

PRESS RELEASE / For immediate release

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Petition Group for a Change in Form of Government, Sea Isle City

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SIC VOTERS: “Don’t be fooled,” Says Petition Group

(Sea Isle City, NJ – October 2006) – The group known as the “Petition Group” that is leading the drive to change the form of government in Sea Isle City strongly cautions voters not to be fooled by a recent move by city commissioners to add an administrator to the payroll. The group is calling this recent action a ploy to coerce voters into thinking their call for change in city leadership has been answered just prior to the very election that will truly do so, when in fact the ordinance, as the commissioners have formulated it, has no substance.

At a regularly scheduled meeting on October 10th, the Commissioners of the City of Sea Isle City introduced, without any prior notification or explanation whatsoever, ordinance #1405, which creates the position of Business Administrator in 2007. This ordinance was presented again for a second reading and passed on October 24th.

The Petition Group is querying why the very commissioners who recently called the addition of an administrator not needed and too expensive have now collectively and suddenly changed their mind just weeks before an historic vote that would change the city’s form of government, especially when other items take much longer to secure a place on their agenda, if at all.

“Certainly, we question the change of heart and especially the timing,” said John Fee, a member of the Petition Group. “But what concerns us most is the way in which this ordinance has been worded. The position, as it’s been added, is wholly ineffective and inadequate to meet the needs of our city.”

The position as introduced would allow for an administrator for a single, one-year term, something the group claims would not attract a strong candidate and make it difficult to effect true management and improvement. Additionally, the Committee cites a May 1992 report by the State of New Jersey Commission on County and Municipal Government which asserts that an

administrator and the current form of government in Sea Isle City don't work well together unless the person is given total authority over all departments, something that is not a part of this newly-introduced ordinance:

“The power to appoint an administrator with supervisory powers over all departments is inconsistent with the Commissioner form. In order for the administrator’s role to work effectively in the Commission form, the administrator would have to be delegated supervisory power by each individual commissioner for that commissioner’s department.”

The Committee maintains that an administrator is only one of three important elements of the total change needed in the city:

- A full-time business administrator with the total authority to run day-to-day operations
- An elected mayor with full responsibility (presently, each commissioner oversees his/her own department; no one in the city has full accountability)
- An expanded five-member council (one commissioner contended recently that the city would only need an expanded form of government if it had 30,000-40,000 residents. While the voting population is small, there is certainly that number of taxpayers and at least that many residents during the summer and shoulder seasons)

The Petition Group believes that a “yes” vote on November 7th will bring the form of government up to date, strengthen the authority of city leaders, provide for more cost-efficient financial controls, promote more communication with residents, bolster enforcement of the laws and ordinances of the city and, most importantly, offer the residents something they cannot currently grasp under the current form: accountability.

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