

Dear Members of the Bridgeport City Council,

I write this letter on behalf of the members of the 132nd Town Committee and Councilwoman Rolanda Smith to let you know that we have completed our search process for a candidate to fill the vacancy caused by the resignation of Marcus Brown, who has become State Representative for the 127th District. As you know, the Charter empowers the City Council to fill the vacancy by majority vote, and so the decision of how to fill the vacancy is ultimately yours to make. However, the longstanding tradition is that the Town Committee for the district makes a recommendation of a candidate when a vacancy exists.

In undertaking this responsibility to make a recommendation, we take it seriously. As we did after the passing of M. Evette Brantley, here we conducted a public process over the course of several weeks seeking qualified candidates who were interested in the seat. We asked these interested candidates to answer some basic questions, such as why they are interested in the seat, what qualifications they would bring to the office, and what some of their priorities would be as a representative from our district. We also asked each candidate to submit a resume.

After conversations with many people who were interested in the seat, we had two people apply for the position: former Bridgeport Police Detective Milton Johnson and Reverend Sara Smith. After reading through their written submissions, we met with each of these candidates to thoroughly interview them, ask them questions, and ensure that they will be able to represent our district with integrity and passion. After the interviews, we deliberated as a Town Committee and took a vote on a candidate to nominate. Since Mr. Johnson and Rev. Smith are members of the 132nd Town Committee, they played no role in the vetting process. **Ultimately, it was the unanimous decision of 132 Town Committee and Councilwoman Rolanda Smith that Rev. Sara Smith should be the candidate nominated to fill the vacancy.** Because this is the ultimate decision of the

City Council, I have attached to this letter the applications and resumes for each candidate for your own independent review and consideration.

We would note in making our recommendation that both candidates were tremendously qualified. They are both long-time Democrats and residents of the district. They both reside in the Central precinct, which is desirable since Councilwoman Rolanda Smith lives in the Bassick precinct. They both would bring some diversity to the City Council as an African-American man and openly lesbian woman, respectively. And most importantly, they are both good, honest people who we feel would represent the district with integrity and enthusiasm. We feel strongly that both candidates are great choices.

However, in deciding to put forward Rev. Sara Smith as our preferred candidate, we noted her amazing commitment to public service and helping the least among us. Between the church and nOURish Bridgeport, she works with volunteers on a daily basis to feed and take care of thousands of Bridgeport residents, provide services for immigrants, and much more. A large number of these vulnerable people in need of assistance are residents of our own district. She doesn't just preach about doing good deeds and addressing the needs of our community. She has made helping the least among us her life's work.

Her ties to the 132nd District are exceptional. Not only is she a long-time resident of the district, but both the church and non-profit that she runs are based right in the center of our district. She has strong community ties to civic organizations in the district, such as the Stratfield Historic District. And, she has served as a member of our Town Committee.

She would bring unique educational qualifications to the City Council as someone who has a law degree, as well as experience as a former trial attorney for the U.S. Department of Labor. Furthermore, she would bring to the Council strong ties to some great non-profits operating in our city, including Green Village Initiative, the Council of Churches, City Lights Art Gallery, Keys Urban Music Program, the Center for Family Justice, the Bridgeport YMCA, and Optimus, to name a few.

As you will see from her application, our Town Committee felt that she laid out great priorities if she were to be appointed to the position. Her top priorities included more educational funding and fighting with our legislative delegation for a more equitable ECS formula. She is a champion for more economic development and more PILOT funding from the state to address the issue of property taxes. She wants to address everyday quality of life issues, such as street paving and sidewalks. And, she believes that we should establish a Charter revision commission. This is a platform that we on the 132nd Town Committee endorse and support.

Finally, anyone who knows Rev. Sara knows that she is one of the most dynamic speakers and people to be around. She is unapologetic, passionate, and caring. She is a lot of fun and will bring a calm and empathy to challenging situations on the Council. She cares deeply about the issues that our city has and wants to face them head on. However, she is also a positive and forward-thinking individual, is upbeat about Bridgeport's future, and believes that Bridgeport's best days are ahead of it. We are confident that Rev. Sara will make an amazing Councilperson, will be a team player, and will seek to learn from all of you as she takes this next step.

We sincerely thank both of these candidates for subjecting themselves to this public process and hope that they will both play a role in civic life in our city regardless of the decision that the City Council takes. Thank you for consideration. Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions.

Thomas Gaudett  
District Leader  
132nd District