SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING
WE THE PEOPLE DAY 2025
PUBLIC HEARING
MONDAY, APRIL 21, 2025 – 5:30 PM

CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Councilwomen Christine Shoop called this Special Meeting, held in Courtroom #1, to order at 5:30 PM. This is the third public hearing of We the People Day. She introduced herself as the Ward 1 Councilwomen of Painesville City Council as well as other staff in attendance: City Manager Doug Lewis and Economic Director Susan Crotty.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE was recited by Mrs. Shoop.

WELCOME AND PURPOSE OF THE MEETING

Mrs. Shoop stated on behalf of the Painesville City Council, she wanted to welcome all those in attendance this evening and explain the purpose of the meeting. Pursuant to Section 123.01, adopted by the electors of the City of Painesville at the November 2020 election, the City of Painesville is required to hold a public hearing for "We the People Day". The public hearing provides an opportunity for the residents of Painesville to provide public comment on the impact of political contributions of corporations, unions, PACS and Super-PACs on the City. Organizers and electors who voted for "We the People Day" are asking for an amendment to the U.S Constitution declaring that human beings, not corporations are legal persons with constitutional rights and that money is not the equivalent of speech, and establishing a biennial public hearing by the City of Painesville.

City Manager Doug Lewis stated as directed also by the ordinance, we have sent letters to our elected representatives about this public hearing and advertised it in the newspaper and on social media. We have not received any response to the notices to date.

Mrs. Shoop stated we are here to listen to you tonight. There is a list of requirements as provided for in the ordinance and she asked Mr. Lewis to review them prior to the public hearing.

City Manager Doug Lewis stated Section 123.01 specifies that each speaker's comments will be limited to 5 minutes so that everyone who would like to speak has an opportunity. If you would like to speak, please print your name and address on the sign-up sheet. I will recognize you in the order you have signed up to speak. When called upon, please use the podium, clearly state your name and address into the microphone, and then limit your comments to five minutes. Please speak to the ordinance and not other city business. The purpose, again, is to examine the impact of political influence by corporate entities in the most recent election.

PUBLIC COMMENTS – "WE THE PEOPLE DAY"

Mr. Lewis acknowledged the residents to speak during this time. The following residents spoke on this issue: Ed Zivkovick, Krista Zivkovich, and Brad Deane. See attachment for their submitted comments.

Mrs. Shoop thanked the participants for their comments and asked if anyone else would like to speak. No one else responded. She stated she is proud to be part of the community which has such passionate citizens and commented on the importance.

ADJOURNMENT

The Public Hearing was adjourned at 5:48 PM.

Samantha Danielson
Clerk of Council

Jim Fodor
President of Council

The *Citizens United* Supreme Court ruling in 2010 opened the Pandora's Box of political corruption in our country. As a result of this ruling, almost all fundraising and spending restrictions for groups that purport to be separate from candidates, 501 (c) (4) corporations, were invalidated.

The justices assumed that their ruling would not be a problem since the law still prohibits direct coordination between these dark money corporations and political candidates' campaigns in directing messaging spending on elections. They assumed, naively it turns out, that the ways in which this unlimited supply of dark money would be used, would somehow be policed effectively. Perhaps they just assumed that campaigns would voluntarily conform to the letter of the law. This has not happened. This kind of clandestine cooperation between candidates' campaigns and the troves of dark money in 501 (c)(4) corporations most certainly happens regularly, and the people who control how this law is enforced are the very ones who were elected by the dark money spent on their campaigns. It's a little like giving a fox the authority to pick who will be in charge of the henhouse, and expecting them to appoint someone other than a fox.

We voters cannot continue to make reasonable decisions in choosing our representatives without knowing who it is who is backing the candidates. And 501 (c) (4) corporations do not have to disclose where the money comes from. Unless we act to ban dark money from influencing elections, the idea of one man, one vote, is dead, and democracy could die with it.

Edward Zivkovich
616 Hickory Lane
Painesville, OH

We the People Day
Painesville, OH
April 21, 2025

January marked the 15 anniversary of the Supreme Court's decision Citizen United. Since then We the People have experienced the reverberations of that ruling. The notion that money equals free speech and that corporations are people have resulted in unprecedented amounts of dark money influencing our elections. More than ever in the 2024 election of Donald Trump.

In November 2020 the citizens of Painesville voted to support an amendment to overturn Citizens United. We recognized the dangers of having unlimited money in our political system. We were right.

Elon Musk and other billionaires stood behind Donald Trump as he took an oath, not on the Bible, to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution. As we've seen during the past 3 months he has repeatedly violated his oath and the rule of law. Citizens United, allowing unlimited amounts of money to be spent was and is complicit in the current political crisis. According to an article available on the website Brennan Center for Justice, "Roughly 44% ($481 million) of all money raised to support Trump came from 10 individual donors." And often big donors have no ties to the states where money is donated. In 2024 donations of out of state mega donors poured into Ohio to defeat Sherrod Brown.

Billionaires in the United States hold nearly $7 trillion in total wealth. But what does that mean? How much is that? If you earned $100,000 per year, paid no taxes and had no living expenses, it would take you 10 years to save $1 million. In 10,000 years you could save $1 billion. And the wealth gap in the US continues to grow. Big money, dark money has overtaken our political process.

oday is Easter Monday. The Bible accounts of Good Friday say that at the hour of Jesus' death there was darkness ver the whole land. Today we might say that dark money has fallen over our land.

For the past month I have been helping a couple study for the U.S. Citizenship exam. I am sure you know that there are 100 questions that prospective citizens must be able to answer in order to pass the exam. Question #1 is, "What is the Supreme law of the Land?" Of course the answer is "the Constitution." Question #12 "What is the "rule of law?" The answer, "No one is above the law." or "Government must obey the law." Question #3 The idea of self-government is in the first three word of the Constitution. What are these words? The answer is " We the People."

On this, We the People Day 2025, we the people of Painesville stand with 22 other states and hundreds of other communities in supporting the movement to amend the
Constitution and overturn Citizens United.

Krista Zivkovich
Painesville, OH

John Bradley Deane
"We the People Day"
April '25

I plan to talk about the inauguration and the front row attendance of the wealthiest men on the planet who also happen to be the biggest recipients of government contracts.

I also plan to talk about the 2024 Senate race and the late introduction of $120 million from the crypto industry to back Blockchain investor Bernie Moreno.

Finally I will speak of The Dark Money Games now on HBO featuring the HB6 scandal and the dark money bribery that lead us there. Including Jon Husted who now sits on the Senate Energy Committee.