

RESOLUTION NO. 5012, AS AMENDED

**A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE CURRENT DATES FOR LOCAL
ELECTIONS ~~AND ENCOURAGING THE BOROUGH TO RETAIN THE~~
~~CURRENT ELECTION SCHEDULE~~**

WHEREAS, the City Charter, Section 11.1, sets the regular City election date as the first Tuesday in October, or on such other date as may be fixed by ordinance; and

WHEREAS, FGC Sec. 22-6(a), provides that the regular election will be held on the day provided in the Charter, unless the City Council, by ordinance, sets the election on the same day as the regular municipal election for the Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB); and

WHEREAS, the FNSB is considering Ordinance No. 2022-24 that would change the date of the Borough's regular election from early October to early November to coincide with the state and federal elections held on the Tuesday following the first Monday in November; and

WHEREAS, equipment for local elections, such as voting booths, tables, chairs, and ballot boxes, is currently borrowed from the State of Alaska Division of Elections, and if the Borough and City held their elections at the same time as the State, the Borough and City would have to procure their own voting equipment; and

WHEREAS, Borough Ordinance No. 2022-24 includes an appropriation in the amount of \$214,000 for the Borough Clerk to purchase election equipment for local elections if the election date is moved from October to November; and

WHEREAS, regular City elections have been held in conjunction with Borough elections, and the City has sought to keep its election codes and procedures as similar as possible to that of the FNSB to ensure consistency for voters; and

WHEREAS, the City sees merit in increasing voter turnout; however, the City of Fairbanks operates on a calendar year budget, and moving the regular election date to November will significantly impact the City's budget preparation process which occurs in November and December; and

WHEREAS, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough moved the date of its regular election from October to November effective in 2019. Their average voter turnout prior to the change (based on their 10 previous regular elections) was 18.35%, and their voter turnout in 2020, a state and federal election year, was 32.86%. The Matanuska-Susitna Borough regular election turnout was 10.31% in 2019 and 17.86% in 2021; and

WHEREAS, conducting absentee voting by mail concurrently with the state and federal elections presents opportunity for voter confusion in that voters might return all


their voted ballots in the same envelope, causing either their state/federal ballot or their City/Borough ballot to not be counted; and

WHEREAS, the City Clerk has identified concerns if the City's regular election is moved to November (excerpt from the City Clerk's April 11 memorandum attached); and

WHEREAS, the City Council believes that keeping the regular City and Borough elections on the first Tuesday in October best serves the interests of local voters.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council that the City of Fairbanks supports keeping local elections in early October and encourages the Borough Assembly to retain the current schedule for regular Borough elections.

PASSED and APPROVED this 9th day of May 2022.




Jim Matherly, Mayor

AYES: Rogers, Marney, Therrien, Cleworth
NAYS: Gibson, Clark
ABSENT: None
APPROVED: May 9, 2022

ATTEST:

APPROVED AS TO FORM:



D. Danyielle Snider, MMC, City Clerk



Paul Ewers, City Attorney

Taken from the City Clerk's Memorandum to Council Dated April 11, 2022

As you know, the regular City election is held in conjunction with the regular Borough election, and we try to keep our election codes and procedures as similar as possible to ensure consistency for voters. There are two ordinances being introduced before the Fairbanks North Star Borough Assembly on Thursday, April 14 relating to Borough elections.

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The second is Ordinance No. 2022-24, which would amend FNSBC by changing the date of the Borough's regular October election to coincide with the state and federal elections on the Tuesday following the first Monday in November. The ordinance also makes appropriations for the Borough Clerk to purchase election equipment that is currently borrowed from the State of Alaska Division of Elections for our local elections. If the ordinance is adopted as-is, the election date change would be effective for the 2023 Borough election.

FGC Sec. 22-6(a) states that "Regular elections shall be held on the day provided in Charter Section 11.1 unless the city council by ordinance sets the election on the same day as the regular municipal election of the Fairbanks North Star Borough." If FNSB Ordinance No. 2022-24 is adopted, the Council will need to consider whether to follow suit for regular City elections.

Ordinance No. 2022-24 raises a number of concerns and, if adopted, will *significantly* impact City elections.

If either the City or the Borough moves the date of its regular election and the other does not, the City would no longer share the cost of its election workers, polling locations, supplies, and equipment with the Borough. There would still be a local election in October and another local/state election in November. Currently our regular election costs \$22K - \$23K. If the City were to conduct elections independently, I would expect the cost of our regular election to at least double. The City would either need to purchase its own equipment or enter into a special agreement with the Borough to use its equipment. I do not have a solid cost estimate on equipment, but based on the Borough's recent purchase, my guess is it would cost the City between \$125K and \$150K to purchase voting equipment for its 12 precincts.

If the City and the Borough both made the change at the same time, there would be three elections conducted at one location on State election years. While this would be a "one-stop-shop" for voters, the City/Borough and the State would occupy two separate areas within each City polling location, there would be two separate sets of election workers and equipment, and two separate lines for voters to wait in to vote. City voters would be issued a total of three ballots (City, Borough, and State) and would follow two separate sets of instructions for voting (since the State moved to ranked choice voting).

When considering the change, thought should be given to the timeline for a run-off election. When a run-off election is required, it must be held within three weeks after the date of certification of the regular election. Assuming the regular election is certified in late November, a run-off election would be held the second or third week of December, which puts the canvassing process over the Christmas holiday. Consideration should also be given to the timeline for swearing in newly elected officials and the preparation/adoption of the City's annual budget.