

## **IMPORTANT NOTICE TO RESIDENTS ABOUT AN OUT-OF-TOWN COMPANY CIRCULATING REFERENDUM PETITIONS IN THE CITY**

Petition Partners, an Arizona company, has been hired to circulate two charter amendment petitions in the City. This company is working for unidentified persons or companies. Petition Partners is not affiliated with the City in any way.

These petitions seek to impose two amendments to the City Charter. If Petition Partners obtains the signatures of 20% of the qualified voters of the City on the petitions, and the amendments are otherwise lawful, then the City will be required to place both questions on a ballot for a vote. If the amendments are approved, then the City charter must be changed to include them. Normally, the City Council adopts charter amendments when they are necessary, after a full public discussion. This petition process would impose charter amendments that the Council has not found to be necessary or in the public interest.

### **BEFORE SIGNING ANY PETITION, PLEASE NOTE:**

1. Residents are entitled to have and keep a copy of what they are signing. Residents can insist on a copy of the petition first so that they will know what it says. Then, if they want to sign it after having enough time to consider it without pressure, they can.
2. Residents should know what signing the petition really means. Petition Partners employees should have background information that informs residents about what the petitions seek to accomplish. To date, this has not been the case.
3. Residents are entitled to know who is promoting the petition before they sign.

**The real supporters of these amendments have not identified themselves. There are no explanations for or clarity about what they are seeking to do. Their hired company does not know the answers. However, they could claim that the amendments will do the following:**

### **Proposed Amendment §C12-6 - Non-Discrimination in Housing and Rental Laws**

This amendment appears to prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, creed, national origin, etc., but this is not the true purpose. This type of discrimination is already prohibited. Further, the City already does not discriminate in housing and rentals. What is the need for this proposed law change? The true purpose of this amendment is in the third sentence, which prohibits the City from making any **distinction** with respect to housing and rentals, as opposed to **discrimination**, on the basis of race, creed national origin, sexual orientation, occupation, familial status, economic status or geographic location or the size or type of housing unit. This could:

1. **Prohibit the City from licensing and making annual safety inspections for rental properties.** Currently, the City annually licenses residential rental properties and performs a safety inspection of each unit. Most residential rental

housing in the City is owned by non-residents or corporations. The City makes a distinction between rental properties, which must be licensed and annually inspected, and non-rental properties, which are not licensed. This is a distinction that is allowed by law and is not discriminatory. If the licensing system is removed, the City would be unable to protect renters with the safety inspections, and landlords would be relieved of any requirement to license or register their properties. In addition, the City now charges a fee for the license application, based on how many units will be inspected. This law would require all fees to be the same, instead of being based on how much staff time is involved.

2. **Eradicate rent stabilization.** The City currently has a Rent Stabilization law. This law puts a cap on rents and encourages landlords to improve their properties. This law was challenged by landlords as unconstitutional. **The highest court in this State found the law to be constitutional and an appropriate exercise of the City's power, and upheld it.** This amendment is an attempt to undo this law and the courts' finding. This will result in higher rents and no incentive to maintain the properties.
3. **Prevent residents from claiming the Homestead Property Tax for owner occupants with a principal residence in the City.** Currently, owner occupants with a principal residence in the City are entitled to claim the Homestead Property Tax Credit. This significantly reduces an owner-occupants tax bill. The amount of this credit that can be claimed is set by the City. This law would prevent the City from making a distinction between owner-occupied housing and rental housing, so that the City could not authorize a Homestead Property Tax Credit, and owner occupant bills would increase substantially.
4. **Eradicate the requirement that landlords pay a trash fee.** Landlords have for years paid a trash fee if they wish the City to remove their trash, in recognition of the fact that rental properties produce more trash. Certain landlords sued the City, claiming that this fee was not proper and not within the City's power. Again, the landlords lost that case. This amendment would undo City law and the court's finding, and would increase the cost of trash removal to residents. Also, the City does not currently pick up trash from properties, such as high rises, that use a dumpster for trash, because the City does not have the equipment for this. This amendment could require the City to acquire expensive new trash removal equipment to remove this trash, and to lose the ability to charge for this service.

#### **Proposed Amendment Section §C10-12– Property Tax Limitation**

1. **The City already has one of the lowest municipal tax rates in the County, and there is no proposed increase in the tax rate for this year.**
2. **This amendment would cap the amount of money that can be raised by City taxes to the amount collected as taxes in fiscal year 2011, forever.** There would never be any funds available to pay for increased costs of goods and

services going into the future. This cap applies even to revenue from new development in the City (i.e. Varsity, Domain, Mosaic, East Campus) that is produced without any tax increase.

3. This amendment would almost immediately require the reduction or elimination of City services.
4. Limitations of this type severely limit the City's ability to provide police, security, trash and other basic services.
5. The amendment takes away the ability of the Council to consider the tax rate, and of the residents to participate in this process, in deciding how to best provide for the public interest.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT YOUR COUNCILMEMBER.

**IF YOU HAVE ALREADY SIGNED A PETITION AND WANT TO WITHDRAW YOUR SIGNATURE.**

A signature can be withdrawn by the signor at any time before the petitions are presented to the City. A withdrawal of signature should be filed with the City as soon as possible. A form to withdraw your signature is below. This form should be filed at City Hall.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, do hereby state that I wish to withdraw my signature from the petition proposing to amend the Charter of the City of College Park by adding a new section, Section §C10-12, Property Tax Limitation. I have no intention of supporting this Petition.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\* \* \* \*

I, \_\_\_\_\_, do hereby state that I wish to withdraw my signature from the petition proposing to amend the Charter of the City of College Park by adding a new section, Section §C12-6, Non-Discrimination in Housing and Rental Laws. I have no intention of supporting this Petition.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_