



## Takoma Park City Council Meeting – September 23, 2020 Agenda Item 6

### **Work Session** Election Update

### **Recommended Council Action**

Review update on election planning and activities and ask questions of staff and the Board of Elections.

### **Context with Key Issues**

The information reported on September 16 is below. There is not much new to report this week.

- The Board of Elections is meeting every two weeks to review materials and continue planning for the election.
- The Communications Specialist continues to promote voter registration and the election on social media. A promotional bookmark has been prepared and will be distributed beginning next week with Library book pickups and placed in Little Free Libraries.

### Reported on September 16, 2020

The November 3, 2020 City Election will be the first one scheduled to coincide with presidential and gubernatorial general elections. Due to the pandemic, the City election will be conducted mainly by mail.

A postcard has been mailed to all households informing residents about the election.

A second mailing will go out in late September to inform registered voters that ballots will be coming in the mail. Ballots will be mailed to be received by voters around Friday, October 9 or early the following week.

Communications to voters will emphasize that the City election process is different than the presidential process, the way ballots are obtained for the two elections are different, and the completed ballots are to be sent to different locations. This will require increased communications efforts in multiple languages.

The City has contracted with Fort Orange Press to print and mail the ballots to all active registered voters. The City Clerk will mail or make ballots available to out of town registered voters upon receiving a written request. Voted ballots may be returned using the postage prepaid envelope or by placing the return envelope in a secure Takoma Park ballot drop box.

The City will deploy two secure ballot drop boxes. One box will be located at the Takoma Park Recreation Center, 7315 New Hampshire Avenue. The second box will be located at the Takoma Park Community Center, 7500 Maple Avenue. Also at the Community Center, the Montgomery County Board of Elections will place a presidential ballot drop box for the convenience of Takoma Park voters. The County BOE box will be checked and emptied by County BOE staff. As ballots begin to arrive, Board of Elections members and staff will be scanning barcodes on ballot envelopes to record which ballots have been received. Later in October, return envelopes will be

opened to check to see that oaths are signed on ballot envelopes so that we can attempt to contact voters who forgot to sign or enclose their ballot envelope.

Also later in October, on dates to be announced, voter services such as voter registration, use of ballot marking devices, responding to voters' questions, etc. will be available during published hours behind the Community Center, at the main entrance from the rear parking lot.

On Election Day, there will be drive-through and walk-through voting in the Community Center rear parking lot from 7:00 AM to 8:00 PM. Voter registration and assistance with voting will be available as well.

### **Council Priority**

Engaged, Responsive, and Service-Oriented Government

### **Environmental Considerations**

N/A

### **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 will provide a financial update at the meeting.

### **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.

The change to vote by mail could negatively impact the turnout originally anticipated when the election date was changed. In preparing for 2020, staff and the Board will be focused on outreach, education, and preparation for residents to vote. When practicable, mailings to voters will be provided in English, Spanish, Amharic, and French.

### **Attachments and Links**

- N/A