

SECTION 3 OF THE VILLAGE OF CHEVY CHASE

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Testimony in support of House Bill 104

My name is Andy Leon Harney and as Village Manager of Section 3 of the Village of Chevy Chase, I have been asked by our Council to speak in support of H.B. 104.

We are a small incorporated municipality, just 1/10th of a square mile, 283 homes. We are one of 157 municipalities in the state—many of them small enough to allow for hand delivery and certainly mail delivery of Charter Amendments at a cost that would be far less than 4 weeks of newspaper ads in some of the larger markets.

In 2021, we added a two sentence amendment to our charter. As the law now stands, we were required to run an advertisement each week over 4 weeks in a “newspaper of general circulation.” Unfortunately, the law defines a newspaper of general circulation as one that is offered for sale. In jurisdictions in Montgomery County and Prince Georges County, that means we must advertise in the only paid circulation paper left standing. Our cost, for a 1’ by 3” classified ad was \$2,035!

If the idea of the existing law was to disseminate a charter change to the residents most affected, we did that. The change was discussed at a public Council meeting and printed on our website. The reasons for the change and the actual wording of the amendment were published in our monthly newsletter in advance of the Council vote. Our newsletter is delivered to each home in our village. It’s unlikely that with a paper the size of the Washington Post, the only local newspaper of general circulation in our area, any of our residents read the small ad. I know people who pour over the obituaries but I don’t know many who rush to the classified ads in 6 point unreadable type every Friday.

I do know our residents read our monthly newsletter.

The options presented by this bill would simply give small municipalities in certain large media markets another option to both notify their residents and save money. In our region, the possible loss of revenue for a newspaper like the Washington Post is likely to be insignificant.

I humbly ask you to consider my testimony and vote to support these modest amendments to the existing law.