

Public Hearing Transcript Weighted Vote 2-9-2022

Theodore Kusnierz

So at this time, we will begin the public hearing for the second public hearing scheduled for this afternoon. And this is in relation to considering a Local Law amending Local Law number two of 1968 as last amended by Local Law number five of 2011 to increase the population threshold to an additional County Supervisor to order. And I will ask the Clerk to please call the roll to establish a quorum.

Bridget Rider

Supervisor Barrett.

Phil Barrett

Here.

Bridget Rider

Butler.

Eric Butler

Here.

Bridget Rider

Connolly.

Eric Connolly

Present.

Bridget Rider

Edwards, Gaston.

Tara Gaston

Here.

Bridget Rider

Grasso.

Joe Grasso

Here.

Bridget Rider

Hammond.

Mark Hammond

Here.

Bridget Rider

Kinowski. Kusnierz.

Theodore Kusnierz

Here.

Bridget Rider

Lant.

John Lant

Here.

Bridget Rider

Lawler. Ostrander.

Scott Ostrander

Here.

Bridget Rider

Peck.

Bill Peck

Here.

Bridget Rider

Raymond.

Jean Raymond

Here.

Bridget Rider

Richardson. Schopf.

Jonathan Schopf

Here.

Bridget Rider

Smith. Tollisen.

Kevin Tollisen

Here.

Bridget Rider

Kevin Veitch, Matt Veitch.

Matt Veitch

Here.

Bridget Rider

Winnie. Wood. Wright.

Mo Wright

Here.

Bridget Rider

Quorum is present.

Theodore Kusnierz

Thank you. And at this time would the Clerk please read the notice of the public hearing.

Therese Connolly

Take notice that pursuant to Resolution 42 of 2022 the Saratoga County Board of Supervisors will hold a public hearing on February 9, 2022 at 4:35 pm, or as soon thereafter as the Board can convene, in the Meeting Room of the Saratoga County Board of Supervisors at 40 McMaster Street, Ballston Spa, New York 12020 for the purpose of considering a Local Law amending Local Law No. 2 of 1968, as last amended by Local Law No. 5 of 2011, to increase the population threshold for an additional County Supervisor.

Take further notice, that at this hearing, all persons wishing to speak will be heard. Written communications may be emailed to publiccomment@saratogacountyny.gov, or by mail addressed to: Clerk of the Board, Saratoga County Board of Supervisors, 40 McMaster Street, Ballston Spa, NY, 12020, which public comment must be received by February 9, 2022 at 3:30 pm.

Copies of this proposed local law are available in the Office of the Clerk of the Board and online at www.saratogacountyny.gov.

Theodore Kusnierz

Thank you very much. And again, the rules for public hearing, as established at our organizational meeting. Individuals wishing to speak please state your name and address for the record. You'll have three minutes to speak. The Clerk of the Board will keep track of the time on that. We have four individuals that have signed up to speak. And the first individual is Barbara Thomas from Saratoga Springs.

Barbara Thomas

Hello, Barbara Thomas, as you know, Saratoga Springs. And I'm opposed to the proposed local law, increasing to 27,500 the number of residents that one board member can represent. In 1968., following the Supreme Court decision requiring one person one vote, this County adopted a weighted vote system at the Board level, but recognize that the ability to be represented on committees was also important. The County decided at that time that each Town should get one Supervisor for each 12,500 residents or part thereof. At that time, both Saratoga Springs and Clifton Park qualified for two supervisors. But using that standard today, Malta, Milton, Moreau and Wilton would have two Supervisors, and Clifton Park, Saratoga Springs, and probably Halfmoon would have three. Since the 70s, the Board of Supervisors has consistently increased the number of people that will trigger the creation of another Supervisor position, because the Board wants to keep the number of Supervisors at 23. Whether that's really because of the number of seats in this room, or your belief about the optimum size for a deliberative body, or an aversion to change, I can't say. What I can say is that it is not fair and getting less fair with each additional census. That's because the committees are where most of the Board's decisions are made. And one Supervisor can only serve on a few committees. As Supervisor Wood noted back in 2011, it's a rare exception, you see much controversy erupt. The reason is we've had full discussion in the committees and the committees make their decisions based on the majority. In the 1960s at the time of the court decisions that allowed weighted voting, it was clear that the courts preference was for the election of Board members from districts that were equal in population. That would mean that each district would get an equal number of committee seats, and every Board member would be equal and cast one vote, and every voter would be equal too. I call on the Board to scrap the proposed law and instead appoint a commission to propose a new charter for this County's governance, one that uses equal population districts as the basis of representation. It will be up to the commission to decide the appropriate number of districts and therefore the number of County Board members, and to decide whether Town Supervisors would be eligible to run for County Board seats. Thank you.

Theodore Kusnierz

Thank you very much. Next individual we have is Mary Lou Clausen.

Mary Lou Clausen

My name is Mary Lou Clausen. And my address is 4 Blue spruce lane in Ballston Lake. I also believe and one person one vote. It does not seem to be fair that the people in the Town of Day have one Supervisor and that the people in the Town of Halfmoon also have one Supervisor. So the few people in the Town of Day have the same influence as the 25,000 plus people on Halfmoon, when they are, when the Supervisors are working in committee. There's nothing sacred about having 23 seats. I mean, we could have a new legislative body that had only 15 seats, as long as there was one vote for one person. Thank you.

Theodore Kusnierz

Thank you. And the third individual signed up to speak is Jeremy Connors.

Jeremy Connors

Good afternoon, Jeremy Connors 26 Churchill Road Halfmoon New York. Basically set forth that the law is intended to have basic interests and representation for its constituents. And while this may seem

like an increase, the House of Representatives still operates with 435 members, but they represent more people than they did 50 years ago. Also, the goal is to actually represent the people of our town and in Halfmoon, we do that well. We support the Supervisor, we support his decisions here, as well as in the Town. We take great pride in making sure we represent everyone of all different backgrounds, social statuses, and opinions. We do it and we do it well. With that I spoke to our Town board, they support this measure, as do I. Thank you.

Theodore Kusnierz

Thank you very much. And at this time, this concludes the number of individuals that wish to be heard. I'm sorry, we have one additional Linda Bryan.

Linda Bryan

Thank you very much. My name is Linda Bryan. I live at 1 Par Way, Mechanicville New York, I serve for the Town of Halfmoon as their Town Clerk for the past 11 years, I've seen many changes during that timeframe. And I've seen an awful lot of good changes. Back in 2012, we had a fund balance in our general fund of \$70,000. We at the end of 2020 had 5,00,000. 2021 figures aren't completed at this point. But I know that they have been very good. And I don't want you to think that we're putting money in the bank but not taking care of our residents. I also take care of the Senior Express, which gives rides to all of our seniors to go to their appointments for those people who don't have other means of transportation. Last year, we saw an increase of those services going up 25% for the rides we had given which are over 5,000 for the year, and also for our new clients, which has gone up this last year of 33%. I also want to thank the Office for the Aging for helping us with our fleet of vehicles. We currently have eight vehicles, half of them with wheelchair accessibility for our residents. So we are not only taking care of our residents very well, we are also taking care of a very fiscal managed budget. And I have our Supervisors to thank for that. I can't imagine we would need to have a second Supervisor to do any better than what we're already doing. And I thank you for your time.

Theodore Kusnierz

Thank you very much and thank you to all the speakers on the subject regarding the second public hearing of this afternoon. At this time I'll ask the Clerk if we received any written communications.

Therese Connolly

There were none.

Theodore Kusnierz

At this time, then I will close the public hearing