



Takoma Park City Council Meeting – July 1, 2020 Agenda Item 3

Work Session

Election Update

Recommended Council Action

Receive the update, provide feedback and ask questions.

Context with Key Issues

On June 17, 2020, the City Board of Elections provided its recommendation to the City Council to change the format of the November 3, 2020 City Election to a vote by mail election, to protect the health of voters and election workers due to the concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The City Council expressed no objections to planning for a vote-by-mail election.

While we would hope and anticipate that most ballots will be mailed or dropped off, some voters will need to vote in person. This would include voters who need to use a ballot marking device, voters who do not receive a ballot in the mail or misplace the ballot received, and voters who are not yet registered. For this purpose, we anticipate opening one location on election day.

To effectively conduct an election by mail, several amendments to the City Code and City Charter will be needed. A proposed schedule for Council action on Charter and Code amendments was provided on June 24, 2020. The City Council will review proposed amendments to the City Charter and Code on July 8.

At the election update on June 24, the City Council posed a number of questions. Staff will provide some additional information at the July 1 update.

Council Priority

Engaged, Responsive & Service-oriented Government

Environmental Considerations

Staff does not anticipate any significant environmental impact from the election.

Fiscal Considerations

The FY21 Budget includes \$57,000 for the election. The estimated cost of the election is being revised to incorporate vote by mail. The cost related to vote by mail will include printing of ballots, envelopes, and instructions, and inserting and mailing ballots to all Takoma Park registered voters. Postage for return ballots will be paid. Staff is consulting with and seeking quotes from potential vendors to print, insert, and mail ballots and related materials.

Racial Equity Considerations

A reason for the change in election date to coincide with presidential and gubernatorial elections is to encourage more residents to vote in Takoma Park elections. It has been particularly difficult to draw in voters from Wards 4, 5, and 6, the wards with larger numbers of people of color and people

who live in multifamily housing. We believe that people who are interested in voting in the presidential election will be more likely to use the opportunity to vote in the City election at the same time.

Staff and the Board of Elections recognize that a vote by mail election may reduce the anticipated turnout. A robust and effective promotion and outreach effort will be needed to reach every potential voter.

Attachments and Links

- Information will be provided at the meeting.