

Regular Meeting

These minutes are for the regular meeting of the Beacon City Council, held in the Municipal Center at One Municipal Plaza on March 20, 2017. Please note that the video recording of this meeting is available at <http://vimeo.com/channels/40154>.

Council Members Present:

Lee Kyriacou, At Large
George Mansfield, At Large
Peggy Ross, Ward One
Omar Harper, Ward Two
Pamela Wetherbee, Ward Three
Ali Muhammad, Ward Four
Randy Casale, Mayor

Council Members Absent/Excused:**Also Present:**

Anthony Ruggiero, City Administrator
Edward Phillips, City Attorney

A moment of silence was observed for those who work to protect human rights

First Opportunity for Public Comments: Each speaker may have one opportunity to speak up to three minutes on any subject matter other than those which are the topic of a public hearing tonight.

Speakers:

Sara From: Works with undocumented people who gave statements about the recent actions of the government with regard to immigrants. Attachment No. 1

Antonia Maeck: Continued the comments contained in Attachment No. 1

Lisa Marie Martinez: Thanked the Council for taking the time to discuss this issue. Does not believe that this is an old Beacon versus new Beacon issue. It is about gentrification.

Hollis Bogdanffy: Support the Sanctuary City status. Hopes that the City Council will be even handed when listening to the public comments.

Pru Posner: Supports Sanctuary City proposal. Congratulated the City on their work with Renewable Highlands. Is against the proposed pipeline project.

Lou Amoroso: Commended Reuben Simmons for doing a fine job with the storm. Advised that some hydrants are still under snow. Has safety concerns about the intersection of Fishkill Ave and Blackburn

Julie Winterbottom: Thanked the council for their work on the Sanctuary City issue. Concerned that the current resolution does not give enough direction about what the police can and will do. Would like "serious crime" better defined. Discretion can be a tricky thing. Might be good to look into what other cities are doing.

Justin Riccobono: Thanked the highway department and NYS DOT for their assistance with the storm. Said that the Parade of Green was a success. A friend of his asked that the Farmers Market resolution be workshopped again. Does not believe Beacon needs to be a Sanctuary City. If a person is arrested, their fingerprints are put through a database. Believes that this would take the issue out of the City's hands.

Paul Salvas: Is opposed to the Sanctuary City resolution. Gave details of illegal immigrants committing crimes.

Public Hearing: Affordable Workforce Housing

Mayor Casale introduced John Clarke, City Planner

Anthony Ruggiero explained that due to the storm, the Planning Board did not review the local law and that the public hearing can be continued to the next City Council meeting on April 3. He explained the amendments.

Speakers:

April Farley: Asked if there could be a modification for Section 8 people who are working and have kids. The city should encourage landlords to accept section 8 certificates.

Theresa Kraft: Is against the developers building the affordable units in a separate building. Believes it would be comparable to segregation.

Pru Posner: Believes that refusing to accept Section 8 is illegal. Attended a housing conference with Peggy and Pam which featured Eric Schneiderman.

Mary Paden, CPC: (Attachment No. 2)

Taylor Palmer: Speaking on behalf of developers, believes that in order to make up for the bottom line, believes that there should not be a cap on density.

Mary Ling, Hudson River Housing: Believes that to truly understand this issue, one has to read and understand the law. Does not think the 70% option will work. Explained the calculations.

A discussion between the consultants, the Planner and the Council ensued.

Rodney Weber: Believes that Beacon needs diversity. Recalled Anne Saylor's presentation on the issue. Historically, a 2% vacancy level is too low – healthy is 6% when landlords have to be competitive. Believes that if a small unit is designed well with ample storage it works.

Council Member Reports:

Ali Muhammad: Thanked everyone for being engaged and thanked the highway department for their work during the storm.

Omar Harper: Thanked the highway department for their work during the storm. Updated the council on the wrestling team's match in Syracuse.

Lee Kyriacou: Waived his comment but read a comment from Barbara O'Leary regarding the Tioronda Bridge. (Attachment No. 3)

George Mansfield: Reserved his comments so the public can speak.

Pam Wetherbee: Agrees with George and Lee and looks forward to more comments from the audience.

Peggy Ross: Thanked everyone for their comments. Asked that people help clear the snow from the hydrants for safety. Gave details on the Pilgrim Pipeline discussion at the Howland Center and the Energize Beacon launch.

Jerry Landisi: Explained about the Dutchess County Stabilization Center. Read the County resolution in opposition to the US Coast Guard's proposal to install the permanent anchorages in the Hudson River.

Mayor Casale: Thanked everyone for coming and for watching at home. Thanked Reuben Simmons, the Fire Department and the Police Department for all they did during the snowstorm. Thanked the County Executive for coordinating with all of the municipalities in the county for storm preparedness. Thanked David Chavez from the NYS DOT for their assistance in snow removal. Appreciates the community's patience while we do the best we can to clear the snow. Thanked the Parade organizers for a successful Parade of Green event.

Resolutions, Ordinances and Local Laws:

1. **April is World Wide Parkinson's Awareness Month:** Mayor read the Proclamation
2. **Resolution Authorizing and Agreement with Beacon Farmers Market**
Council asked questions regarding the new location of the Farmers Market and the vendors selling prepared foods. Sara, Market Manager, answered and allayed all concerns.
 - Motion by Council Member Kyriacou, second by Council Member Mansfield
7-0
3. **Resolution Authorizing a Land Banked Parking Agreement Regarding Scenic Hudson Long Dock.**
 - Motion by Council Member Ross, second by Council Member Mansfield
7-0
4. **Resolution to Schedule a Public Hearing for April 3, 2017 to Receive Comments Concerning the Proposed Local Law Regarding an Alternative Grievance Day**
Mayor Casale explained that since we share our Assessor with the Town of East Fishkill,
 - Motion by Council Member Wetherbee, second Council Member Muhammad
7-0
5. **Resolution to Authorize an Agreement with Cervone Towing Services for the Beacon Police Department. (moved to April 3)**
6. **Resolution to Authorize an Agreement with Beacon Arts to Place a Beacon 3D Sculpture on City-Owned Property**
 - Motion by Council Member Muhammad, second Council Member Wetherbee
7-0
7. **Resolution to Schedule a Public Hearing for April 3, 2017 to Receive Comments Concerning the Proposed Local Law Regarding Public Trail Regulations**
 - Motion by Council Member Wetherbee, second Council Member Muhammad
7-0
8. **Resolution Appointing a Firefighter**
 - Motion by Council Member Muhammad, second Council Member Wetherbee
7-0
9. **Approval of Minutes: March 6, 2017**
 - Motion by Council Member Wetherbee, second by Council Member Mansfield
7-0

Second Opportunity for Public Comments: Each speaker may have one opportunity to speak for up to three minutes on any subject matter on which the Council can take action.

Speakers:

Tina Bernstein: Advised that she was disappointed by the latest resolution. Believes that this is a time to stand up for each other. Supports the idea of a Sanctuary City. Added that most crimes committed in the United States are committed by US citizens not immigrants.

April Farley: Thanked the police chief for coming to the Community Forum at the Springfield Baptist Church. Would like the council to be mindful about how Beacon is perceived by others in the world. Gave details about the upcoming NAACP meeting and the process for submitting a complaint to the DC Human Rights Commission.

Ann Cypher: Has not been able to find a clear definition of "Sanctuary City". Asked if the City of Beacon can afford the loss of federal funding and the added burden of more people living here.

Connie Hogarth: Expressed her strong support for the Sanctuary City proposal. The AG Eric Schneiderman made a case for adopting legislation and hopes that NY can be a sanctuary state. (Attachment No. 4)

Jason Hughes: Thanked Councilman Muhammad for reading his comments at the last meeting. Read the Police Chief's job description.

John Christian: Does not support the Sanctuary City proposal. Feels that we already respect our fellow residents. Does not want to attract gangs and crime to Beacon.

Roger Cammins: Believes that at this particular time, Muslims and Mexicans are being targeted. Believes that this is our moment to take an ethical stand and pass a resolution that is unequivocal and clear.

Rusty Staub: Believes that comments against the Sanctuary City proposal are based on fear. Studies have shown that sanctuary cities have less crime. Added that withholding federal funds would be prohibited by the Tenth Amendment. This type of threat is meant to pit communities against each other.

Theresa Kraft: Would like the site of the Depyster House to have historical designation. Gave some history of the Newburgh Letter.

Janet Werther: not in attendance but submitted comments via email. (Attachment No. 5)

Executive Session:

- **Matter Pertaining to Personnel**
Motion by Council Member Harper, second by Council Member Muhammad

Next Workshop: March 27, 2017

Next Meeting: April 3, 2017

Elizabeth Evans

From: Sarah From <sarahbfrom@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 20, 2017 7:42 PM
To: Ali Muhammad; Peggy Ross; Omar Harper; Pam Wetherbee; George M. Mansfield; Lee Kyriacou; Randy J. Casale
Cc: Toni Maeck
Subject: More Statements from Undocumented Beacon Residents

Dear City Council and Mayor,

Here are a collection statements from undocumented Beacon residents. There are several more here that we did not have the time to read in public comment tonight. We hope that you will take the time to read these powerful and courageous words from our neighbors.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Sarah From
9 Deerfield Place

"Hi I'm O., I have 3 children and 2 are American citizens and they go to the Beacon High School. I came to Beacon 12 years ago because in my country I lived in very bad poverty. I had no food to feed my child so I decided to come up north so that I could get a job and be able to literally feed my son. It took me 3 months to cross the border and the desert. It wasn't easy because there's a lot of violence in the border and men that tried to rape me and take my son away. I tell you this because I want you to understand that if you were in a similar situation maybe you would also do the same thing I did. I'm here in Beacon where I work and work and work. I get no weekends off I don't go on vacations but my children are well fed and happy in their schools. I want you to know I no longer feel safe. I have no way of regularizing my legal status because there's no law that says I can. I was told by my neighbor that I should go back to the end of the line like all immigrants. He doesn't understand that there's no line. When my kids get sick I need to take them to the doctor, so I'm worried that I'll be stopped and that the police will take me or my husband away. Sanctuary City means to me that I can trust the government and it's police force and if something happens to us they won't call ICE or CBP. Please know I do not receive any form of government help. Don't believe that we get Section 8 or food stamps. We don't because that is not what we do. I'm not asking for you to change immigration laws I know you can't. But it would be nice if you could make Beacon a Sanctuary City so I can help myself by not being so afraid and anxious."

From M:

"I'd like them to know that I spent 12 years waiting for a labor sponsor certification. When it was time for my employer to sign off and show their taxes I was fired. I worked for him for 15 years making a little more than minimum wage in exchange for the papers that never came. I'd like them to understand that now immigration doesn't even have an option to regularize my status. I'm not lazy, I work hard and pay my taxes just like everybody else I also own my home in Beacon since 1997. I don't live off any government assistance and I'm not looking for hand outs. I'd like the opportunity to show that I have earned my citizenship and that the local police will not come after me if I need their services. Sanctuary status for me would make a difference because it means I can trust my local police department and I could talk freely with them."

From G:

"I belong to a mixed legal status family. First I'd like all of you to know that I came to the US as a 19 year old fleeing violence and poverty. I have been in Beacon since 2006 and I love it here, this is my home. Sanctuary City Status means that I have to worry a little bit less that my wife and children will come home and not find me there because the local police stopped me and called ICE on me. I know that right now they don't do that. But who can guarantee that they won't be forced to do so soon enough? If they have a protocol in writing then I know that they are less likely to do so. I don't have a criminal record and I have paid my taxes every single year since I came to the US in 2000. I also own my house and my kids go to South Avenue with some of your kids too. I am not a problem I am a hard working parent of American citizens. I don't live off any welfare or social security. That's all."

From J:

"Sanctuary status for me means that I can take my girls to Rombout Middle School without fear that the police will stop me while walking back and forth there. I'm afraid now because the color of my skin makes me a target and even though I don't have papers it's not because I haven't tried. I spent 15 years waiting for my previous employer to sponsor me. At the last minute he backed out and I was left without papers and heartbroken. My daughters were born during that time and I provide for them just like you all do for yours. I am your neighbor, I am not a terrorist. I am not the enemy. I worship at St. John's like many of you. I shop at Key food and am proud of Beacon too. I haven't been to church or spent money on anything but the absolute necessities because I feel persecuted and afraid. My American citizen daughters are in counseling because they feel they'll come home one day to find their father gone. My wife is an American Citizen too, did you know there's no way to legalize me? There's no law to help me change my status, believe me, I live like this not because I choose to but because I have no way to come legal. Sanctuary status means for my family that we will feel safe and can worship along with everyone and I can walk around all I want in Beacon."

From J.:

"I moved to Beacon 10 years ago. I'm employed by a Beacon business and I'd like you to know that I have paid my taxes for the last 10 years too. I am not here to take advantage of any situation. I was asked to come in and talk by my employer but I know that ICE is going after the immigrants that are advocating so I said no. My family and I go to the local Spanish services at the Catholic Church in Beacon where we pray that you will have the compassion to see us as the human beings that we are. We are just like you and we eat food and go to work and take care of our children just like you too. Sanctuary City Status would help me because my American children would be less worried that I'll be taken away in the middle of the night. It's hard being a provider and knowing your kids now need counseling because of the hate that surrounds us. Please consider making Beacon a Sanctuary City to provide a little bit of peace for some of your neighbors."

From M.:

"I came to this country at 14 and married my husband 24 years ago. We both tried to legalize our status through Labor Certifications when that was available- this was the only way to become legal and now there's not even that. We spent a total of 18 years going through 3 different employers trying to make this happen. Each time the employer took advantage of us by paying us very little for years of work and at the end when it was time to sign they backed off. This is a common story and we know we are not the only ones out there. Did you know that most undocumented people pay taxes and don't live off Welfare or Social Services? I'm telling you this because I want you to understand that I no longer have any peace, all I have is anxiety and live in fear. I have been here longer than I lived in my country of birth while paying taxes and never using Social Services of any kind. What if ICE sends me or my husband back? My husband is from a different country, our children are American citizens and are in College that we pay for. Who will pay for the tuition? Who will take care of our home and mortgage? I have been in Beacon for the last 5 years. I work locally and spend money on Main St too. I go to all the Main Street festivities and cook empanadas for the Spirit Beacon Day in the fall. I am a good person, please tell the Police Chief and the Mayor that I have earned my right to be here. If they don't have a protocol saying

that Beacon is a Sanctuary City and leave it up in the air then if the Officers are having a bad day and they stop me, will they call ICE?

Please write this Sanctuary City Status so we can breathe a little easier. We are a part of your community and we contribute to making Beacon a beautiful place we can all call home"

From P.:

"I was asked to talk tonight and give testimony at the City Counsel meeting and I respectfully must decline. I'm a little bit worried of being out in the open as far as my status is concerned because we are basically being hunted down. I came as a teenager many years ago and have been here for 22 years. You might ask yourself why I'm still undocumented but I can tell you that it's not for a lack of trying. There's nothing that can legalize me. Not the fact that my spouse is an American born citizen or that my children are also American citizens. People think that because our children are born here they give us the right to stay and legalize ourselves or that you can marry and American citizen and boom you become a citizen. Neither case is true. Making Beacon a Sanctuary City would help my family because it'd be nice to know that the Police force and the Mayor has our backs and won't call ICE on us. It'd make Beacon safer because we could fully cooperate with the police if there's any reason to."

From G& N:

"Hi we are long time Beacon residents, we moved here in 2001 in when we bought our first home. We'd like to dispel some the myths that surround undocumented people specifically in Beacon. We are not moochers and we don't take anything from the system. We are self-sufficient and even though there's no way for us to legalize ourselves we continue to be productive members of society hoping the government will one day make a law that we can one day earn our citizenship. We live, worship, eat and work in Beacon while staying away from trouble and doing what all good citizens do everyday. Making Beacon a Sanctuary would help us because it'd mean that the Mayor and the Police understand that we are a part of our beautiful Beacon and that Beacon loves us back."

Sarah From

917.686.4052

sarahfrom.com


The Community Preservation Corporation

2 Church Street, Suite 207
Ossining, New York 10562

March 20, 2017

The Community Preservation Corporation (CPC) was launched in 1974 through a joint agreement between the City of New York and its leading commercial banks to restore and rebuild New York's aging neighborhoods. In the more than 40 years since, we have evolved and expanded our reach to become a consistent source of capital to underserved housing markets throughout New York City and in communities and downtowns across the New York State. CPC targets downtowns and Main St. in the Hudson Valley to assist communities in their redevelopment efforts. Beacon was one of the first Cities targeted by CPC in the 1990's.

CPC has financed more than 170,660 affordable housing units to date. With \$9.7 billion in public and private investments, our work has helped revitalize countless neighborhoods and downtowns and provided quality housing for low-income families, senior citizens, and individuals with disabilities. Since CPC began lending in Beacon back in the early 1990's, we have financed more than 22 properties for a total of 160 residential units with total development costs of \$20MM. CPC's financing leveraged \$2.3MM in subsidy for projects funded with Dutchess Co. HOME and Beacon CDBG funding. CPC is the current construction lender on 40 Leonard St., a 78-unit new construction residential rental project that is about 60 % complete. The project is on schedule and on budget and expected to be completed by summer of 2017.

As a leading nonprofit affordable housing and community/downtown revitalization finance company, we utilize our deep, strategic relationships with government agencies, local community groups, banks, and other lenders to create customized loan opportunities for our customers. As a trusted partner in your success, we work hand-in-hand with you to help maximize the potential of your multifamily project and its impact on the community.

As such we had met with Beacon City Mayor and City Administrator some time ago to discuss revisions to your local Law 223 concerning Affordable Workforce Housing and offer the following comments and suggested revisions to the Draft Proposal dated 2/17/2017 that modifies and replaces the existing Law.

Comments to Local Law to amend Chapter 223 concerning Affordable Workforce Housing as written in Draft Dated 2/17/17

For Reference: NYS HCR & Industry Standard Definitions:

Section 8 Rental Housing – Rental housing assistance program for families at extremely low -30% of AMI - very low @ 50% of AMI and low income @ 60% of AMI as defined by the Section 8 Program guidelines. Section 8 provides rent subsidies to assist in making rental housing affordable.

Affordable Rental Housing – Rental housing affordable to families at less than 60% of AMI

with rent payments that does not exceed 30% of the household income adjusted for household size including utilities.

Workforce Rental Housing – Rental housing affordable to families from 61% - 120% of AMI with rent payments that do not exceed 30% of the household income adjusted for household size including utilities.

Market Rate Rental Housing – Rental housing that is NOT income or rent restricted. Typically ranges in affordability depending upon the unit types, amenities packages etc. Typically rents in excess of 165% of AMI are considered Luxury Market Rate Rental Housing.

Affordable Homeownership Housing – For sale housing affordable to families at less than 80% of AMI with mortgage payments including PITI (principal, interest, taxes and insurance) not to exceed debt to income ratios as set by various Lenders/Fannie Mae/FHA - SONYMA is 33% – 40% of gross income of the loan applicants.

Comments/Recommendations:

1. Recommend the proposed law should distinguish the guidelines between rental and homeownership/for sale unit. The income limits should be different for for sale housing and the limits are based on debt to income ratio.
2. Recommend the affordable level for homeownership must be higher than rental housing in order for homeowners to qualify for mortgages. Suggest it be set at not less than 80% of AMI for income eligibility which is considered in the industry as “affordable” homeownership for first time homebuyers.
3. Recommend Income levels to qualify for Workforce Rental Housing should be a higher % of AMI than the rent levels as a % of AMI or the pool of eligible households will not be wide enough to capture the Workforce Families that are currently underserved.
4. The proposed law that limits household income at 70% of AMI and max. rents set at 30% of 70% of AMI is by definition Affordable Housing and not Workforce Housing. Developers will be hard pressed to develop from an economic standpoint, with such income and rent restrictions without applying for subsidy.
5. Most all housing subsidy comes with government restrictions for deeper affordability at <60% of AMI. Further most all subsidy sources will NOT allow the preferences the City of Beacon has included in 223-41.10 G of the law.
6. Recommend setting rents at 30% of not less than 80% or 90% of AMI and the income limit to not less than 100% of AMI for Workforce Housing.

See rent chart below.

2016 Dutchess County Median Income \$87,100**HUD Household Income and Rent Limits**

Household Size	1	2	3	4	5	6
Household Income Limit:						
Extremely Low <30% AMI	\$ 18,350	\$ 20,950	\$ 23,550	\$ 26,150	\$ 28,440	\$ 32,580
Monthly Rent Limit*	\$ 459	\$ 524	\$ 589	\$ 654	\$ 711	\$ 815
Very Low <50% AMI	\$ 30,500	\$ 34,850	\$ 39,200	\$ 43,550	\$ 47,050	\$ 50,550
Monthly Rent Limit*	\$ 763	\$ 871	\$ 980	\$ 1,089	\$ 1,176	\$ 1,264
Low <80% AMI	\$ 46,000	\$ 52,500	\$ 59,150	\$ 65,700	\$ 71,000	\$ 76,250
Monthly Rent Limit*	\$ 1,150	\$ 1,313	\$ 1,479	\$ 1,643	\$ 1,775	\$ 1,906
<90% AMI	\$ 55,050	\$ 62,850	\$ 70,650	\$ 78,450	\$ 85,320	\$ 97,740
Monthly Rent Limit*	\$ 1,376	\$ 1,571	\$ 1,766	\$ 1,961	\$ 2,133	\$ 2,444
<100% AMI	\$ 61,000	\$ 69,700	\$ 78,400	\$ 87,100	\$ 94,100	\$ 101,100
Monthly Rent Limit*	\$ 1,525	\$ 1,743	\$ 1,960	\$ 2,178	\$ 2,353	\$ 2,528
<120% AMI	\$ 73,400	\$ 83,800	\$ 94,200	\$ 104,600	\$ 113,760	\$ 130,320
Monthly Rent Limit*	\$ 1,835	\$ 2,095	\$ 2,355	\$ 2,615	\$ 2,844	\$ 3,258

*** Note Income has NOT been adjusted for utility allowance**

Rents would be LESS if tenant pays Utilities

March 8, 2017 #3

Dear Councilman Kyrnacon,

Dump the idea of a Two lane Bridge over
The creek and restore The Tioronda Bridge to
one lane like it was - Can't we keep a
little bit of Beacon History in Beacon?

When ever you have time, Take a ride to
Leonard Street and tell me what you think
of the three huge buildings being built
across from St. Joachim's Church - One
of the building is actually on The street,
To me, it looks like The gap off route 84
in Fishkill.

Keep up the good work,
Sincerely

Barbara O'Leary
24 Falconer St
Beacon NY 12508

Subject:

FW: Sanctuary City Mar 20 2017

I am CH at 20 Hartsook Lane..

For another time, I want to convey and reinforce, the strong support that I and many others in this community, for the necessity for this City Council, in the document you are working on, incorporate the language, Sanctuary City, Beacon.

Clearly you all are keenly dedicated to the intent to support our neighbors and friends who are the most vulnerable to the deportations of the federal government and to the attempted Muslim travel ban which is being actively opposed judicially and we hope will succeed in putting this undemocratic and unconstitutional measure to rest.

Two things new happened last week: An Immigrants Rights rally was held in Newburgh, and with its large Latino population, had hundreds of people show up, enthusiastically..and heard NY Atty General Eric Schneiderman make the case for strong support for a resolution for Sanctuary City, and for people, including those who are undocumented, to learn about their rights and that their neighbors in Newburgh are with them, to protect them from deportation and to protect their rights as contributing members of their community. The AJ would like to see our state of NY declare itself a Sanctuary City...and we need to work on that!

The second good thing that happened was that the Newburgh City Council did pass a Sanctuary Policy Resolution....and the Council said -- we want to assure people that as long as they are law abiding citizens, none of our law enforcement officers are going to be seeking them out for deportation. And they have declared themselves a Sanctuary City.

Just as Kingston, Irvington, Bedford, Santa Ana, Ca. and growing numbers have done.

And so, once again, we ask that as you complete Beacon's resolution, we join this growing number and declare, actively for Beacon, that we will not allow the police to aid ICE and strike fear in the hearts of our Muslim and Latino sisters and brothers here in Beacon, and that we make the commitment to be seen as a Sanctuary for the most vulnerable among us. It is very real...the tyranny of fear of detention and deportation that hangs over so many of us...and we have the power here in Beacon, to do our part, with strength and courage, to be counted among the angels!

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Elizabeth Evans

From: Janet Werther <janetwerther@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 20, 2017 10:49 AM
To: Peggy Ross; Lee Kyriacou; Pam Wetherbee; Ali Muhammad; George M. Mansfield; Omar Harper
Cc: Elizabeth Evans; Anthony Ruggiero; Randy J. Casale
Subject: A Citizen's Perspective on the "Sanctuary" City Resolution

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Dear City Councilmembers,

I am writing to you regarding the Sanctuary City effort. As I am unable to attend tonight's meeting and give a comment publicly, I hope you will indulge my comments via email. This past weekend I heard both that the word "sanctuary" could tear the fabric of our city apart and that this resolution might ultimately be meaningless and do essentially nothing. I would like to argue against both of these perspectives.

First, I would like to address the idea that such a resolution is meaningless. Clearly, if it has the power to "tear the fabric of our city apart," this is not true. Whether the resolution can be enforced or upheld with regard to the state and federal governments is one question, and one that I don't think can be answered until such a resolution is passed and efforts are made to put it into action. But the sheer quantity and intensity of investment from both ends of the political spectrum would clearly belie the idea that it is meaningless. The resolution, if nothing else, has meaning to our citizenry. It communicates our values, our priorities, and addresses the question of who does or does not have the privilege and the right of seeing themselves as part of "our" community.

Working from that premise - the premise that such a resolution has meaning *within* our city and community, that it indeed participates in drawing the boundaries of who counts as "us," - I would encourage you to think very carefully about who or what are the forces that might be "tearing apart the fabric of our city." I would argue that people living and working in Beacon and the surrounding areas who may be undocumented, who will be made more precarious if we fail to pass a resolution of this kind, are *already* part of our community. These are people who work with and for us, whose children attend school alongside ours, who are our neighbors and our friends. These folks *are* "us," and I would argue that to work from any other premise is itself divisive. I would further argue that putting our local police in the position of being forced to work as ICE agents, encouraging distrust between residents and the police, thus creating an incentive for precarious or undocumented folks in our community to *not* report crimes - *this* tears at the fabric of our community. Children who cannot focus in school because they are afraid that no parent will come to pick them up because today might be the day that their mother or father has been detained by ICE - *this* tears the fabric of our community apart. Ceding local control of our community's welfare to the racist, xenophobic impulses that forget that *all* of us, except those of 100% indigenous Native American blood, are related to hard working, often undocumented immigrants - *this* tears at the fabric of our community. Not a resolution that asserts Beacon's right to maintain local control of its police force. Not a resolution that ensures undocumented citizens of our city that they are no less safe here than they were a year ago. Not the word "sanctuary."

This brings me to consider the resolution itself. I know many of you have been working very hard to put together language that will be acceptable to the city and the council at large, and that will be meaningful without overburdening our city with promises that it cannot keep. I want to express my heartfelt and deep gratitude for your efforts in this most thank-less task. Truly, thank you. I want to remind the council, as well, that the reason

sanctuary city resolutions are being passed across the Hudson Valley and across the nation is not in a mass effort to stop all oversight of immigration or all deportations. Rather, it is to assert the independence and local control of municipal governments and police forces. There is a *change* in national policy that these resolutions are predicated on and responding to. We have a national agency that deals with immigration and deportations: ICE. The goal and purview of local police forces has always been to keep local communities safe from crime. No sanctuary city resolution or like statement has called for an end to policing in general, that I am aware of. No sanctuary city resolution or like statement should suggest that the local police force *may not* report any undocumented citizens to ICE if it deems such action prudent and justified, that I am aware of. Rather, what a sanctuary city resolution can and, I believe *should* do, is assert publicly that our local resources will remain under local control. Such a resolution should insist that our city government and city police force refuses to be *compelled* under duress to take action that a) is not in the best local interest (see my above concerns regarding children, families, and the reporting of crimes), and b) should be done, if at all, by the national agency that is tasked with and funded for these very purposes.

It boggles my mind that the very word "sanctuary" should be seen as so offensive to some stakeholders. Indeed, I find such quibbling with the word sanctuary to be frustrating. I personally prefer the word sanctuary because it both ties us to a state and national movement of asserting these local rights, and because of the power that word has to communicate the values of acceptance and inclusion to our precarious undocumented community members. If the word sanctuary itself is going to be used to railroad this process, however, I support using some other language to title our resolution, so long as the content of the statement allies with the above stated values. I implore you once again, however, to consider just what and just who is tearing at our local fabric: those who simply wish to continue living, working, and contributing to the economy here? Those who wish to show support for their friends and neighbors? Those who wish to assert local jurisdiction and authority over local policing and governance? Or those who feel personally affronted at the thought that we as Beaconites might take a stand in favor of those of ourselves who are not white, not English speaking, and not several generations out from the hopeful struggle of immigration?

Thank you for your time.
Sincerely,

Janet Werther
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