

# A Better Mt. Pleasant: Faced with a likely referendum loss, village trustees repeal ordinance to extend trustee terms in office

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MOUNT PLEASANT, WI MARCH 29, 2022 – On Monday night, the Mount Pleasant Village Board of Trustees were poised to confirm the certification of a referendum petition on a charter ordinance designed to extend village officials terms in office from two to three years starting in 2023, and forcing the measure to a referendum vote by village residents first.

Dozens of volunteers circulated the petition and collected nearly 1300 signatures in just two weeks. On Friday, March 25, 2022, the Village Clerk certified that enough valid signatures had been collected to trigger a referendum vote which then required the confirmation of the Village Board on Monday to proceed.

Instead, faced with a likely referendum loss, village trustees voted to repeal the ordinance, rather than let residents vote on their controversial actions to amend the charter of the village with only two weeks' notice.

“On the heels of the Foxconn fiasco and years of outrageous borrowing and spending in Mount Pleasant, there is no appetite by residents to reward trustees with longer terms in office, making it even harder to hold them accountable,” said

Kelly Gallaher, of local watchdog group A Better Mt. Pleasant, who submitted the petition. “In a time of extreme political divisiveness, residents of all political points of view eagerly agreed that voters should decide the length of terms in office, not politicians.”

Village [audio recordings](#) revealed that trustees were initially advised by staff—mainly Village Attorney Chris Smith—to institute longer terms in office to avoid election turnover which he said was “not good for the operation.” Smith went on to say that the only objection he could think of was that trustees might not want to make a three year commitment instead of two. Saying, “you’d probably be doing the village president a favor if you resign before your term is ended, because he gets to pick the replacement.”

“This cynical and self-serving coordination of village staff and elected officials is disappointing, but not surprising,” continued Gallaher. “Instead of including residents in this decision, they did the right thing only after they saw they had lost.”

Had the referendum moved forward and the ordinance struck down, the village would be prohibited from reintroducing it for two years. A repeal of the ordinance does not disallow it to be put forward again. Gallaher vows that should the village try to sneak through another term extension ordinance, A Better Mt. Pleasant is ready and able to circulate a petition again.