A Resolution Opposing Senate Bill 169 and to Preserve the Current Plurality Election Model Used by the City of Gastonia

WHEREAS each year the City of Gastonia reviews and evaluates those prioritized issues of policy and law then pending before the State and Federal Legislatures which pose a substantive likelihood of impacting the community and its citizens; and

WHEREAS the City Council unanimously adopted an “Advocacy Agenda for 2023-2024” earlier this year which was delivered to each member of our local legislative delegation in the North Carolina General Assembly; and

WHEREAS the Advocacy Agenda for 2023-2024 provides in part that “the City opposes any changes to the current non-partisan plurality election model used by the City under NCGS §163-192 that allows all Gastonia citizens to vote for each member of the Gastonia City Council”; and

WHEREAS on August 16, 2023, without notice to the City Council of the City of Gastonia, Senate Bill 169 which originally was a local bill specific to other communities in North Carolina, was amended in committee by adding language which would revise the Charter of the City of Gastonia so as to change the method of electing Gastonia City Council members such that citizens would only be able to vote for the Council member residing in their Ward; and

WHEREAS this revision of Gastonia’s Charter was not requested by the Gastonia City Council and its introduction was not in keeping with the General Assembly’s customs and traditions concerning the adoption of Local Acts; and

WHEREAS the Gastonia City Council believes that the benefits of at-large voting outweigh those of single district or Ward voting in that number of candidates available for election tends to be larger, vote trading between councilmembers is lessened, and that Council members in at-large systems rise above the limited perspective of a single district or Ward because they are elected by and accountable to the entire electorate and therefore prioritize the good of the entire community rather than only the good of one Ward; and

WHEREAS the Gastonia City Council believes that district or Ward-only elections result in the Council having to redraw Ward boundaries after each census and perhaps even after every annexation, and that at-large elections are therefore more practical for a community of our size and population; and

WHEREAS Senate Bill 169 will strip the right to vote for five out of six City Councilmembers from every citizen of Gastonia thereby causing citizens to feel disenfranchised and unrepresented by a majority of the Councilmembers who will still be able to vote on major issues affecting the safety, health and welfare of those citizens;
NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the City Council of the City of Gastonia unanimously urges every member of the North Carolina General Assembly to repudiate the provisions of Senate Bill 169 that revise the Charter of the City of Gastonia and to vote against the Bill so long as it contains language that revises the current non-partisan plurality election model used by the City under NCGS §163-192 and to vote against any other legislation that seeks to achieve the same end.

This the 21st day of August, 2023.

ATTEST:

Candice Owenby
Deputy City Clerk

Walker E. Reid, III, Mayor

CITY OF GASTONIA
NORTH CAROLINA