



Legislation Text

File #: HCC-194-FY21, **Version:** 1

Submitted by: Laura Reams
Submitting Department: City Clerk
Agenda Section: Action

Item Title:

Hyattsville Ordinance 2021-01: Close of Candidate Registration (Introduction)

Suggested Action:

I move that the Mayor and Council introduce Hyattsville Ordinance 2021-01, an ordinance whereby the City Council amends Chapter 8 of the Hyattsville Code to change the day by which candidates for office are required to register as candidates (INTRODUCTION).

Summary Background:

Over the last several months, the Board of Supervisors of Elections and the City 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 have included various administrative and procedural updates to allow for an all Vote-by-Mail election, a Charter Amendment adjusting the day of Election and the process by which the Council President and Vice President are elected, and in December, a resolution formally designating the 2021 election as Vote-by-Mail.

Staff and the Board have proceeded with preparations for the 2021 election including the procurement of a print and mail vendor for Vote-by-Mail ballot packets. In discussions with vendors, it quickly became apparent that the existing time frame in the City Charter and Code from the close of candidate registration (last Friday in March) to when ballots were required to be printed and mailed (30-45 days prior to election day) was too short.

Procedurally, after the close of the candidate registration deadline there is a withdrawal deadline the following Monday. After the withdrawal deadline passes, the candidates are certified by the Board of Supervisors of Elections. After certification, the Board must proof and approve election ballots. This process can take 2-3 business days. Upon approval of the ballots, they are then sent for printing and mailing. For a traditional election this timeframe is tight, but adequate. For a Vote-by-Mail election which requires ballots to be mailed to all registered voters 30-45 days in advance, the timing is inadequate.

The City's selected print and mail vendor has recommended allowing for at least 10 business days to print and mail ballot packets. To accommodate this timeframe, the Board recommends adjusting the close of candidate registration from the last Friday in March to the second Friday in March. For the 2021 Election, candidate registration will open on February 1 and will remain open until 5 PM on Friday, March 12: allowing six (6) weeks for Candidate registration.

This change will require both a charter amendment resolution and an update to City Code, Chapter 8.

Charter Amendment 2021-01 and Ordinance 2021-01

- Proposes moving the close of candidate registration from the last Friday in March to the 2nd Friday in March.

Next Steps:

- January 19 Council Meeting: Introduction of ordinance
- February 2: Adoption of the ordinance
- February 22: Effective date of the ordinance

Fiscal Impact:

TBD - There is currently \$55,000 budgeted for the 2021 Election. An all Vote-by-Mail election will require a budget amendment, to be presented to the Council for approval on January 19.

City Administrator Comments:

Recommend support.

Community Engagement:

There is a communications strategy planned for Vote-by-Mail.

Strategic Goals:

Goal 1 - Ensure Transparent and Accessible Governance

Legal Review Required?

Complete