

Succeeding in Local Politics



Checks and Balances/ Separation of Power...

- Mayor, CEO of the city:
 - Operations of departments
 - Negotiations with unions and personnel
 - Drafts the annual budget, which needs council approval
 - Is the lead sponsor for special projects, tax incentive proposals, negotiations on behalf of the city with public and private entities
- The City Council
 - Legislative body for Pittsfield
 - New Laws (ordinances)
 - Approve all spending including the budget and capital projects
 - *Can override the Mayor's school budget with a supermajority
 - Approval of special tax packages or economic development projects
 - Special permit authority for large developments and drive-thrus

Checks and Balances/ Separation of Power...

- **School Committee:**
 - Approves School Budget, which is then sent to City Council for approval
 - Negotiations (along with Mayor) with teachers collective bargaining unit
 - *Can override Mayor's school budget with supermajority of Council supporting

- **The City Clerk**
 - Where you go to get things done
 - Prepares City Council agenda with Council President
 - Oversees/manages elections
 - Where you file petitions*

The Power of the Petition...



- This is the way a request to the City Council is made:
 - Mayoral requests
 - City Councilor requests
 - Organization/Business
 - Citizen ---- YOU!

The Power of the Petition (cont.)

How to File a Petition

- **Extraordinarily simple!**
 - Go to the City Clerk's office
 - Ask for Petition paper
 - Write or type your request to the council
 - Sign it
- *Filing is Easy, Getting results is more complicated...*



The Power of the Petition (cont.)

Directly from the People

- **Ballot Question:** Large signature drive can place a question on the citywide ballot
 - Example: The citywide vote that killed the Stadium Authority.
- **Citizens Petition Can Lead to Change**
 - Styrofoam Ban
 - Name Change of Rosemary & Rev. Willard Durant Park
 - Plastic Bag (proposed) ban
 - Circus/Exotic Animal Ban



The Power of the Petition (cont.)

Directly from the People

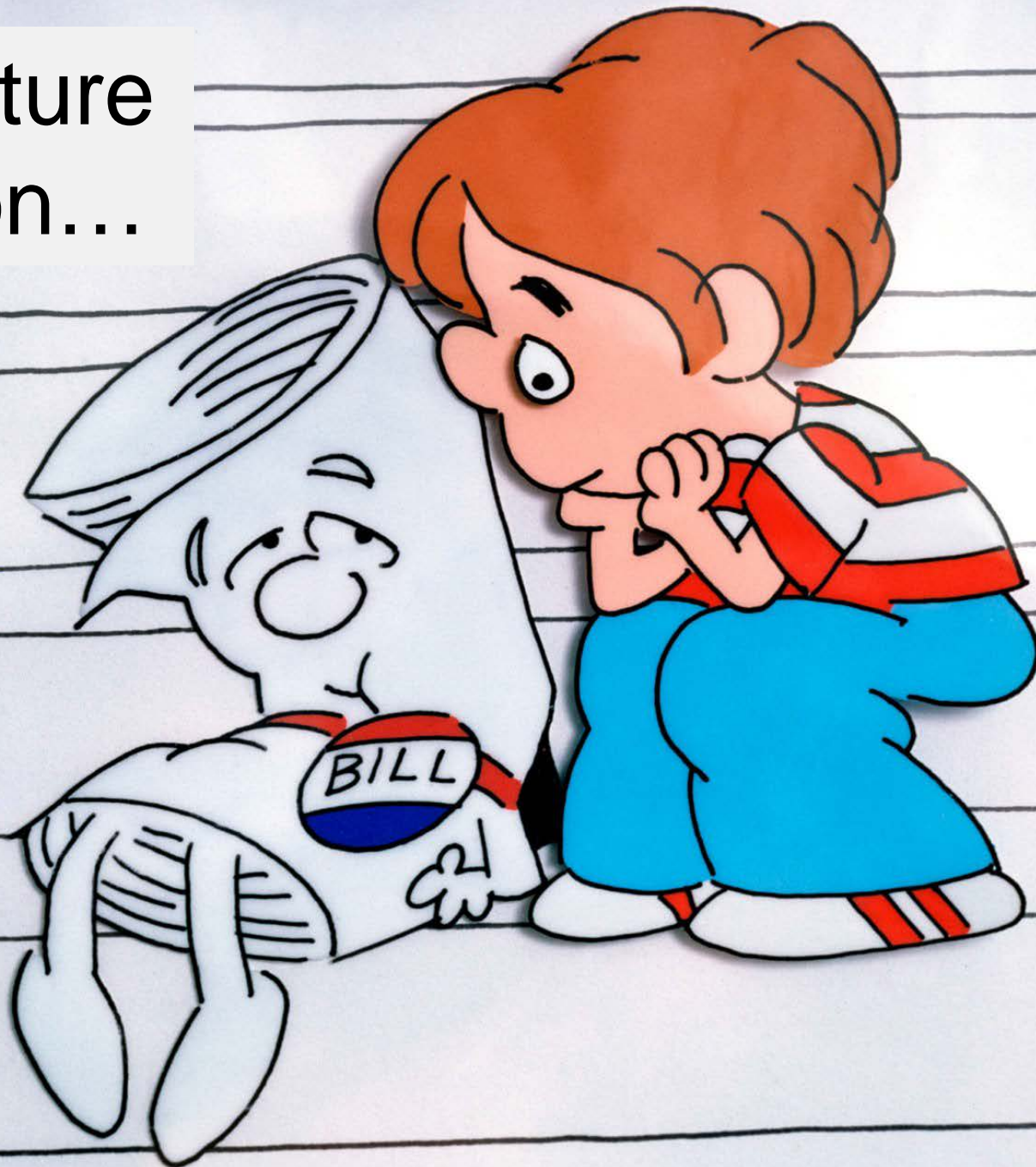
- **Taking Stand on National/International Issues (that are not under our jurisdiction, but raise awareness, add support and solidarity)**



- **Anti-TPP Vote**
- **Anti-Citizens United Vote**
- **Support of Verizon Workers Vote**
- **No on Question 2 Vote**

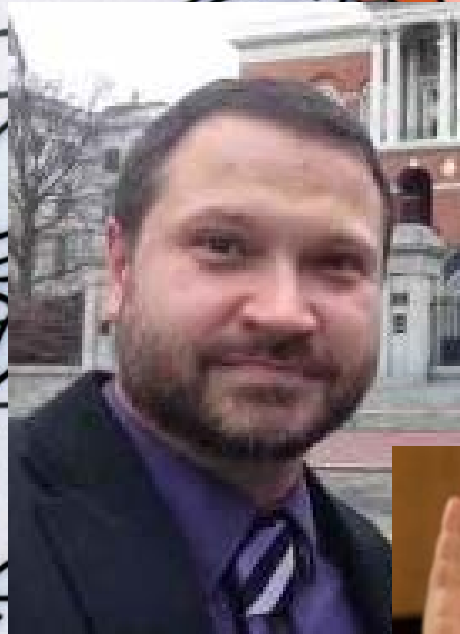
How to Nurture Your Petition...

Introduce
it to
New
Friends!



How to Nurture Your Petition...

- Find Like-Minded Supporters
- Get 100 or more signatures to add to it!
- Find a City Councilor to Sponsor it. Ideally an open-minded, progressive one.





Moving Your Petition Forward...

(Standup for
it)

- Be there for the Council Meeting, speak at open microphone
- The petition may be referred to a commission, board or council subcommittee – follow it! Be there for the next round.
- Get 100 or more signatures to add to it!

A large group of people is seated in a council chamber, facing forward. Some individuals in the back rows are holding colorful balloons. The room has a wooden door and framed pictures on the wall.

Moving Your Petition

(Bring A Lot of Friends)

Forward...

- There is nothing more effective than a full council chamber to advocate for your issues!
- Have a strategy
- Follow-through with it!

A large crowd of people is gathered at night, illuminated by stadium lights. In the foreground, a person with blonde hair, wearing a dark suit, stands at a wooden podium, addressing the audience. The crowd is dense and extends far into the background, filling a large arena or stadium. The sky is dark, and the overall atmosphere is one of a significant public event.

You Never Know What You Can Do... When an idea catches fire!

- Most of the best progressive achievements started at the local level. Period.

Discussion

