



## Takoma Park City Council Meeting – July 20, 2016 Agenda Item 7

### **Work Session**

Election Synchronization

### **Recommended Council Action**

Consider proposed Charter amendments and memorandum regarding the logistics of election synchronization.

### **Context with Key Issues**

During the November 2015 Takoma Park election, a majority of voters expressed support for rescheduling City elections to coincide with statewide general elections (“election synchronization”) by switching the City election to even-numbered years, provided that the City could retain voting rights for 16-17 year olds and noncitizens, instant runoff voting, and same-day voter registration. Election synchronization would create the possibility that City election matters could be included on the statewide ballot (“ballot unification”). The policy underlying election synchronization and ballot unification is to increase voter turnout by making voting in City elections convenient for voters participating in State and Federal elections.

City staff and the Takoma Park Board of Elections consulted with State and Montgomery County elections officials and determined that it is not feasible at this time to achieve ballot unification while retaining key components of the City’s election law. Accordingly, the Council directed staff to proceed with the Charter amendments necessary for the City to synchronize its election date with the statewide general election.

The proposed Charter amendments create a one-year term for candidates elected in the City’s 2017 election and change the date of subsequent City elections to even numbered years to coincide with statewide general elections. The proposed Charter amendments also include minor changes to the timing of the nomination meeting and vote count to improve the logistics of the City’s election cycle.

The attached memorandum discusses considerations regarding the logistics of collocating City polling equipment and personnel at County polling facilities and the anticipated costs and staffing requirements of election synchronization.

### **Council Priority**

Engaged, Responsive & Service Oriented Government

### **Environmental Impact of Action**

N/A

**Fiscal Impact of Action**

To be determined.

**Attachments and Links**

- Suggested Charter amendments
- Memorandum regarding 2018 election options

1 **PROPOSED ELECTION SYNCHRONIZATION**  
2 **CHARTER AMENDMENTS**

3 **July 20, 2016**

4 This document includes the proposed Takoma Park Charter amendments necessary to synchronize  
5 Takoma Park regular elections with Statewide general elections. It also proposes to extend the time for  
6 the Board of Elections to certify the results of elections from 24 hours to 48 hours because of the  
7 expected increase in voter turnout and the possibility of logistical complications relating to the increase in  
8 the number of polling locations. Finally, it includes a proposed amendment to establish an earlier date for  
9 the nomination meeting (the Tuesday one week and one day after Labor Day, which is approximately  
10 eight weeks prior to the election) because of difficulties experienced with absentee ballot preparation with  
11 the current five-week period between the nomination meeting and the election.

12 **ARTICLE III**  
13 **THE COUNCIL**

14 \* \* \*

15 **Section 301 Number, Selection, Term, Wards**

16 (a) All legislative powers of the City are vested in a body designated as the Council of the City of  
17 Takoma Park, consisting of seven (7) members. Six (6) of these members are elected by ward and are  
18 called Councilmembers, and one (1) is elected at large and is called the Mayor. The regular term of the  
19 Councilmembers and the Mayor is two (2) years or until their successors have been elected and duly  
20 sworn. The term of the Councilmembers and Mayor elected in the 2017 regular election is one (1) year.  
21 Newly elected Councilmembers and the Mayor take office on the second Monday following their election.

22 \* \* \*

23 **ARTICLE VI**  
24 **REGISTRATION, NOMINATIONS, AND ELECTIONS**

25 \* \* \*

26 **Section 604 Nominations**

27 (a) Nominations for Mayor and Councilmembers shall be made at a meeting of citizens called by the  
28 City Clerk at the direction of the Council. Such meeting shall be held at a convenient place within the City  
29 to be designated by the Council and notice thereof shall be given through a newspaper or newspapers of  
30 general circulation within the City and/or by handbills generally distributed and posted throughout the City.  
31 The meeting shall be held on the second Tuesday evening after Labor Day in the year of the election, but  
32 if this date conflicts with Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year) or with Yom Kippur (Jewish Day of  
33 Atonement), then the meeting shall be scheduled for the next weekday evening after the end of the  
34 second day of Rosh Hashanah or after the end of Yom Kippur. The City Clerk shall preside at the

35 meeting; a qualified voter of the City shall be chosen as secretary of the meeting by the qualified voters of  
36 the City present; the secretary shall keep a record of the proceedings of the meeting and file the same in  
37 the office of the City Clerk.

38 \* \* \*

39 **Section 606 Election of Mayor and Councilmembers**

40 (a) On the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November 2017, and in every even-numbered year  
41 thereafter, the qualified voters of the City shall elect its governing body of seven (7) members. Six (6) of  
42 these members are elected by ward and are called Councilmembers, and one (1) is elected at large and  
43 is called Mayor. Each of those elected shall reside in the City and be voters of the City, and in the case of  
44 the Councilmembers, be residents of the areas from which they are so elected consistent with the  
45 provisions of Section 304, Article III of this Charter.

46 \* \* \*

47 **Section 613 Vote Count**

48 (a) Within forty-eight (48) hours after the closing of the polls, the judges of the election shall canvass the  
49 voting machines or other voting system, and count any paper ballots, regular and absentee, to determine  
50 the vote cast for each candidate or any questions on the ballot.

51 (b) The judges of the election shall meet within two days following the election, and shall therefore  
52 determine and declare what persons have been elected, issue certificates of election to such persons,  
53 and certify the results to the Council.