



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** HCC-133-FY21, **Version:** 1

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Submitting Department: City Clerk  
Agenda Section: Discussion

**Item Title:**

**Hyattsville Charter Amendment Resolution 2020-01: Election Day, Certification of Election, and Council Organizational Meeting**

**Suggested Action:**

For Discussion and Public Input

**Summary Background:**

In November 2018, Mayor Hollingsworth and Councilmembers Ward, Suiter, and Lawrence submitted a motion proposing the City make revisions to the Election Code necessary to enable the Board of Elections Supervisors to distribute, proactively, a Vote-by-Mail ballot to all registered voters in the City of Hyattsville (on State and city-only registries) and appropriate funds necessary to support this effort in the 2021 municipal election. Council discussed the motion on November 19, 2018. Council indicated support for bringing the proposal back for further discussion after evaluation by the Board of Supervisors of Elections. The Board made a commitment to Council to research the feasibility and logistics of moving to a Vote-by-Mail system post-Election 2019.

Since that time, and with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic there has been a renewed national initiative for Vote-by-Mail elections. Locally, several elections have been held by mail including the State primary and the Cities of Rockville and New Carrollton. Benefits of an all Vote-by-Mail election include increased voter turnout and civic engagement.

The Board and Clerk's office have worked with the City Attorney to review and make recommended changes to the City Charter and Code for an all Vote-by-Mail election in 2021. These changes include three (3) separate pieces of legislation: the enabling ordinance for City Code: Chapter 8, Elections, the Charter Amendment, and a resolution formally designating the 2021 election as Vote-by-Mail.

The ordinance enabling the administrative changes required to implement a Vote-by-Mail election was adopted by Council on November 2, 2020. To formally designate the 2021 election as a Vote-by-Mail election the Council must adopt a resolution. This resolution is included in the public hearing packet under separate cover and will be on the action agenda for the City Council on December 7, 2020.

A high-level summary of the proposed changes to the City's Charter is below. These changes were discussed in detail on July 20, 2020.

**Charter Amendment**

- Proposes moving Election Day to 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday in May
- Proposes changes to the process by which the Council President & Vice President are Elected
- Reduce timeline for Board to certify election from 10 days to 5 days

Charter Amendments require a Public Hearing which must be held 21 days after public notice of the hearing. The proposed timeline for adoption of the Charter Amendment is listed under “Next Steps”.

**Next Steps:**

Timeline for Adoption

- October 19: Schedule Public Hearing for November 16
- November 16: Public Hearing
- December 7: Adoption of the Charter Amendment Resolution
- January 26: Effective Date of the Charter Amendment Resolution

**Fiscal Impact:**

TBD - There is currently \$55,000 budgeted for the 2021 Election. An all Vote-by-Mail election will likely require a budget amendment, related to infrastructure and increased communication costs. Staff issued a Request for Proposal for an election vendor in the summer. One response was received, and staff and the Election Board are currently in the evaluation process as well as continuing to seek additional vendor quotes.

**City Administrator Comments:**

Recommend support.

**Community Engagement:**

There will be a communications strategy planned for Vote-by-Mail.

**Strategic Goals:**

Goal 1 - Ensure Transparent and Accessible Governance

**Legal Review Required?**

Complete