April 25, 2025

FR: Bill Hosko, Saint Paul resident, small business owner
TO: Saint Paul City Council members, Saint Paul Mayor Carter

RE: Saint Paul elected official's January 2025 'Ordinance 25-02' appearing on this fall's ballot

Saint Paul City Council and Mayor Carter:

In January, with the support of Mayor Carter, the Saint Paul City Council voted 7-0 to adopt 'Ordinance 25-02':

> *"Amending Chapter 6.03 of the City Charter pertaining to the application of Administrative Citations for violations of City Ordinances, based on the recommendation of the Charter Commission pursuant to Minnesota Statute section 410.12, subdivision 7."*

1. Most citizens believe amending Saint Paul's Charter should be done via public referendum and not unilaterally by the City Council.

2. The adoption of Ordinance 25-02 will arguably grant you historic new powers to levy what could be unlimited new fines for unlimited ordinance violations (Yes, new fine actions may well require 'public hearings', however, most of us, in all honesty, know they remain 'political theatre' and beforehand decisions remain). In January, while each of you made public statements on why you support your Ordinance 25-02, it appears none of you stated why you did not want citizens to decide the matter?

3. A group of citizens, led by the venerable Peter Butler, were concerned enough about this undemocratic behavior that they began a petition drive in February to collect 2,000 verifiable Registered Voter signatures so as to place the matter on to this fall's ballot, where Mayor Carter you will be up for re-election. They had 60 days to do it, otherwise, your January 7-0 vote would have become official in 90-days - this month.

By the 60-day deadline, just over 2,000 signatures were submitted to the City, which in turn forwarded them on to Ramsey County, which oversees Saint Paul elections. Upon review, the county/city rejected nearly 500 of those signatures. But after some discussions between Mr. Butler and officials, nearly 200 were accepted back. This process also granted him another 10 days to collect more signatures!

I became aware of this group's efforts, particularly after I came across one of their petition tables (one of a number of city-wide locations they had been working) outside Mancini's on St. Patrick's Day. While there, minutes later Mayor Carter (along with your entourage) you were driven up in a large black SUV to go inside for a photo op serving beer behind the bar. Before you went in, you were cordially asked to sign the non-partisan petition – a classic and clear example of democracy in action. You cordially declined in return, stating that you don't sign petitions.

Their goal was to collect another 500 signatures by the deadline of April 14. I offered then to collect 100 if it would be helpful. My offer was accepted, and it was heartening that nearly 95% of those I spoke to in the nearby West 7th and Irvine Park neighborhoods signed the petition in the last three afternoons before April 14.

On April 15, the day after the signatures were formally submitted, Mr. Butler and his group learned from the city/county that they had indeed surpassed the 2,000 verifiable signatures threshold and the public would now be able to decide the fate of Ordinance 25-02! Exciting for them and for Saint Paul.

Still, since January, many would agree that not enough attention has been brought to this matter and now with recent developments there is some behind-the-scenes debate as to what will happen next:

- Why have you all remained publicly silent on this since April 15, and why has there been little media attention of this arguably historic situation?

- Your withdrawing Ordinance your 25-02 (anytime between now and September when ballot printing begins) allows you to bring it back another year in hopes that there will not be another petition effort to stop you?

- Mayor Carter, withdrawing your Ordinance 25-02 means that you won't have to engage in what will likely be a heated debate over the issue during your re-election campaign this fall?

- City Council members, withdrawing your Ordinance 25-02 means none of you will have to work to sell it to the public, thereby risking seeing it defeated at the polls this November – perhaps even resoundingly?

- On the other hand, turnout this fall (in what will be Saint Paul's last odd-year mayoral election, before we switch to even-numbered-year elections for mayor (thereby doubling or tripling turnout) being Mr. Butler initiated that successful petition effort as well) may well remain low at a typical 20% or so - thereby making it easier to pass?

- Or will enough people, potentially tired enough of City Hall's perceived heavy-handedness, turn out to defeat your Ordinance 25-02?

Saint Paul City Council members and Mayor Carter, will you now publicly convey to all of Saint Paul that you fully intend to uphold the public's right to decide the fate of Ordinance 25-02?

Will you now publicly thank Mr. Peter Butler and those who worked closely with him for over two months, and will you thank all the Saint Paul citizens who signed their petition?

And will you support a fair, honest and robust debate of its merits – perhaps minimally one public-live-streamed debate in each of the seven wards you were elected to serve – to the best of your abilities?

Let us know your plans, and soon. You now have a great opportunity to generate much good will. Please make the most of it. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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