

2016 Fall River Charter Community Survey

RESULTS



Thank you – over 100 hours invested!!

- Commissioner Cusick
- Commissioner Quinn
- Commissioner Robillard
- Augie Venice
- Michelle Dionne
- Cheryl Costa
- Geraldine Viveiros
- Ann Marie Wilson
- State Rep. Alan Silvia
- Clara Fallon
- Ron Thomas
- Margie Charkowski
- Sue Miozza
- Sue Mathias
- Carol Lenahan
- Keith Costa



The Fall River Charter Commission also thanks all those that took the time to complete the survey, put it the mail and to those that took it online.



About the Survey

- November 2015 **9,318** voted in support of charter review
- The Commission wanted to hear from the public
- A 12-question survey was created on January 11, 2016
- This survey is important because it gives the Commission an idea of what voters may support on the 2017 ballot
- This survey is valid
- **5,367** surveys were completed for a return rate of 10%
- The commission will consider the survey results during deliberations
- The survey results will certainly facilitate further discussion

Number of Surveys Distributed

- **52,996** surveys were mailed with the city annual census on March 11, 2016
- About **2,300** delivered to housing units throughout the city
- Surveys distributed at neighborhood meetings and other such venues
- **109** completed on-line via Fall River Government TV
- Cut-off was May 30, 2016
- TOTAL SURVEY RESPONSES: 5,367



Typical Response Rate from General Public Survey

- Between 1 - 20%
- **Our response rate was 10%**



The 12 Survey Questions

- 1. **YES** or **NO** Do you believe that our current elected Mayor and elected City Council form of government is working?
- 2. **YES** or **NO** Should the City Council have the power to add or subtract line items from the city budget?
- 3. **YES** or **NO** Should the City Council have the right to approve or confirm all mayoral appointments to boards and commissions?
- 4. Which of the following would you support?
 - a. A two (2) year term for Mayor **OR**
 - b. A four (4) year term for Mayor

The 12 Survey Questions (cont.)

- 5. Which of the following would you support?
 - a. A two (2) year term for City Council? **OR**
 - b. A four (4) year term for City Council?
- 6. Which of the following would you support?
 - a. A two (2) year term for School Committee **OR**
 - b. A four (4) year term for School committee
- 7. **YES** or **NO** Do you support ward councilors?
- 8. **YES** or **NO** Should the Mayor be allowed to serve on the School Committee?

The 12 Survey Questions (cont.)

- 9. **YES** or **NO** Should there be term limits for elected officials?
- 10. **YES** or **NO** Should the City of Fall River be run by a professional city manager?
- 11. **YES** or **NO** Do you support a periodic forensic audit?
- 12. **YES** or **NO** Should there be a debt limit for the City?



The Survey Parameters

Population: 52,996

Sample: 5,367

Margin of error: \pm 5%

Confidence level: 95% (this is a *subjective decision*; however it is erring on the side of caution because the following slide indicates a 99% confidence level would have been justified)

Valid Survey Results

- 382 surveys is the minimum recommended sample size based on population size of 52,996, with a margin of error of 5% , a confidence level of 95% and a response distribution of 50%
- Based on a review of the first 400 surveys completed, the range of dispersion was 0 to 5% , meaning looking at BOTH 400 and 5,367 surveys, we found there was not much difference in the final percentages. The margin difference was **never** greater than 5% and that was for only **one** survey question.

Who Participated in the Survey

- Police officers
- Various Board & Commission Members
- Neighborhood Organization Members
- City Employees
- Voters
- Teachers (*active & retired*)
- School Committee & Department Members
- Firefighters
- Girl Scout Leader
- Active Community Members



Observations

- Many people wrote on the survey that they did not understand “ward councilors” and “professional city manager” and what they do.
- Lots of negative comments about the city, i.e. cleanliness, purple trash bags, the incinerator, drug problems, elected officials, welfare, gangs, rail service, housing, taxes, fees and rates, poor condition of roads and streets (pot holes), etc.
- The 1st question on the survey about, “do you think our current form of government is working” was a question that many felt was about the current group of elected officials.
- Because it was a two-sided survey, many people did not complete both sides

F.Y.I.

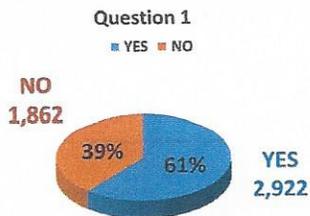
The comments provided in this presentation are taken **verbatim** from the online or written survey. Spelling, punctuation and highlighting are representative of what was provided.

Only about 20% or 1,000 survey comments is represented in this presentation. The surveys were randomly selected in groups of 100 and **ALL** comments that were written in those groups of 100 are provided in this presentation.



Question 1: Do you believe that our current elected Mayor and elected City Council form of government is working?
YES or NO

• 4,784 responded out of 5,367= 89.1% (583 did not response to question)



Is Current Form of Government Working?

We are 95% certain that the true percentage of people in Fall River who “believe our current form of government is working” is within 56% to 66%.



Comments

- *Potholes – Fix the potholes. One damaged my car pretty bad. (Written)*
- *The council HAS to work with the mayor; right now I don't see much of that. (FRGTV)*
- *No one should take jobs and give them to out of town persons. Take care of our own and our own will take care of us. (Written)*
- *No one has been able to figure out trash. (Written)*
- *Parking permits/passes for residents in congested residential areas. Beneficial for residents to “secure” a parking spot and also for added city revenue. (Written)*

Comments (cont.)

- *Great idea to review the city charter (after too many years) have gone by. It's something that should be done periodically. (Written)*
- *I have lived in this city my whole life and am very disappointed in both the Mayors and City Councilors for the past 10 years at least. Maybe they will get better with this new group of people. (Written)*
- *Our mayor that we now is a breath of fresh air. I really think that he does care for us & also hope he does something on the \$10.00 fee plus bags. (Written)*
- *Too many high priced personnel on payroll not paying attention to doing their jobs. Need to get out and make sure employees are working. (Written)*

Comments (cont.)

- *I clean trash from the street in my neighborhood. Appalling! (Written)*
- *City needs to enforce the ordinances it creates. Should be salary caps placed per position so that the sitting mayor can't appoint and set salaries. Help business thrive. Allow tables, chairs, merchandise, etc. to be placed on sidewalk! (Written)*
- *Cannot judge mayor's effectiveness, needs more time in office. City has money for bike park on Rodman St but streets directly across in desperate need of resurface? (Written)*
- *I think the "form" of city government is fine; personalities and "grandstanding" need to be curbed. Ward councilors might make the problem worst. (Written)*

Comments (cont.)

- *The Council needs to work with the mayor (Written)*
- *I believe that the Mayor/City Council from of government could serve the citizens well, sadly we seem to be in a period of grandstanding + poor leadership (Written)*
- *I feel nothing should change. People complain as it is about how our city official work to go fours years is insane. This is a city. There not running the USA. (Written)*

Question 2: Should the City Council have the power to add or subtract line items from the city budget?
YES or NO

4,975 responded out of 5,367= 92.7% (392 did not response to question)



Should the City Council have the Power to Add/Subtract Line Items from Budget?

- We are 95% certain that the true percentage of people in Fall River "who want the city council to have the power to add or subtract items from the city budget" is within 61% to 71%.



Comments

- *I feel that the city council should be able to veto spending line items in the budget but not add anything.* (FRGTV)
- *My response to Ques 1+2 is based solely on the lack of support our current mayor receives from the current city council and not how effective I feel the new mayor is.* (Written)
- *By majority vote* (Written)
- *And perhaps an independent person with financial experience* (Written)
- *Don't know enough* (Written)

Question 3: Should the City Council have the right to approve or confirm all mayoral appointments to boards and commissions? YES or NO

5,041 responded out of 5,367= 93.9% (326 did not response to question)



City Council to Confirm Mayoral Appointments?

We are 95% certain that the true percentage of people in Fall River who believe "the City Council should have the right to approve or confirm all mayoral appointments to boards and commissions" is within **70% to 80%**.



Comments

- Like to see a law that states that the mayor can not appoint anyone for more than 90 days after his/her term in office expires, unless the City Council approves said contract by a greater than 2/3 vote (it would take 7 city councilors to approve a contract extending later than 90 days past the mayors term.... if a mayor gets re-elected and wishes to keep his current staff than perhaps just a majority of 5 councilors need to approve it. (FRGTV)
- Officially, any office of the City Government , should have the expertise of education, non politically connected (no nepotism) should be allowed to fill a Director,/or Admin. position. Qualifications are a must've! (FRGTV)

Comments (cont.)

- *Mayoral appointments should serve at the sole discretion of the mayor so a working committee can begin to accomplish what this city needs.* (Written)
- *Boards and commission should have more power "citizens control of citizens money"* (Written)
- *Absolutely not!* (Written)
- *You can't get anything done with so many people involved. Let Mayor make his choices and if they don't work out, only he is to blame.* (Written)
- *Believe the City Council should have the right to confirm certain board positions and appointment's* (Written)

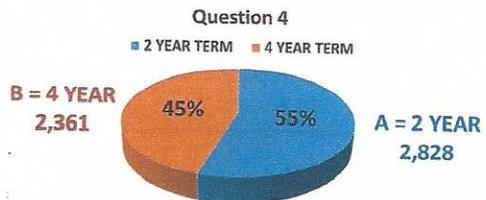
Comments (cont.)

- *Mayor can't hire anyone he wants.* (Written)
- *So it doesn't become a place for nepotism.* (Written)
- *Don't know enough* (Written)

Question 4: Which of the following would you support?

- a. A two (2) year term for Mayor OR
- b. A four (4) year term for Mayor

5,199 responded out of 5,367= 96.9% (168 did not response to question)



Two Year Term for the Mayor

We are 95% certain that the true percentage of people in Fall River who support "a two year term for Mayor" is within 50% to 60%.



Comments

- *Do not try to do too much. I used to think two years was not enough, now I am not sure. The mayor and city council can work together. (Written)*
- *There should be a four year mayor term instead of 2 years too much time is wasted on political campaigns than on actual running of city! (Written)*
- *As for the length of the Mayoral term, from 1854 until 1902, Fall River had Mayoral elections every single year. While those were partisan elections (so party primaries may have slightly skewed the nominating process), there were still successful and unsuccessful Mayors just as we have today. (FRGTV)*

Comments (cont.)

- *I would rather see a 3-year appointment rather than a 2 or 4 year term but would support a 4 year term over a 2 year term. (FRGTV)*
- *Like the mayor to be a 4 year term but the council and SC to remain at 2 years. (FRGTV)*
- *3 years limit on Mayor..not 2 not 4 (FRGTV)*
- *We fire a mayor in the mist of his term. We drop a new mayor with only 10 months in office. We hire a person too young for being a mayor. We better stay two-year term. (Written)*
- *3 year term for mayor better than 2 year. (Written)*
- *Less campaigning, more working (Written)*

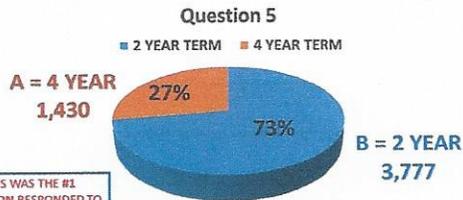
Comment Section (cont.)

- *The mayor needs longer terms- city needs continuity in gov't. Constant change is why city gov't is such a mess!* (Written)
- *Yes if the mayor and city council had a 4 year term, they would have more time to get things addressed.* (Written)

Question 5: Which of the following would you support?

- A two (2) year term for City Council? OR
- A four (4) year term for City Council?

5,207 responded out of 5,367= 97.0% (160 did not response to question)



Two Year Term for the City Council

We are 95% certain that the true percentage of people in Fall River who support "a two year term for the City Council" is within 68% to 78%.



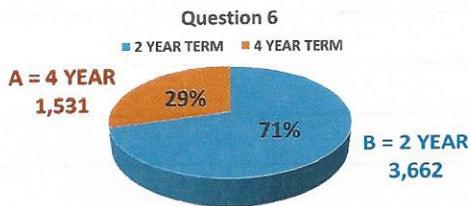
Comments

- I believe the mayor & city could should serve two year terms unless they're doing positive things for the city in which case 4 years will suffice. (Written)
- I favor a reduction of counselors from 9 to 7 because we have lost thousands of people who have left the city. (Written)
- Rotating (Written)
- I think council meetings should be more prepared. (Written)

Question 6: Which of the following would you support?

- A two (2) year term for School Committee OR
- A four (4) year term for School committee

5,193 responded out of 5,367= 96.8% (174 did not response to question)



Two Year Term for the School Committee

We are 95% certain that the true percentage of people in Fall River who support "a two year term for school committee" is within 66% to 76%.



Comments

- *Elections every two years are annoying! Let them do their jobs!* (Written)
- *Rotating so it isn't all elected at once* (Written)
- *Too much time + money into re-elections every two years – plus disruptions in governing.* (Written)
- *No school committee needed* (Written)
- *I prefer 1 year at a time* (Written)
- *First year should be a probation period* (Written)

Question 7: Do you support ward councilors? YES or NO

4,779 responded out of 5,367= 89.0% (591 did not response to question)



This question was LEAST responded to.

Ward Councilors

We are 95% certain that the true percentage of people in Fall River who support "ward councilors" is within 59% to 69%.



Comments

- *Ward councilors limit who can be elected and limits our choices of qualified candidates. (Written)*
- *Like the idea of ward councilors – many positives to it. (Written)*
- *Ward councilors serve their own purpose. (Written)*
- *Will ward councilors work for the whole city or just the part they are elected from. Such as "the South End" has plenty of reps. or maybe "The Flint" just doesn't need as much! (Written)*
- *What are ward councilors? (Written)*
- *Not sure what they do? (Written)*

Comments (cont.)

- *I very ***STRONGLY*** am against in ANY form ward councilors! I feel that would lead to certain competition between neighborhoods- we have enough of that already. I want to be able to go to the counselor whom I feel could help me the most, not be limited to only one. (FRGTV)*
- *I would (potentially) support a combination of Ward Councilors and Councilors at large. (FRGTV)*
- *I'm only in favor of Ward Councilors if they are ONLY elected by the votes of the people in the ward they will represent. (FRGTV)*

Comments (cont.)

- *Ward councilors would put equal representation throughout the city avoiding a majority from one section of the city (FRGTV)*
- *Like at large councilors as well, but maybe there can be three ward councilors "super wards" North/ Center/ South end.... hey just my wacky ideas.... (FRGTV)*
- *Unaware of function (Written)*
- *Councilors should be neighborhood based. Not voted as a member city-wide. (Written)*
- *With conditions: no more than 9 councilors total; perhaps 4 councilors to certain 4 different regions of the city are represented , along with 5 at-large (Written)*

Comments (cont.)

- Please bring back ward councilors so that each ward will be represented, not just popular people who are elected to council. Thank you for sending these surveys out. (Written)
- In the past I believe ward councilors represented the various city neighborhoods . I don't believe that is the case now. (Written)
- Ward councilors is a terrible idea!! (Written)
- No idea what it is. (Written)

Question 8: Should the Mayor be allowed to serve on the School Committee? YES or NO

5,142 responded out of 5,367= 95.8% (225 did not response to question)



Mayor Serve as Chair of School Committee

We are 95% certain that the true percentage of people in Fall River who do not believe "the mayor should serve on the school committee" is within 48% to 58%.

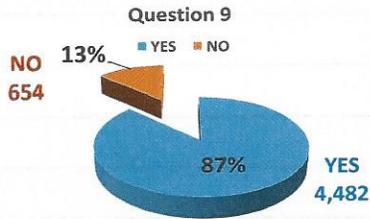


Comments

- *Feel that mayor should definitely not be allowed to serve on the school committee. Further politicalizes hiring/dismissal process. (Written)*
- *I believe the mayor's involvement is necessary, and he/she should sit on the school committee. (FRGTV)*
- *School committee – NO MAYOR – He runs the city. Superintendent should be in charge and committee members work along side making informative decisions about our children's education. (Written)*
- *Never! (Written)*
- *Mayor on school committee with same vote as other members – majority rule. (Written)*

Question 9: Should there be term limits for elected officials? YES or NO

5,136 responded out of 5,367= 95.7% (231 did not response to question)



Term Limits

We are 95% certain that the true percentage of people in Fall River who want "term limits for elected officials" is within 82% to 92%.



Comments

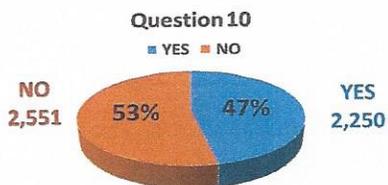
- *Elected officials should have a term limit of no more than 3, 4 year term, in office, whether consecutive or not, no more than 12 years of public service* (Written)
- *I believe any term limits should come exclusively from the ballot box.* (FRGTV)
- *Term limits will force out a hard working person. Elections will rid us of unqualified councilors!* (Written)
- *Term limits are essential.* (FRGTV)
- *The vote is a term limit!* (Written)
- *Very definitely* (Written)

Comments (cont.)

- *As people get complacent and stale – need new ideas!* (Written)
- *All elected officials should be elected for 4 years but limited to 2 terms.* (Written)
- *Term limits for officials, but run for re-election.* (Written)
- *Term limits for Mayor, City Councilors + School Committee* (Written)
- *All elected officials should only be allowed to hold any office for 2 terms. Any more than that + people become too confrontable not good for the city.* (Written)
- *Big time* (Written)
- *The longer the terms are, the more complacent elected officials become. Long-term politicians seem to be more prone toward granting favors to friends and relatives in terms of job placements and favors.* (Written)

Question 10: *Should the City of Fall River be run by a professional city manager?* YES or NO

4,801 responded out of 5,367= 89.5% (566 did not response to question)



Professional City Manager

We are 95% certain that the true percentage of people in Fall River who do not feel the city should have "a professional manager" is within **48% to 58%.**



Comments

- *I support a city Manger and strong City Council (FRGTV)*
- *A professional manager with a masters degree in business. City need to run like a business, as it is failing terribly! (Written)*
- *Perhaps (Written)*
- *What would be role & function? What current position(s) would this replace? Who would hire? If this passes would suggest an independent citizen review committee that would recommend to city council. (Written)*
- *Why do we need a "professional city manager" if we have a mayor? City Councilors seem to just provide road blocks for what the mayors are trying to accomplish. Back the mayor, then if he isn't cutting it, we replace him. (Written)*

Comments (cont.)

- *I assume a professional city manager has some background in budgets an dealing with various agencies. (Written)*
- *Temporarily in order to improve economic status. (Written)*
- *I think in positions of power, not just one authority should have full responsibility, Could cause abuse & Manipulation (Written)*
- *No one person should be allowed to make decisions for the City of Fall River without approval from the City Council or resident vote. (Written)*
- *The Mayor should be a great manager + ultimately has the last word as long as the C.C. concurs (Written)*
- *It's the mayors job to run the city not just make speeches. (Written)*

Question 11: Do you support a periodic forensic audit?
YES or NO

4,959 responded out of 5,367= 92.4% (408 did not respond to question)



Periodic Forensic Audit

We are 95% certain that the true percentage of people in Fall River who support "a periodic forensic audit" is within **83% to 93%**.

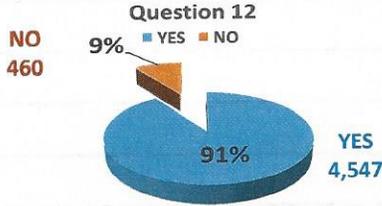


Comments

- A forensic audit looks for criminal wrong doing. What the city have use is a performance audit that identifies waste and methods to streamline government. (FRGTV)
- What is a forensic audit?? (Written)
- How often? (Written)
- Def think a forensic audit and all other types of audits should be done often! Way too much waist in our government and way too little accountability to the taxpayer. (FRGTV)
- Support annual or bi-annual forensic audit. (Written)

Question 12: Should there be a debt limit for the City?
YES or NO

5,007 responded out of 5,367= 93.3% (360 did not response to question)



Debt Limit

We are 95% certain that the true percentage of people in Fall River who believe "there should be a debt limit for the City " is within **86% to 96%**.



Comments

- Debt limit should not be set by charter. (FRGTV)
- There has to be some debt but it should not be unlimited. (Written)
- Too many things could occur to cause the city to go over budget – and even into debt – natural disasters, etc. (Written)
- How much? (Written)
- I think that think you need to be very careful with debit limits. The amount allowed must leave room for hard times when you my need to bond over what you do as a normal year. Don't tie the cities hands to get the see out of a prior situation the mayor may not have created. Whatever the normal debit limit is for our city that is manageable should have a cushion, maybe \$25'million over but must have a 2/3 vote to allow.(FRGTV)

Comments (cont.)

- *City debt limit should NOT apply to long-term municipal bonds floated for specific, limited purposes, such as school construction or infrastructure improvements, with the proviso that no bond may be exempted from the debt limit without the approval of the electorate via ballot referendum or special plebiscite* (FRGTV)*
- **Plebiscite is the direct vote of all the members of an electorate on an important public question such as a change in the constitution.*
- *Debt limit should be tied to taxes (Written)*
- *All items should be open to the public and policies and taxes should be changed or implemented by what the public wants. (Written)*

Comments (cont.)

- *A household runs on a budget the city should also (Written)*
- *Only with override voting (Written)*
- *Don't spend what you don't have (Written)*
- *Based on sound financial principles so the limit is not too low; can be raised by 2/3 vote of council (Written)*
- *Run it like the beast it is – "A BUSINESS" (Written)*
- *City gov't too irresponsible to handle debt! Mandatory balanced budget required! Stop all hiring now. City gov't not providing necessary svcs. like road repair, snow removal! (Written)*

RECAP

#	QUESTION	RESPONSE
1	Government Working?	61% say YES
2	City Council power to add/subtract budget lines items?	66% say YES
3	City Council right to approve/confirm board and commission appointments?	75% say YES
4	Term of Mayor?	55% say to leave it at 2 years
5	Term of City Council?	73% say to leave it at 2 years
6	Term of School Committee?	71% say to leave it at 2 years
7	Ward Councilors?	64% want ward councilor representation
8	Should Mayor serve on the school committee?	53% say the Mayor should <u>not</u> serve on the school committee
9	Term limits?	87% want term limits
10	Should the city be run by professional manager?	53% feel the city should <u>not</u> be run by a professional manager
11	Periodic forensic audits?	88% want periodic forensic audits
12	Debt limit for City?	91% want a debt limit for the city

Comment Section of the Survey

- *There is serious drug issues, gang + excessive welfare fraud. The schools are a mess + Durfee is a circus. (Written)*
- *As someone who works in construction I see the gross amount of waste on all state + government funded projects. This waste of taxpayer money needs to be stopped. (Written)*
- *As with any governing council, there needs to be a system of checks and balances. And there should be an accountability of time these people spend working. No more of these 2 hour workdays!!! On the clock till their job is finished. No longer going out for free lunch!!! (FRGTV)*
- *Thank you for sending this survey! It shows that someone cares about the city and its residents. The city needs all the help it can get! Born and raised in the city - hoping for better! (Written)*

Comment Section (cont.)

- *Eliminate retirement and benefits for any elected position. (FRGTV)*
- *City council is a good idea but most of the time it is political people who are not appropriate for the job and do NOT represent the people of Fall River....are politically connected. (FRGTV)*
- *You should look at Greenville, SC to see how a City has recovered from loss of their textile industry, and how they have used their river as a focus point in the City which has helped the City build industry. (FRGTV)*
- *The school committee should not be a separate entity. City government includes the education of our children and yet our school committee is like a separate governing unit of education. (Written)*

Comment Section (cont.)

- *The litter is out of control all over city! Places like Davol St. coming into F.R. from Somerset, neighborhoods streets Pot holes on main streets like New Boston Rd, Eastern Ave – President Ave, Davol St etc. (Written)*
- *The city has Dept's. Dept heads should be professional managers in their discipline. (Written)*
- *Fall River needs to be doing a better job repairing the roads. (Written)*
- *Can someone remove all the dead tree stumps in F. R. Clear all the trash in the city streets and make F. R. clean. More should be done to clean the city, it's disgusting (Written)*

Comment Section (cont.)

- Those not circled are not mistake. I have no opinion on these questions. Circumstances change and what is right today may be different in the future. (Written)
- The Education Board needs to take serious action now as Fall River is the 2nd dumbest city in the state behind Holyoke. (Written)
- The citizens should also have a say in the things that improve the city (FRGTV)
- Create an environment of transparency, system of greater accountability. (Written)

Comment Section (cont.)

- Those elected to office have to be committed to the city and the people they serve and represent. If this city is to attain any past dignity - those who are in charge of it have to put the welfare of the city first!!!! Not the welfare of themselves. You are elected to a position - it should not become a dynasty! (Written)
- Change city motto "We'll Try" = negative connotation (Written)
- There is an urgent need for checks & balances on the mayor's office. The city council needs more of a say on what the mayor is allowed to do. I'm sick & tired of new taxes based on the whim of the mayor. Get this house in order now! (Written)

Comment Section (cont.)

- Why does this city have nine city councilors? Save the tax payers money. All we need is five councilors. (Written)
- Bringing in a broad variety of voices w/in government is preferred over setting too many arbitrary constraints (such as term limits, debt caps, etc.) to allow elected officials to govern. The burden should always be on the electorate to wisely choose competent people to serve in city government. (Written)
- Please do everything you can to lessen pink slip for teachers. I love this school (Durfee) but fear of losing my job every year will push me to leave! (Written)

Comment Section (cont.)

- *Fall River has the greatness Fire Department of any place I ever lived. The police department is underfunded but they still do a pretty good job. (Written)*
- *The politics of this city is a joke. The city is getting worse + worse yet people are more concerned with colored trash bags, painting bridges blue, and recalling good mayors to replace with terrible ones. (Written)*
- *Our city needs to be cleaned up + that includes gangs get them out of our city. The waterfront is not a top priority! The rest of the city looks like a dump site. Our city is the priority #1. (Written)*

Comment Section (cont.)

- *Real estate taxes for seniors on fixed income should have a cap? (Written)*
- *Informed enough to know that my taxes and other city fees and expenses keep going up. (Written)*
- *Don't pay health ins. for city councilors family (Written)*
- *There aren't enough lines, nor time in my day to write everything down. (written)*
- *Too many city councilors. Eliminate worthless jobs and ridiculous salaries in Fall River government. No economic developer needed. Fix the streets in lieu of. (Written)*