City of Chesterfield

RECORD OF PROCEEDING

TOWN HALL
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL
OF THE CITY OF CHESTERFIELD
AT 690 CHESTERFIELD PARKWAY WEST

APRIL 15, 2019

The meeting was called to order at 7 p.m.

OFFICIALS PRESENT

Mayor Bob Nation
Councilmember Barbara McGuinness
Councilmember Ben Keathley
Councilmember Mary Ann Mastorakos
Councilmember Dan Hurt
Councilmember Michael Moore
Councilmember Tom DeCampi
Councilmember Michelle Ohley

OFFICIALS ABSENT

Councilmember Barry Flachsbart

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Mayor Nation announced that the purpose of this meeting is to provide information and to seek input, comments, and questions from the audience pertaining to the proposed Better Together City County merger petition. Mayor Nation introduced Mr. Will Krueger, representing Better Together and Dr. Terry Jones, a recognized expert/author in public policy and government.

BETTER TOGETHER PRESENTATION

Mr. Will Krueger introduced himself and briefly described his history and his interest in the City County divide and how the structure of St. Louis frustrates the designs of policy makers, activists, and residents who want to see change in their community.

Mr. Krueger briefly described the history of Better Together and the process that has evolved since it was founded in 2013. Better Together staff compared the municipal structure in St. Louis to other regions across the United States, conducted surveys and identified problems they claim are directly tied to the municipal structure of the St. Louis region. A task force made up of five residents of the region was then convened to study everything again and four main themes were identified as areas for change:

- Unified public safety
- Unified economic development strategy
- More efficient government spending
- Preserve local identities while making communities feel like home

Mr. Krueger summarized the following highlights of the plan released on January 28, 2019:

- A new class of city would be created – the first ever Metropolitan City in Missouri.
- The Metropolitan City of St. Louis would have boundaries congruent with the current city and county combined.
- The Metropolitan City of St. Louis would be run by one mayor, one prosecutor and one assessor to form the executive branch, all elected democratically through a primary system.
- The legislative branch would consist of 33 members, elected from districts drawn by a non-partisan expert and approved by the County Council and Board of Aldermen before those bodies dissolve.
- There would be one police department, centrally accountable to the police chief and mayor, and one municipal court for the entire region.
- There would be regional use of sales tax to pay for these regional services.
- All municipalities, including Chesterfield, would become known as municipal districts. Municipal districts would retain their government structure, including their Mayor and City Council, and would continue doing general administration and operating Parks and Recreation. They would have the "first voice" in matters of zoning and trash/recycling.

DR. TERRY JONES PRESENTATION

Dr. Terry Jones introduced himself as a scholar of metropolitan governance, and stated that his assertions are made on the basis of decades of work in this area. Dr. Jones stated that Chesterfield was formed thirty years ago by a vote of the people. The Better Together petition not only kills the fundamental right of the people of St. Louis County to form their own community, it also eliminates all St. Louis County municipalities currently in existence. Dr. Jones then made several assertions about the legitimacy of the Better Together petition and how it violates local democracy:

- The normal process of writing a Charter involves input from citizens. A group is formed, there is public discussion, then a vote of the people. The Metropolitan City Charter will be written by two people (the mayor of the City of St. Louis as of January 1, 2021 and the County Executive as of that same date). It will take a two-thirds vote from the Metropolitan Council to either reject a Charter or change the charter once it has been approved.
- There was no popular process for selecting the five members of the Better Together task force. These individuals were not selected by a vote of the people and the drafting of the petition occurred behind closed doors with no public input. When the plan was finally released, it was filed as a petition by the Secretary of State, within hours.
- The Better Together petition introduces a great centralization of power. It is not a good idea to concentrate too much power in any one place. Citizens want popular, local control. The mayor of the Metropolitan City of St. Louis would be one of the most powerful mayors in the United States in terms of his or her formal powers. For example, he or she would appoint all six members of the Board of Trustees for the Metropolitan St. Louis Sewer District.
- Municipalities are dead if the Better Together petition passes. Municipal districts are a euphemism. The Metropolitan City of St. Louis will control whether or not certain municipal districts exist. It has ultimate budget approval and control over what municipal districts may and may not tax. It also has ultimate control over police and public works functions.
- If the Better Together petition is successful, there will be no exit strategy in case of failure. Because it will be embedded into the Missouri Constitution, it would require another statewide vote to change it.

Dr. Jones continued by addressing two of the main themes identified for change by the task force:

- **Unified economic development strategy** – While we can all agree that we need to be more economically competitive, there is no relationship between the number of governments a metropolitan area has and its economic performance. The things

that matter are educational attainment, workforce development, venture capital, financial capital, and having more of a foreign born population in the community. To our credit, those are the things that we have been working on as a region through initiatives like St. Louis Graduates and The Mosaic Projects. There are many other regional initiatives, including MSD, the Metropolitan Zoological Park and Museum District, St. Louis Community College, the Regional Justice Information System, and Great Rivers Greenway, to name a few.

- **More efficient government spending** – There have been nearly twenty city county consolidations in the United States in the last fifty years and not one has achieved any kind of cost savings. There are two very logical reasons for this: 1) When merging units with different pay scales, the resulting pay scales in all likelihood will have the higher pay scale, so the average cost per employee goes up. Keep in mind that about eighty percent of local government is made up of wages because it is a labor intensive enterprise. 2) When large bureaucracies are formed with thousands of individuals, they become very inner-focused and middle management tends to expand more than necessary, so their touted cost savings disappear.

Dr. Jones stated that equity, cost savings, and economic competitiveness are things that we all support, and we can improve and expand regional programs in a sensible way without threatening our sense of local democracy.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mayor Nation opened the meeting to public comment. The following individuals asked questions and/or made comments in opposition to the Better Together petition:

Mr. Ron Cawood, 16992 Riverdale Drive
Mr. Edward Hamm, 14938 Royalbrook Drive
Mr. Oscar Cartaya, 1815 York Ridge Court
Ms. Elaine Zukowski, 88 River Bend Drive
Mr. Chris Howard, 222 Blue Sage Court
Mr. Gary Wiegert, 2028 Hickory
Ms. Sandy Geisel, 1114 Athena Way, St. Peters
Mr. David Levin, 14411 Quiet Meadow Court
Mr. Paul Dillender, 312 Cheval Square Drive
Mr. Alan Keathley, 16726 Chesterfield Farms Drive
Mr. Ben Lewin, 9 Bently Circle Court
Mr. Dennis Ganahl, 15979 Woodlet Way Court
Mr. Jim Denk, 3475 Brookshire, Florissant
Mr. William Munroe, 201 Cove Landing Drive, Wildwood
Mr. Bruce Geiger (former Chesterfield Mayor), 14787 Greenloch Court

The following individual asked a question of Mr. Krueger, but did not publicly state opposition or support of the petition:

Ms. Laura Grapes, 14988 Manor Ridge Drive

The following individual made comments in support of the Better Together petition:

Mr. Robert Fowler, 1547 Timberlake Manor Parkway

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Nation gave each Councilmember the opportunity to speak, and each Councilmember made comments in opposition to this petition as proposed by the Better Together group.

Mayor Nation adjourned the meeting at 9:24 p.m.

Bob Nation

Mayor Bob Nation

ATTEST:

Vickie J. Hass

Vickie J. Hass, City Clerk

APPROVED BY CITY COUNCIL: 5/6/2019