

## **LEADING/GOVERNANCE**

### Open the City Charter for a review

#### Leadership

Allentown went from a mentality of public service to self-service. In order to restore trust and efficacy in the city we must make structural changes in governance. The strong mayor form of government was part of the reason that one person was able to control so many other elected officials for over a decade. This needs to change. We need to explore other forms of government that create a system of checks in balances between Council and the administration.

#### Inclusion

Residents do not have an authentic voice in the decision-making process. The City should establish neighborhood Resident Advisory Boards with decision making power. The charter would recognize the authority of these boards and outline the structure, compilation, guidelines and powers granted to the boards. The boards would deal with issues pertinent to their communities. Issues of focus would range from land use, zoning and budget recommendations to traffic issues and blight issues. In this way, residents would have a formal and official voice in what is done or not done in their neighborhood.

#### Representation

Currently, 5 out of 7 Councilpersons live in the West End. Each neighborhood has its own character, challenges and opportunities and who better to represent a neighborhood than someone who lives there. All residents deserve someone on council that they know “understands their neck of the woods”. The Eastside is neglected, Southside is forgotten and the parts of Center City not in the NIZ are left in the shadows of the skyscrapers.

Implementing District seats on City Council would help ensure full representation of the City. Potentially there could be 4 District seats (South, East, West and Center-City) and 3 at-large seats on Council.

## Strengthen Budget Review Process

### Time

Most members of City Council have full and/or part-time jobs outside of Council. More time is needed to review the budget, negotiate and make amendments. This is taxpayer money and a moral document-not something to be rushed in front of council. Council should also receive monthly budget updates.

### Lessons from the School Board

The School District's budget is 3x the City's. The Fiscal house for the Allentown School Board is just now getting in order. Years of dysfunction led to wasteful spending and bad habits. The School Board receives monthly budget reports and a list of every check cashed and received during that time period. This format allowed us to identify discrepancies in fund balance statements from month to month. With the help of outside entities, we were able to develop a better system of checks and balances in the business office. To ensure that our processes and procedures are at the highest standard we brought in a third party to help us get our financial house in order. While this costs money up front, it will end up saving money in the long run and help prevent future "surprises".

Our annual budgeting process is also longer. We pass the proposed preliminary budget in January, the preliminary budget in February, the proposed final budget in May and the final budget in June. This schedule gives the board and members of the public a full 6 months to review the budget, make suggestions, amendments and ask questions.

### Staffing

The City should conduct a personnel study to ensure that we fully utilizing staff's full potential and skill levels. Conducting personnel study in which positions, responsibilities and salaries are reviewed would ensure that all departments are appropriately staffed and that those in positions have the necessary skills and certifications. Annual evaluations for all city employees would increase accountability, transparency and productivity in City operations.