



In the Year Two Thousand and Seventeen

Upon the recommendation of Councilor Dennis Bidwell, Councilor Gina-Louise Sciarra and Councilor Jim Nash

17.406  
A Resolution

Opposing Expansion of the Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School

Whereas, the Hadley-based Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School (PVCICS) failed in February, 2016 to obtain a charter amendment from the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education that would have permitted it to increase its maximum enrollment;

Whereas, the PVCICS has gone back to the Board asking again for authorization to expand its maximum enrollment from 584 to 1036 K-12 students, an expansion request not supported by evidence of unmet demand;

Whereas, the Northampton School Committee remains opposed to the expansion of PVCICS, and will formally vote again on the matter at their October 12, 2017 meeting;

Whereas, the Northampton City Council, in September, 2016, voted unanimously to approve a resolution "Opposing Lifting the Cap on Commonwealth Charter Schools", with a major factor in that decision being the projection that in FY2017 about \$2.2 million, net of reimbursements, is being diverted from Northampton Public Schools, to six nearby Commonwealth charter schools enrolling 190 students from Northampton;

Whereas this impact on the budget of the Northampton Public Schools is substantial, representing almost 5% of the system's operating budget, funds that could otherwise be spent on priorities such as preschool expansion, providing French/Spanish instruction and instrumental music in elementary schools, adding teachers and adjustment counselors;

Whereas, the voters of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, in November, 2016 voted 62%-38% to oppose a Ballot measure that would have lifted the cap on Commonwealth charter schools, which would have paved the way for creation of new charter schools;

Whereas, the voters of Northampton voted 72%-28% to oppose that ballot measure, with all of Hampshire County voting 74% -26% to oppose the lifting of the charter school cap;

Whereas the flawed funding program for reimbursing school districts for their payments to charter schools in place in 2016 remains unchanged, and is underfunded, meaning that anytime a new charter school seat in the region is taken by a Northampton resident, even more dollars will be drained from the budget of the Northampton Public Schools;

Whereas the inequities of the charter school funding system create unnecessary tension and disunity in communities across the Commonwealth;

Whereas, the Northampton Public School Department is paying \$669,000 in FY2017 for 56 Northampton students attending PVCICS;

Whereas, these numbers will likely increase if the requested PVCICS expansion were granted by the State board;

Whereas, a broad range of organizations including the New England Chapter of the NAACP, Jobs With Justice, Massachusetts AFL-CIO, Citizens for Public Schools, Massachusetts Teachers Association, American Federation of Teachers Massachusetts, and Northampton Save Our Schools are all in opposition to expanding the number of charter school seats in the Commonwealth;

**Now Therefore Be It Resolved** that the Northampton City Council joins with the Northampton School Committee and Mayor David Narkewicz in calling on the Commonwealth's Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to reject the proposed expansion of enrollment at the Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School; and

**Be It Further Resolved** that the City Council President is authorized to submit a letter to the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, and to speak with the Board Chair, expressing this body's strong opposition to expansion of the PVCICS, as well as this body's opposition to the addition of any new charter school seats until the charter school funding formula is fundamentally reformed; and

**Be it Further Resolved** that Northampton's representatives in the State Legislature are encouraged to redouble their efforts to achieve fundamental reforms leading to more equitable and expanded funding of the Commonwealth's public schools.