

Laura Hurley

From: noreply@civicplus.com
Sent: Friday, October 8, 2021 1:15 PM
To: Laura Hurley; dallas1701@comcast.net; Bellamy286@outlook.com; rbenson@shore-lawyers.com; mdunn@greatersalisbury.org; pdgosnell@yahoo.com; quanticojones@comcast.net; samorris655@gmail.com; david@davidplotts.com; mchesnik@gmail.com; btsar7@comcast.net; rwstraus@hotmail.com; mwt@tilghman.org; phil.tilghman@tilghmanoil.com; blairtodd64@gmail.com; swhit12@live.com; pwilber@webbnetlaw.com
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Online Form Submittal: Charter Review Committee Submission Form

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Charter Review Committee Submission Form

First Name	Robert
Last Name	Taylor
Email	rbt.adkinspotts@gmail.com
Comments, Questions or Concerns	<p>Dr. Harry's Not-So-Hidden Agenda</p> <p>Here is text – in the March 20, 2021 newsletter of the Democratic Club of Wicomico County, as posted online – from which I read at the October 7 meeting. It appears under the heading General Membership Meeting March 17 (Dr. Harry Basehart Speaker):</p> <p>_____</p> <p>"Salisbury University Political Science Professor Emeritus Harry Basehart shared a "Guide to Legislative Redistricting in Maryland" featuring charts, maps and commentary. His 30-minute presentation was followed by another 30 minutes of questions and answers. He advocated First District Democrats actively engage members of the General Assembly to consider altering the current district configuration to make it more competitive for Democratic candidates."</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Not even an undergraduate rocket (or political) science degree is necessary to comprehend that analysis of his agenda regarding redistricting.</p>

Indeed, far from the rambling of an absent-minded professor, his thesis for changing the redistricting commission section (201.B.) of the Charter deliberately seeks to promote a personal agenda that is patently political. Among other things, he has served two terms on the Wicomico County Democratic Central Committee. This does not disqualify him from advocating for that agenda, but you should realize the highly partisan goal behind his advocacy.

His game plan for the redistricting commission, which he suggests would ameliorate the political aspect inherent in the redistricting process, in its practical effect would allow for more control by a political party or other group. Moreover, he could not recall any point of dissatisfaction with our past commissions (or, one presumes, the present commission). To reiterate: "if it ain't broke ..."

My comment regarding Dr. Basehart should not be construed as an objection to any revision whatsoever of the Charter section mentioned above. Although I disagree with his proposed structure and greatly increased power of the Commission, the suggestion for public hearings is sound. In that regard, I am surprised that he is, apparently, not calling for such action by this Commission before it submits its recommendations to the County Council.

However, much of the verbiage he proposes is not necessary, such as the timeline, reference to the Open Meetings ("state and local laws"), etc. The County Council is well-advised about proceeding both timely and properly, and it has done so repeatedly.

To reiterate my statement at the October 7 meeting, there are some pertinent points to consider including:

1. Because (a) as Dr. Basehart stated, his proposed "criteria" are currently required by law and (b) the next redistricting process will not occur until the 2030 census is completed, it is prudent to forgo any change of Charter section 201.B. until shortly before then – say in the 2028 general election – due to the potential for state legislative or court decisions between now and then that might require such change. Again, it is noted that the Council is well-advised in this regard.
2. For the reason noted in item 1, it is not appropriate to include specific court-made rules (certain of Dr. Basehart's "criteria"), which are subject to potential change, etc., and, if not stated correctly and comprehensively in the Charter could be

misleading for the public.

3. Dr. Basehart has proposed that the Redistricting Commission determine the district boundaries, which the Council would be required to rubberstamp – either the Commission’s initial plan or, if that is not approved, a “revised plan” presented by the Commission. Although I’m not certain, this may be an unlawful delegation of the legislative power of the Council under Maryland law. But, even if it is lawful, such delegation is certainly not appropriate and emasculates the citizens’ chosen representatives.

Robert B. Taylor

PS – This is not a personal attack or criticism of Dr. Basehart or his conduct and acumen as a professor at Salisbury University or elsewhere. These matters are not relevant to his proposal, my comment regarding it, or his political agenda. My comment is factual and objective, and it is not ad hominem.

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