

# **Sneaky Council Seeks to Substitute Non-Binding Referendum Petitioners Reject Council's "Bait and Switch" Manipulation**

*The Petitioners will not sell out the public.  
Council shows knowledge to permit Petition's demand on November ballot.  
Let's get it done without Council hiding behind an opinionated lawyer.*

**May 28, 2018, Newton, NJ** From the petition's start, only some members of Newton's government (but all of the Petitioners) knew how to respect and execute the Faulkner Act Petition process in a proper fashion. Others chose to childishly kick sand, name call and avoid the petition. Now we see renewed manipulation – the introduction of a non-binding Council referendum ordinance to substitute for a binding Faulkner Act petition before the Council for a second reading.

Last week's response to Town Manager Russo (see attached email) was that the government should vote to accept the public's position on moving Newton's election date or simply put the public's question:

“Shall the Town of Newton, NJ change the date of the municipal elections from May to November thereby increasing voter participation and saving tax monies?”

...on the ballot in November as per our Faulkner Act Petition. The Council knows various methods to achieve this legally – we offered to negotiate with them.

**Instead, Newton Council chooses to remove the power of a binding referendum, change the ballot question and propagandize about non-existent partisan politics.** The Faulkner Act prohibits partisan politics and gives equal legal footing to the Petitioners and Council. If the Council wants to change the petition or declare it illegal – **be honest or be prepared to take it to court.**

Who is Newton's puppetmaster who between OPMA council meetings distorts, demonizes and manipulates this Faulkner Act petitioning process? What happened to our response offering cooperation?

All the legal nonsense this month, regarding Council's need for a “special election”, was puffery to manipulate the public and disrespect/discredit the Petitioners. As the Petitioners and public signees waived the right to a special election, from the beginning, we now see the Council knows the method exists to do so.

The Council wants changes it has no right to establish – as the public's petition is already certified.

“I do not respect this 'bait and switch', non-binding referendum nonsense along with the past weeks of legal disinformation. It is time for change and to get this done,” Dr. Mecaj states. “Moving the election to November will bring more voter participation, reduce special interests and save tax dollars. A “trifecta” of goodness! Newton would still remain nonpartisan as Sparta, Vernon and Byram have already demonstrated. We see now that insiders know how to put this referendum as-is on the November ballot. Let's get it done.”

The town government delayed and wasted time at the last Council meeting. The Petitioners' ordinance has had a first reading. It is time that Newton council members respect the Petitioners and the public.

## THE EMAIL TO TOWN MANAGER TOM RUSSO

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Ludmilla Mecaj <[lmecaj@gmail.com](mailto:lmecaj@gmail.com)>

**Subject: Re: Negotiation Regarding Petitioners' Demand**

**Date:** May 21, 2018 at 3:17:22 PM EDT

**To:** [trusso@newtontownhall.com](mailto:trusso@newtontownhall.com)

**Cc:** Suzanne Kimble <[patriotsway.kimble58@gmail.com](mailto:patriotsway.kimble58@gmail.com)>, Ludmilla Meçaj <[lmecaj@gmail.com](mailto:lmecaj@gmail.com)>, [bjm22540@gmail.com](mailto:bjm22540@gmail.com)

Mr. Russo,

As per our conversation here is the confirming email:

Subject: Negotiation Regarding Petitioners' Demand to Change Newton's Municipal Election Day to November

Last Friday, I spoke to Mayor Levante who was asked to call me at your behest. The topic was if the Petitioners would be willing to withdraw the petition should an ordinance be passed to establish a referendum in November to decide whether to switch the municipal election day to November. If the Mayor/Council do not accept the position of the Petitioners, the referendum would be scheduled for November's election day.

We discussed that the following would need to be established:

1. The proposed ordinance should state the ballot question be that as listed on our petition (attached to this email) and that the referendum will be held on November 6, 2018 (and not a special election date).
2. A Whereas clause in the ordinance will state that the five Petitioners (Dr. Ludmilla Mecaj, Ms. Suzanne M. Kimble, Mr. William R. Kimble, Ms. Barbara J. Morris and Mr. Neil L. Morris), who submitted a Faulkner Act Petition on April 18, 2018, agree to simultaneously withdraw the Faulkner Act Petition with passage of the ordinance to go to referendum.
3. Well in advance of the May 30 meeting, I asked that each Petitioner should be delivered, by registered mail, the agreement the Petitioners and Government will sign (a simple single page outlining the above should suffice). I will coordinate with the other Petitioners to deliver the signed agreement to you before the Council meeting on May 30.

If we don't wait to the last minute, we will avoid any last minute misunderstandings that will provoke legal delays!

Thank you,

Ludmilla Mecaj

*Contact: Dr. Ludmilla Mecaj, former candidate for Newton Council 862-268-6652  
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