Proposed Charter Amendments 405-406 and 606

The Dorchester Citizens for Better Government is a non-partisan collaboration of residents of Dorchester County that are proposing these charter amendments principally to address two problems in the way the County Council conducts its business and chooses to govern. Those problems are the lack of transparency and full disclosure of the work of the County Council and the abnormal turnover and upheaval in key personnel in the County government.

The problems that we see need to be addressed are as follows:

1. **Transparency and Full Disclosure-**
2. A new Charter Section 606 would mandate that the County Council implement solutions to increase the ease by which citizens can participate in and understand more fully the Council decision-making process.
3. It would require Council meetings to be on live CATV or live streamed on the internet.
4. It would require the Council to provide documents to the public that support the agenda items prior to Council meetings.

The Council has voted down at least 3 requests to have meetings shown on TV or the internet. Due to the size of the county, making people drive long distances to attend meetings in person is not reasonable. Listening over the phone is inadequate since the Council Members do not always identify who is speaking and connections are not always good.

With regard to the need for non-confidential supporting documents that are already provided to the Council Members, we only know from the agenda what the topics will be but currently are provided no details that would help in understanding the issue or problem and how it might impact us individually or as a community.

1. **Abnormal Turnover and Upheaval in Key Personnel**:
2. Abnormal turnover in County Manager and department head positions has occurred over the last three years. This causes a lack of stable leadership, declines in morale, and inefficiency. Two County Managers alone have left during that period, and one must look at the elected Council as a major cause of this upheaval.

The Proposed Charter Amendment 405-406 specifies the qualifications of the County manager by strengthening the role of the County Manager in hiring and termination decisions of department heads; by instituting a formal process and safeguards for the hiring and dismissal of the County Manager; by setting a time limit on the service of an Acting County manager; by prohibiting any Council member individually from directing an action be taken by the County Manager without the concurrence of a majority the full Council; and by preventing cronyism while in office by prohibiting a council member from assuming an Acting or permanent County Manager position during his or her term of office, plus two years thereafter.

# The Council retains its legislative and executive authority and nothing in these amendments will have any significant budgetary impact.

# **If you are a registered voter in Dorchester County or any of its cities and want to sign these petitions, they are available at the Chamber of Commerce at 306 High Street during normal working hours. For more information about this effort, for questions, or to help, please contact Allen Nelson at** **Dorchartchq22@yahoo.com** **or Steve Rideout at** **swrideout@aol.com****.**