, the School Building Commission, have requirements for Board of Aldermen to be on these boards. Are they going to be held to the same rules as anybody else?

Now getting to the budget referendum. First off I hear that there are people that think the votes don't have sensitivity to the issues of people on fixed incomes. That is completely false. We have members on our board that are retired, members that are unemployed, members that not only are unemployed but their unemployment benefits ran out. We are very sensitive to people on fixed incomes. We have many, many discussions concerning how we can both keep the taxes as low as we can and also provide needed services. There is a lot of misinformation by political people going out there. They are saying that we have a 13-point increase in the mill rate. Actually it is 11.69. We went through revaluation. If we went with the budget with no changes other than revaluation over which we have no control and the Board of Aldermen have no control, the change in the mill rate just due to revaluation was 8.92 mills. That's without a single dollar increase in the budget. Just for revaluation - 8.92 mills.

The Board of Aldermen approved a budget, their increase based on the old mill rate went from 27.65 to 29.32. That's a 1.67 mill increase on the old rate. On the new revaluation that would have been a 2.208 or 2.21 increase.

That went to the Board of Apportionment and Taxation. We increase that by another .28 under the old rate, .37 under the new rate. Then we had the public hearing and we made changes for the Board of Education. This is where everything fell apart. Up until the tentative budget that we set, the Board of Aldermen and everyone else was fairly happy. Citizens didn't know what the effect of the revaluation was at this point. They hadn't gotten their tax bill, and it wasn't until the tax bills came out that they really got upset. I understand that and I'll get to that in a minute too.

After we met for the public hearing on the tentative budget, we set a final budget where we increased the Board of Education by \$460,000 on the expense side. We also included an additional \$300,000 on the revenue side. So it was only a \$160,000 effect on the taxpayer, which was a .14 under the old budget and .18 under the new budget. The total change for revaluation starting with 8.92 and with further increases the difference between the old values and the new values is another .675. So out of that 11.69 total increase, 9.59 was due strictly to revaluation. Again we have no control, the Board of Aldermen have no control over. That is something that has to be done every 5 years.

Right now I have no problem with a referendum at all. I do have some problems with some of the way things are set up. We do have revaluation that must be done every 5 years. There is no provision in Charter Revision on how to handle revaluation. The values can go up, they can go down. They have in the past two years gone both up and down. I have heard people speaking, especially about the car taxes. Because house values went down, and mill rate went up, that had a bad effect on the car taxes. That is something that is being screamed about all over the State to come up with a way to fix car taxes. Right now we only have one mill rate and when it affects house values it also affects car values. Your house values went down, the mill rate went up, so even though your car values went down, your taxes on cars are going up. We have no control over that. The Board of Aldermen has no control over that.

If we do go to referendum, and people are upset and they want to have the taxes decreased, which is their right, you as Board of Aldermen who went through the budget process this year, know we did a heck of a job getting down to as far as we could go and there is very little that we can take out. The only thing we can do to reduce taxes is to reduce services.

In this Charter Revision we're saying the referendum should take place not more than 30 days after the Board of A&T sets the budget. Right now the final budget is set on the third Monday in May. Further down you say if the budget isn't passed by June 15 we'd send out tax bills based on the old rate. Well, 20 to 30 days after the Board of A&T passes the budget already brings it into June, close to the second week in June. So you are very close to that June 15th date

just to start. There is nothing in there that tells us any minimum amount that it would have to be added or subtracted based on what the voters are looking for. There is no time limit before the next referendum. If there is a problem with 1.5 percent on the budget increase in and of itself, does that include grants and other things? You could have grants come in - right now we have a \$61 million budget, a \$915,000 increase which could be one grant or two grants, which will have no effect on the mill rate, no effect on the taxes, and could cause a referendum. Do we want to do that or do we want to take grants and other things out of the equation?

The longer we wait to set a final budget will have an ill effect on the schools. Right now, any time we're talking about the schools, if there any possible cuts to be made at the schools, they must by law give pink slips to anyone that is eligible to get a pink slip. The longer it takes us to set the budget, we will lose those people that have pink slips going out and getting other jobs. The longer it takes us to set a final budget, any positions that need to be filled, we will lose good candidates from our own system and possibly some other candidates because they'll be taken by other school systems. That will have an overall negative effect on our school system as well.

The Board of Aldermen normally hands over the budget to the Board of A&T, we accept the budget and start working on it. Under this new proposal, can we now say that if you give us over 1.5 percent we can turn it back to you and not accept it? What effect does that have on the timeline as well? That will just increase it.

My only other concern is that you were talking about continuing the Charter Revision and continuing working on the budget process and once that process is completed and Board of Aldermen have the final say, the referendum will go away. Why would you put it out to the people to do a referendum now, and then take it away when the Aldermen have final control? Just because they can vote for the Aldermen? That's every two years. The budget is every year. If you're going to give them the right to vote on the budget, they should have it every year. Thank you.

Ken Plavnicky, 15 Mountain View Road

Mr. Sturges does a decent job on what he does, he knows his money figures. I don't think that's the point that most of the people want. I think they want to vote on whether to pass the increase or not. Not all about these little figures, just that if the budget goes up, they want the yes or no to vote so it can be a Democracy. I hope this doesn't turn into a Democrat Republican thing where we get so many Republicans against Democrats because it shouldn't be that way. The people should still have a vote, number one, and like I said I see the job they do, they do a hard job. The people should still have a vote if the budget goes to 1.5 percent. Thank you.

Phyllis Rivera, 201 Prospect Street

We would like that our voices be heard for the referendum. We would like our voices be heard.

Lorie Vaccaro, 515 Beaver Street

I am on the Charter Revision Commission Mr. President and this is a responsible referendum. I'd like to remind the Board that it was maybe two months ago that the people in Ansonia were asked to vote yes for the referendum for \$5 million and it was ultimately put off until November. I'm asking the Board of Aldermen vote tonight for this responsible referendum. It would be triggered by a 1.5 percent increase in the budget or higher. I have some petitions here that we canvassed some neighborhoods. I have 163 signatures that I can submit. Also one of the real estate websites, there are 72 houses in foreclosure or pre-foreclosure in this town. Some of those are on the Hilltop. They're all over the City. I heard the word "revaluation" at least a half-dozen times tonight. The issue is devaluation. Our property taxes keep going up. Nobody's going to move to Ansonia. People don't want to move to Ansonia with the taxes being increased geometrically. It's getting way out of hand. The people here tonight, I've heard mostly everyone speak in favor of this 1.5 percent budget referendum. It's responsible. The time has come to give the people a voice on how their money is spent. I have my signatures for your review.

Elizabeth Gaudet, 202 Prospect Street

I, for one, would like to know where this money is going to? Is it going to overinflated salaries? My son has had his bike stolen three times in the past month. The cops came out. I'm paying his salary and he's blaming me for not having the bike locked up. What sense does that make? Where is the money going? Our school systems suck. The Police Department blames the citizens. Where is it going? That's what I want to know. We have one day a week of trash pickup and trash is all over the street. The street I live on. The street the Mayor lives on. We have the Nature Center for recreation for our kids. Where is this money going to? That's what I want to know. That's what I'm having a problem with.

Danny Evans, 8 White Oak Road

That's where I live now. I have lived in 13 states a number of different countries and probably 40 different cities around this United States. I've never been taxes like this. I've never seen such a thing. The last time I addressed a group of council members I was in the State of Utah. My taxes on my property nearly doubled. I was very upset. They went from \$250 a year to \$420 a year. I was outraged. That's nearly double. Of course there my kids aren't allowed to go to school, there are no police, there are no fire departments, there are no

town parks, there are no public libraries. If you believe that I'll sell you the Brooklyn Bridge too. We had all the same services; they were all provided. We had all the same things. But I choose to live here; I understand that. I am willing to pay the taxes. I found a beautiful woman I fell in love with and I'm staying in this area. But I don't understand these taxes. I asked. It seemed like an innocent question to me. The taxes are going up; I would like to know which members voted for the increase in taxes, and which members voted against the increase in taxes, so I can base my vote accordingly. Well that doesn't work; none of them vote for it. It's an appointed board that decides who does that. You have no control over them. I have no control? I elected these officials that are sitting at this table to do a job. That job, I think the main thing to do is, I'm not interested in what light poles go up at the baseball park or even how often the street gets repaved. I want to know how you are spending my money and what you're doing with it. And you're not willing to raise your hand and say, "I think your taxes should go up," or "I think your taxes should go down." They're not willing to take that responsibility and they're not willing to do that. If you're not willing to do that, I'll do it for you. If you're not willing to vote on whether taxes should increase or decrease then we the people will decide for you.

Janet Waugh, 83 Prospect Street

I want to thank everybody for coming tonight; I know it is a very important issue. I just want to sum it up on behalf, I am a Charter Revision member, and I am a member of the Ansonia, which we all are. I think it's very important that we bond together like the gentleman said earlier. It's not the Democrats, it's not the Republicans. We the Town of Ansonia and remember that. I heard so many stories; I've heard people cry. I've seen my son come up here last week. Even as a 14-year-old there's concern with how we're going with our town. I want to help my son be here in a few years and I want him to be proud of being in Ansonia. Looking around I think you all want to see education improve and taxes go down. And how are we going to do that? Tonight is the first step. Vote for our referendum and vote for your right to vote on November 5th. Remember that everybody is working together. Thank you.

Edward Norman, 51 Grove Street
Vice Chairman, Board of Apportionment & Taxation

I'm here to address the referendum in regard to the referendum vote on the budget. There's a lot of misinformation going around about that. Your proposal is a 1.5 percent in the budget. That is not the issue here tonight. If you truly listen to the people it's the taxes - it's the increase in the mill rate. The mill rate is only about 55 percent of our budget. We get money in from the State, we earn interest on our reserves, there's a lot of other ways that income does come in. With this proposal at 1.5 percent, if the State in it's infinite wisdom increases our Board of Education budget up to full funding which they promised many, many years ago, of \$1 million, that would have to go to referendum because we of course will take that \$1 million and spend it. It

wouldn't really have an impact on the mill rate, which would be the taxes, it would have an impact on the spending. So the 1.5 percent increase in spending is not a true number to control your budget. I am neutral on whether the budget should go to referendum for approval or be it handled the way it is. One of the big points that I brought out when it first came up is the Board of A&T is appointed to keep politics out of it. We are not there for life terms like the Supreme Court. We are appointed by the Mayor and then this Board has to ratify or approve that appointment. My term is only for three years. If they don't like what I'm doing, they don't have to reapprove that. The other point is, I want to bring out an example of the budget and the misunderstanding of the budget. Back a few years ago when we had a prior election for the Board of Aldermen, there was an independent group called "Ax the Tax." They ran on the platform that it was an 8.4 or 8.5 increase in the budget. Totally false. That was the Board of Aldermen's budget. That was the budget that the elected board put together. At the end of the year, by the time the Board of A&T finished with that, there was a zero increase in the mill rate. Taxes did not go up. But there was a 4 percent increase in spending. That spending came from other areas such as the State, such as interest on our reserves. Again, our reserves are things that many people don't understand. It's not a cookie jar; it's there for specific reasons such as money put aside for pensions.

I want to digress for a minute. I came to the Board of Aldermen in 1995. I was elected to the Board of Aldermen because I didn't like the way the budget was handled. One of the things that really perturbed me was that back in February of 1995 - the 100th anniversary of the Board of Aldermen - we had gone through the budget process and the Board of Aldermen approval of the budget was that they sought, the first time in that meeting in February, there may have been two or three questions on it, they approved it, and turned it over to the Board of A&T. When I was elected, the first thing I did was I requested to be appointed to the Finance Committee and I set up Board of Aldermen budget hearings, which were unheard of before that. We went through the budget, I did what you'd call, pick off the low-hanging fruit. Cut those items that were being spent that we can control. Then pass it on to the Board of A&T for that fine tuning. But again, the Board of Aldermen budgets, the elected officials, continually ... two statements that continually irk me is that the Board of A&T controls the budget. We don't control the budget; we balance the budget. The Board of Aldermen controls the budget. You sign the contracts for those outrageous benefits and outrageous salary increases. We don't approve those; those are approved by this Board. Other things - projects that come up. We don't control the projects. We don't control projects like the ATP where we had to loan them almost \$1 million to get out of the regulations from the federal government - we had to buy that out. We still haven't seen that money back because it hasn't been sold off. I don't think we'll ever see that back. We don't control the Riverside Apartment project, we just provide the money for it based on what this Board sends us in the form of contracts. Just to clarify that point, we had a Board of A&T meeting last night. We are still trying to get from the Board of Aldermen a concise resolution for salary increases from last year's budget. Is that our responsibility? We look at it, it's wrong, we send it back.

They still have never provided adequate information in a timely manner. If we are going to do non-contractual salary increases, they should come to us in February for that July 1st date so we know what the true figures are.

And then, again, there is no help from the State by any means. When we were discussing the budget this year, everybody criticizes the Board of Education. Again, it goes back, the Board of Education is an elected board. They put that together. They are as responsible to the voters as you are. We are an appointed board and we are just more or less the fiduciaries of the City. We look it over, we try and balance it. The math to the mill rate is a very simple calculation. How much money do we have to raise in taxes, what is the assessed value, 70 percent of the assessed value is what we tax at. It comes up to a number of 24 mills or 39 mills, whatever the case may be. It's the simple math that we do, it's not some covert activity to try and increase taxes on people and force people out of the City.

Tonight there are a lot of people that voiced their opinion on the increase in taxes. Not the 1.5 percent you're sending to referendum, on spending. The other part is, this revaluation was a big hit in the purses of a lot of people on the hilltop. This was an actual physical reassessment where they went out and inspected houses, inspected properties, see if you had the right number of bathrooms and how many rooms you had or additions or whatever. Several years ago we more or less had a drive-by reassessment because we are required to do it every five years. The drive-by reassessment determined that the two family houses on the West Side were undervalued. Just by an arbitrary move without looking at the physical properties, my taxes, which I own a two-family house, increased 40 percent. I had absolutely no control over that. There was never a big outcry from the rest of the City, but as we look at those seniors that own two-family houses on the West side, those were the ones that were hurt the most in the purse.

I just want to go back to 1995 when I came to the Board. The other part of my disdain was the mill rate was close to 65 mills. The City at that time had been applying for waivers for almost 15 years not to do reassessment. So that when we talk about car taxes, when we finally did a revaluation, the taxes were cut in half. Again, at the time, I had a boat. My trailer was garaged in Branford. My tax rate here on my house and my vehicles was 65 mills. In Branford it was 18. That is the disparity with the MV and what they're trying to change as far as how bad the tax disparity is across the State, especially on motor vehicle. The exact same model in two different towns is astronomical. It could be twice as much or three times as much. I thank you and I think in closing that referendum in regard to the 1.5 percent, if we really want to do justice to the voters and let them vote on it, then just bring the budget to referendum but again as the Chairman of the Board of A&T said, you're going to have to readjust the schedule in the rest of the Charter because it's just too close and it won't work out because what happens is, you get a special tax sometime in October which coincides with the sewer tax that we had nothing to do with

which the WPCA, which is an autonomous board, imposed that tax. Whatever it was, on each individual household. I thank you for your time.

Judy Nicolari, 167 Pulaski Highway
Chairman, Ansonia Cultural Commission

I really like what the Charter Revision Commission came up with as far as people who want to serve on these commissions, and I know it's not just the Cultural Commission, it's other commissions. I love the idea that if you don't attend three meetings in a row you are automatically off. I do understand that people go on vacations and if that's just e-mailed to the Chairman that would be acceptable. You're away and you're fine, I'm glad you're able to go away. But I just think that's a great part of what should happen in Ansonia is three meetings, you're automatically off and you don't have to write a letter to that person, it's just, you'll know. If you want to be on a commission you've got to serve on the commission and I hope that happens. Thanks.

Adjournment

Alderman Jeanette MOVED to adjourn; SECONDED by Alderman Radin. A voice vote was taken and the MOTION PASSED 12-0.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia M. Bruder, Secretary
Ansonia Board of Aldermen