

TOWN OF RIVERDALE PARK

Board of Elections

TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: TRP Board of Elections
Sarah Zolad, Chief Election Judge
Kate Kelly, Deputy Chief Election Judge
Heather Cronk, Board member
Pat Doyen, Board member
Jahera Otieno, Board member

DATE: February 21, 2024

RE: Changes Recommended for the Town's Election Timeline

Action Requested: No action is requested at the February 26, 2024, Work Session. At the February 26th meeting, the Board of Elections of the Town of Riverdale Park seeks the opportunity to discuss with the Mayor and Council recommended changes to the timeline for Town Elections.

Background: The Board of Elections was established by [Charter Amendment Resolution 2022-CR-01](#) and became effective on April 19, 2022. Town Charter Article V defines the role of the Board of Elections; specifically, § 502 (j)(4) and § 502 (j)(5) state:

- (j) In addition to such other duties and responsibilities as may be provided in this Article or by ordinance, the Board of Elections shall have the following duties and responsibilities:*
- 4) Periodically review town election procedures and best practices for the conduct of municipal elections.*
 - 5) Solicit community input and recommend to the Mayor and Council changes to the Town's electoral process.*

Recommendations Related to the Timeline for Town Elections

To help promote best practices for the Town's elections; to provide clearer avenues of participation for all qualified residents as voters, candidates for office, members of the Board of Elections and the Board of Election Appeals, and elections judges; and to support the work of Town staff, the Board of Elections is recommending an expanded timeline for the conduct of the Town's elections starting at the date of appointment of members of the Boards of Elections and Election Appeals and ending on election day (see the Table).

| Task | 2025 Election | Days Before | Current Authority | 2023 Election |
|--|---|--|---|------------------------------------|
| Boards of Elections (BOE) and Election Appeals (BEA), | October 7, 2024, Legislative Meeting | | Charter § 502(b): One year before the next Town election Code § 29.3(b): February legislative meeting next preceding the Town election in May | February 7, 2023 |
| Mayor and Council pass ordinances: method of voting, polling place, candidates' filing dates and fees | January 6, 2025, Legislative Meeting | | Town Charter § 506: Candidates for Office to File Petition Town Charter § 508: Conduct of Elections Town Code § 29-15. Use of paper ballots or voting machines. | February 7, 2023 |
| Election Notices posted in <i>Town Crier</i> , in each Ward, on Town website, and Town communication platforms | February issue and front page of the website (<i>Town Crier</i> deadline is January 15 th) | First of the month 3 months before an election | Charter § 504: 20 days before an election | March edition of <i>Town Crier</i> |
| Town Election Information Session | Prior to candidate filing deadline | At least 1 to 2 weeks prior to the candidate filing deadline | | March 18, 2023 and March 20, 2023 |
| Candidate filing deadline | March 1, 2025 | First of the month 2 months before an election | Code § 29.11 25 th day before the election | April 6, 2023 |
| Election judges, and alternates appointed | March 3, 2025, Legislative Meeting | | Code § 29.3(b): February legislative | |

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| by Mayor and Council | | | meeting next preceding the Town election in May | |
| Candidate packets certified by BOE and Ethics Commission; candidates notified | March 14, 2025 | 52 days before election day (May 5) | § 29-12. Verification of candidate's qualifications | April 6, 2023 (BOE) April 7, 2023 (Ethics Commission) |
| Sample ballots posted in each Ward, on Town website, and Town communication platforms | March 21, 2025 | 45 days | Code § 29-14: at least 10 days before elections | April 11, 2023 |
| Election materials to the printer (mail-in ballot envelopes, inserts, and ballots) | Week of March 24, 2025 | | | Early to Mid-April 2023 |
| Final mail-in ballot applications due | April 18, 2025 | 17 days | Code § 29-23(b): COB 10 days before election | April 21, 2023 |
| One shortened, early voting day | May 4, 2025 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. | Sunday prior to Election Day | | None |
| Election Day All mail-in ballots due by the closing of the polls | May 5, 2025 | First Monday in May | Charter § 507: first Monday in May [in odd-numbered years] | May 1, 2023 |

The additional time would offer at least the following benefits:

- The Town would be better able to foster engagement with the elections process—and thereby with Town government—among voters, candidates, potential candidates, elections officials, and Town staff.
- All parties would have more time in advance of certain deadlines and therefore more time to complete their duties and responsibilities for election day.
- The Board of Elections would be better able to ensure that all tasks are completed completely, accurately, and in keeping with the Town’s Code, Charter, and Elections Manual.

- There would be more opportunity to review and update procedures as the Town's population grows and technology advances, thus helping the Town to stay current with State and County elections rules and with other jurisdictions. (This proposed timeline reflects best practices in local elections at nearby municipalities.)
- The Board of Elections would have more time to recruit and train election judges properly, increasing the professionalism of our elections.

Next Steps

After the discussion with the Mayor and Council on February 26, 2024, the Board of Elections requests that the Mayor and Council direct Town staff to work with the Town attorney to draft legislation to enact the recommended timeline changes for the May 2025 election.

In addition to holding regular public meetings, the Board of Elections will submit an article for an upcoming edition of the *Town Crier* concerning the changes, will submit information to post on the Town's communication platforms, and will solicit community input concerning the proposed changes.

Members of the Board of Elections will be present at the February 26, 2024, work session to answer questions from the Mayor, Council, and public regarding the proposed changes.