

The Detroit City Council begs Snyder, “We can do this without an emergency manager.”

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On March 6, the Detroit City Council voted 7-1 to initiate a legal appeal of the decision by Michigan’s multi-millionaire Republican governor to name an emergency manager for the city of Detroit. Snyder’s decision was based on his determination that Detroit was in a financial state of emergency.

While this action has been hyped as a “challenge” to the Governor’s declaration, a careful reading of the appeal indicates it is nothing of the sort. The city council, instead, is putting itself forward as a more effective mechanism to carry out brutal cuts.

Snyder’s declaration was based on a report issued a week earlier by a six-member finance review team, a group of well-healed CEOs and Wall Street advocates, led by Andy Dillon, the Democratic State Treasurer and former hedge-fund manager.

The impending overturn of the elected government in Detroit and its replacement by a emergency manager armed with dictatorial powers to void union contracts, sell city assets and impose cuts has drawn national and international attention. However, the “opposition” of the city council is a charade.

Charles Pugh, Council President, issued a statement to the media declaring that the body was itself able to impose the massive cuts being demanded by the city’s creditors, making the appointment of an emergency manager unnecessary. “We’ll make the case that there are only a couple of things an emergency manager has the power to do that we can’t. The question is, what are those things and how do you achieve that without an emergency manager,” he declared.

“The governor hasn’t decided yet if he wants an emergency manager, so there is still time to convince him we don’t need one,” Pugh told *Reuters*. “I’m not saying our finances aren’t in trouble, but we can do this without an emergency manager.”

To reiterate his point Pugh told the media on Thursday, after the council delivered the appeal to the governor, “We’re not appealing the fact that we have a financial emergency. We know that we do. We’re not naive and we’re not out of our minds. But what we are saying is that an emergency manager is not the way to fix it.”

Indeed, the four-page legal resolution asserts that the City Council is more than prepared to make city workers and residents pay for the draconian measures demanded by the banks and municipal bondholders.

It states that the council already has a plan, based on the previously adopted Consent Agreement drawn up with the state of Michigan last year. It notes that while the “city has made measurable progress towards the goals outlined in the document” other emergency managers, for example in Detroit’s schools, and the cities of Benton Harbor, Flint and Pontiac—have not been successful.

The City Council resolution touted Detroit’s measures to “right-size” its budget, stating, “Over the last nine (9) years the City has reduced its workforce by 45%, from 20,799 employees in 2003 to 11,396 in 2012, a number that continues to decline...”

During 2012 alone, the City Council imposed pay cuts of 20 percent and raised workers’ health care co-pays another 20 percent. Since 2009, a full 25 percent of city jobs have been eliminated.

The council had originally intended to issue its resolution with the support of Detroit Mayor, Dave Bing. City council members waited the entire day under the impression that Bing was going to support the Council’s action. However, at 4:30pm Bing called a press conference to say he would not fight the appointment of the EFM.

“We need to stop BS-ing ourselves, quite frankly and

get on with it,” stated Bing. “It is simply a fight we cannot win at the 11th hour in a 30 minute appeals hearing.” Bing himself had previously suggested that he be named emergency manager, only later to change his position.

Meanwhile several supposedly “left” members of the city council, including JoAnn Watson, who has close ties to the unions, took part in a protest Wednesday against the appointment of an emergency manager. The protest was aimed at diverting the anger among working people in Detroit over the looming imposition of more massive cuts behind the same Democratic Party politicians responsible for slashing jobs and city services. Watson in particular has been outspoken in presenting the struggle in Detroit as one of race, thus attempting to divide the working class and obscure the class significance of the attacks being carried out at the instigation of wealthy Wall Street investors against the working population of Detroit as a whole.



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