

Dear Fellow Clarkston Voter:

On November 5th, you will be asked to vote on the adoption of four charter amendments. I'm writing to ask you to vote **"NO"** on Charter Amendment #1 ("resign to run"). The proposal states:

Clarkston Charter Amendment 1 - Restrictions Concerning Officers, Section 4.18, Paragraph 4

This section currently requires incumbent Councilpersons seeking election to Mayor or an incumbent Mayor running for a regular Council seat to resign their office unless their current term of office expires at that same election.

The proposed amendment would eliminate this "resign to run" requirement for an incumbent elective city officer.

Shall Section 4.18 Paragraph 4, Restrictions Concerning Officers, be amended as proposed?

I know that there is a temptation is to read right over these proposals because they seem so harmless. And I think for most cities, this probably wouldn't be a big deal. But in Clarkston, where our city council likes to appoint friends and do things in secret, that's not the case.

The only reason that you are being asked to vote on this charter amendment is because Mayor Eric Haven and Councilmember David Marsh tried to use a secret campaign and inside information to obtain their current seats. It was a violation of the charter to do what they did. The city council is proposing to fix this - not by changing their conduct - but by asking you to change the charter.

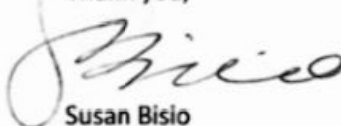
What exactly did Haven and Marsh do? Haven started a secret campaign for mayor without resigning from his seat on the city council, as required by the charter. Haven gathered 25 of his 30 nominating petition signatures before he resigned. Marsh, as one of Haven's first petition signers (along with Al Avery, Jason Kniesc, and Sharron Catallo), was part of a select group who knew about Haven's secret campaign. Haven waited until the last possible moment to resign on the Friday before petitions were due, which meant that there would be a one-year council seat available (to fill the remainder of Haven's term). Marsh, Kniesc, and Catallo immediately started collecting Marsh's petition signatures on the Friday that Haven resigned. Petitions were due on Tuesday, four days later, and the three of them used the weekend to collect all of the signatures that Marsh needed. People who weren't in the know didn't learn that Haven had resigned or that there was a one-year council vacancy until that was announced at the Monday evening city council meeting. Since our meetings aren't televised live, only those physically at the meeting were made aware of Haven's resignation. With petitions due the next day, that made it next to impossible for anyone who might have been interested in Haven's vacant seat to gather enough signatures before the close of business on Tuesday, the very next day. And it was impossible for the city clerk to give the one to three week notice of a vacancy that she was required to give, so that others interested in filling the vacancy could have time to collect nominating petition signatures. This conveniently meant that Haven and Marsh were going to run as unopposed candidates.

I filed an election complaint, and the city attorney agreed with my position. Haven had to get new petition signatures dated after his resignation, and the one-year vacancy created by Haven's resignation was publicly announced. Because Haven timed his resignation for the last possible moment, the notice requirements of the charter were still violated, but at least others were given a chance to run if they wanted to. Haven and Marsh won despite their very questionable conduct, but at least they had opponents (something both had tried to avoid).

If this charter proposal passes, then secret campaigns like this will be permitted. The resigning official will be able to choose his/her replacement by giving their desired candidate a heads up. Or, the resigning official could say nothing, potentially allowing for an unfilled council position (because no one will know that it will be open until the resignation). You won't get to vote on the replacement, and the city council can appoint whomever they want until the next election. This is how Sharron Catallo was placed back on the council after she lost her election. Haven, Kniesc, and Avery voted "yes" to appoint Catallo to fill Mr. Detkowski's seat following his resignation, proving that those who secretly campaign together will stick together.

Please support open and transparent government. Vote "NO" on proposed Charter Amendment #1.

Thank you,



Susan Bisio