



James R. Fouts - Mayor

**OFFICE OF THE MAYOR**

**ONE CITY SQUARE, SUITE 215**

**WARREN, MI 48093-6726**

**(586) 574-4520**

**[www.cityofwarren.org](http://www.cityofwarren.org)**

June 26, 2020

Ms. Sonja Buffa  
City Clerk  
City of Warren

**RE: Veto of Council Action at Regular Meeting on Tuesday, June 23, 2020  
Agenda Item 13 b – CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION OF A RESOLUTION  
addressing term limits**

Dear Ms. Buffa:

Pursuant to Section 6.8 of the Warren City Charter, I veto the action taken by the Warren City Council on Tuesday, June 23, 2020 under Agenda Item 13 b to approve a ballot proposal to limit the term of office for mayor.

Just four years ago, on August 2, 2016, the electorate approved a ballot proposal to extend the term limits of mayor from three terms to five terms. The vote was a message of confidence in either experienced leadership or in the individual freedom of voters to choose elected officials.

Shortly after the vote, a privately funded initiative sought to reverse term limits back to three terms. This campaign paid workers to collect signatures, and even with paid workers, failed by a wide margin.

I do not understand the purpose for this course of action. It amounts to taxpayer-funded exercise in redundancy. A mid-course change like this would be a disruption to any seated officer who serves under the premise of an established potential tenure. We are aware that voters may unseat any elected officer. At the same time, I, like many elected officials, establish policies and a fiscal and operational time line based upon a potential tenure of service in office. A mid-cycle reduction would waste the performance plans that I developed during the course of my administration. I fail to see how mid-course reduction

to a potential tenure of a seated officer would achieve a principled outcome or is remotely related to the benefits that terms limits are intended to achieve.

This action amounts to a legislative imposition upon the office of mayor. Any change proposed for another City office, whether office of Mayor, Clerk or Treasurer, should be unified with that office. It would be appropriate for Council to give attention to its own office, and terms limits that recognize at-large and district members, but its unilateral and piecemeal focus on a separate branch of government contravenes principles of separation of powers.

I agree in principle with one aspect of Council's action. To an extent, Council is identifying a need to change City Charter, and I fully support a change in the broad sense. Our City Charter was adopted in 1956, and reflects the law, language, principles and organization of that era. It is time to update and transform the Charter into a balanced, clear, succinct, and legally current governing document. I welcome a joint initiative with Council for a Charter revision that will reflect the legal and organizational climate of 2020 and beyond, and not 1956.

I end with a plea for unity. We face unprecedented challenges: a worldwide health crisis; civil unrest; and shrinking funds. As local leaders, our service must focus on protection and peace for our community. Division only causes instability and detriment. A City Council and Mayor working in unity can bring peace and stability. Together we can lead the community through its challenges and offer the protection and peace we promised our residents.

Accordingly, I respectfully veto the council action taken by the City Council on June 23, 2020. The operation of the Council action is suspended in accordance with City Charter Section 6.8.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James R. Fouts". The signature is stylized with a large, looping initial "J" and a trailing flourish.

James R. Fouts, Mayor  
City of Warren

cc: City Council