

Work Session

Agenda Item #	2
Meeting Date	April 20, 2016
Prepared By	Kenneth Sigman City Attorney
Approved By	Suzanne Ludlow City Manager

Discussion Item	Update on synchronizing City elections with Maryland statewide general elections and inclusion of City candidates and ballot questions on the statewide ballot.
Background	<p>During the November 2015 Takoma Park election, a significant majority of voters expressed support for rescheduling City elections to coincide with statewide general elections by switching the City election to even-numbered years, provided that the City could retain voting rights for 16-17 year olds, non citizens, and persons on parole or probation for felony convictions, instant runoff voting, and same-day voter registration. Rescheduling the elections would create the possibility that City election matters could be included on the statewide ballot, which is administered in Montgomery County by the County Board of Elections.</p> <p>The City can reschedule its election to coincide with the statewide general election with relatively simple charter amendments that create a one-year term for candidates elected in the City's 2017 election and changing the date of subsequent City elections to even numbered years.</p> <p>Several additional Charter amendments will be required to enable the City to have its candidates and ballot questions included on the statewide ballot, and the City must make those Charter amendments before it can file a request with the State Board of Elections. At this point, it is unclear whether it is feasible for the City to retain its expanded voting rights, instant runoff voting, and same-day voter registration if City contests are included on statewide ballot. City staff will be meeting with State and County election officials as soon as possible after the Maryland primary to determine feasibility. Staff simultaneously will consider the possibility of initiating Charter amendments that will synchronize City and statewide elections and allow the City to request to have its candidates and ballot questions included on the statewide ballot.</p>
Policy	Maximize voter turnout for City elections while maintaining voter eligibility for 16-17 year olds, persons convicted of felonies, and noncitizens, and retaining instant runoff voting.
Fiscal Impact	Undetermined. Impact will depend upon whether City matters are included on the statewide ballot.
Attachments	<p>Preliminary schedule for Charter Amendment to enable election synchronization and inclusion of City matters on the state ballot</p> <p>Summary of potential Takoma Park City Charter amendments</p> <p>Pertinent current Takoma Park City Charter provisions</p>
Recommendation	