

# School Board Election Cycle, Terms and Composition

Background Information  
(Revised May 31, 2018)



## School Board **Election Cycle & Terms:** Current Framework

- 3-year term begins January 1 following November election
- Board Members serve concurrent terms
- Board terms coincide with City Council terms
- 2012: Elections transitioned from May to November
- Next election: November 2018

# School Board Election Cycle & Terms: Legal Basis

## I. Code of Virginia

- Cities and counties have different legal standards.
  - Elected vs. appointed School Boards have different legal standards.
- §§ 22.1-57.3, 24.2-222, 24.2-223: Elected School Boards (Cities)**
- Elections coincide with the governing body's elections.
  - School Board terms are the same as the governing body's terms (1-4 years).
  - School Board terms of office defined by City Charter
  - Board Member terms staggered only if governing body's terms staggered

## II. City of Alexandria Charter

**§§ 3.01, 10.01, 15.10: Council and School Board Elections**

- 3-year concurrent terms for Council Members and Mayor
- City Council elections held in November 2015; every 3 years thereafter
- School Board elections held every 3 years; coincide with Council elections

# School Board Election Cycle & Terms: Comparison of Local Jurisdictions

School Board	Arlington County	Fairfax County	Falls Church City	ACPS
Term	4	4	4	3
Staggered/ Concurrent	Staggered	Concurrent	Staggered	Concurrent
Election Cycle:	1 <sup>st</sup> Year : 1 2 <sup>nd</sup> Year: 1 3 <sup>rd</sup> Year: 2 4 <sup>th</sup> Year: 1	Odd years preceding presidential elections	1 <sup>st</sup> Year: 4 3 <sup>rd</sup> Year: 3 (Every 2 years in odd years)	Every 3 years, beginning in Nov. 2012

- Statewide:**
- Approximately 2/3 of School Boards serve staggered terms
  - Only 3 city School Boards in Virginia serve concurrent terms
  - 121 School Boards serve 4-year terms
  - 14 School Boards serve 3-year terms
  - 1 School Board serves a 2-year term

# School Board **Election Cycle & Terms:** Transition Benefits

## Benefits of Staggered and Extended Terms:

- Ensures **retention of institutional knowledge as a continuing body** by avoiding large-scale turnover
- Ensures **continuity of policy** instead of frequent changes in focus
- Members have more time to gain **experience** before running for reelection.
- Allows voters to **focus** on local issues/schools more frequently
- Increased voter **interest**: allows voters to focus on fewer candidates/election
- Members **better able to serve** the public/constituents
- Good government practices: more **effective** and more **efficient**
- Non-partisan

# School Board **Election Cycle & Terms:** Transition Drawbacks

## Potential Drawbacks:

- Voters must **wait longer** to change direction of Council's or the Board's policies/priorities if desired
- May make it easier for organized groups to **oppose** individual candidates

# School Board **Election Cycle & Terms:** Transition Requirements

## **Requirements:**

- Requests to stagger terms or change term length require City Charter amendment:
  - Must be initiated by Council
  - **Must apply to both School Board and City Council**
  - Amendments to City Charter must be approved by General Assembly
- Majority of Board elected first cycle, remaining members elected subsequently
- General rule is to extend, not shorten terms during transition

# School Board **Election Cycle & Terms:** Transition Process

## **Process:**

- School Board adopts Resolution for Council to pursue City Charter amendment
  - Regular Order and Public Hearing prior to adoption
  
- City Council proposes Charter amendment for:
  - Public Hearing
  - Inclusion in Legislative Package for General Assembly Session
  - (Regular Order followed)
  - Possible Citywide Referendum
  
- Staff works with Alexandria delegation to General Assembly to draft and sponsor bicameral bills



# City Council Election Cycle & Terms: Recent History

## City Council Docket:

- **February 11, 1997**
  - Revision of City Council Member terms (length & staggered cycle)

## City Council & School Board Election Process Committee:

- **March 2007 - Formed by Mayor to examine & make recommendations on:**
  - Moving City elections from May to November
  - Creating staggered terms for Council and the School Board
  - Revising Council and School Board compensation
  - Related issues (non-partisan Council elections; at-large vs. districts, etc.)
- **June 2007 Public Hearing re: issues examined by committee**

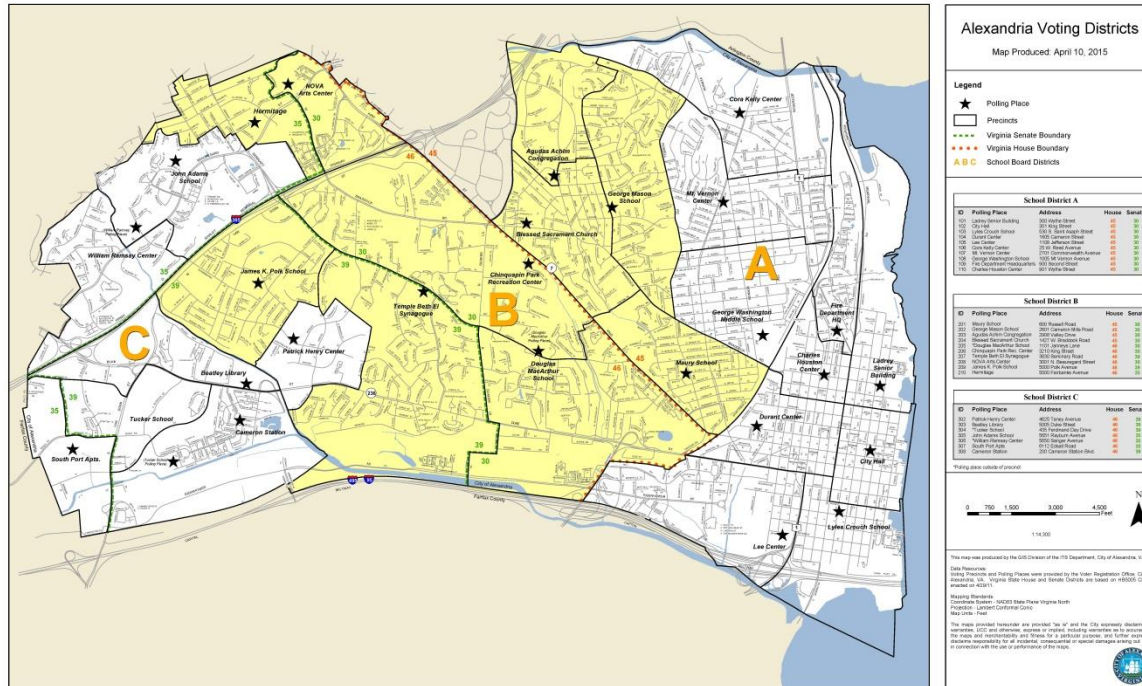
## City Council Docket:

- **November 10, 2009**
  - City Charter Amendments re: Council Elections
- **June 2010**
  - City Council approved moving elections from May to November **2012**;  
Council terms extended 6 months during transition

# School Board **Composition:** Current Framework

- 9 Board Members
- 1 Chair and 1 Vice Chair
  - Selected by the Board at its January Organizational Meeting to serve 1-year term
- 3 Board Members Elected from Each Voting District:
  - A (Eastern Alexandria)
  - B (Central Alexandria)
  - C (Western Alexandria)
- Voting Districts Determined by City Council

# School Board Voting Districts:



## Redistricting:

- Follows census every 10 years
- Voting district population variance may be no more than  $\pm 5\%$
- 2011: Population of districts remained within acceptable variance; City Council voted not to change boundaries

# School Board **Composition:** Legal Basis

## I. Code of Virginia

- Cities and counties have different legal standards.
  - Elected vs. appointed School Boards have different legal standards.
- §§ 22.1-50, 22.1-57.3: Appointed & Elected School Boards (Cities)**
- 3 Board Members per voting district (appointed)
  - When School Board transitions from appointed to elected, first elected board must consist of same number of Members as appointed Board it replaced
  - Board Members shall be elected from the same voting districts they were previously appointed from.

## II. City of Alexandria Charter

### **§§ 3.01, 3.05 15.10,: City Council & School Board Composition**

- 6 Council Members and 1 Mayor elected at-large
- Vice-Mayor is a Council Member; elected by majority vote of full Council
- City of Alexandria is single school division
- 9 School Board Members; elected from districts determined by Council

# School Board **Composition:** Comparison of Local Jurisdictions

School Board	Arlington County	Fairfax County	Falls Church City	ACPS
Composition	5 (At-large)	12 (1/District plus 3 At-large)	7 (At-large)	9 (3/District )
Student Enrollment	Approx. 25,700	Approx. 189,000	Approx. 2,700	Approx. 15,500
City/County Population	Approx. 234,000	Approx. 1.138 million	Approx. 14,000	Approx. 160,000
Board Member: Student Ratio	1 : 5,000	1 : 15,500	1 : 385	1 : 1,700
Voting Districts	-	9	-	3

- Statewide:**
- 67 School Boards have 5 members
  - 41 School Boards have 7 members
  - 10 School Boards have 9 members
  - 9 School Boards have 6 members
  - 5 School Boards have 8 members
  - 1 School Board each: 12, 11, 4, or 3 members

# School Board **Composition:** Transition Benefits

## **Benefits of Smaller School Board (e.g., 2 per District + 1 At-large):**

- **Creates Efficiencies** - Eases difficulty of aligning 9 schedules for each:
  - Regular, Special Called & Closed Board Meeting
  - Work Session and Retreat
  - Professional Development Opportunity (NSBA, VSBA Events/Programs)
- **Increased Voter Interest** - Allows voters to focus on fewer candidates/election
- 2 Board Members/district would **allow Members from the same district to meet together with constituent groups** more frequently.
- At-large Board Member(s) could **focus on Citywide issues.**
- Good government practices: more **effective** and more **efficient**

# School Board **Composition:** Transition Drawbacks

## Potential Drawbacks:

- May make it **easier** for organized groups to **oppose** individual candidates
- **Decreases diversity** of perspectives/experience/approaches to issues
- Fewer Board Members addressing each district's **unique needs**
- Fewer Board Members to serve as **liaisons** to:
  - Advisory Committees
  - City Boards & Commissions
  - PTAs
  - Schools

# School Board **Composition:** Transition Requirements

## **Requirements:**

- Requests to change the number of School Board Members or their constituencies require City Charter amendment:
  - Must be initiated by Council
  - **Does not impact composition of City Council**
  - Amendments to City Charter must be approved by General Assembly
  
- Majority of Board elected first cycle, remaining members elected subsequently



# School Board **Composition:** Transition Process

## **Process:**

- School Board adopts Resolution for Council to pursue City Charter amendment
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# School Board Election Cycle, Terms & Composition: Transition Considerations

## Cost:

- Negligible impact; elections already held in Alexandria each year; schools already closed on Election Day (Bd. of Elections)
- Negligible increased costs (Bd. of Elections)
- Negligible increased staff time (Bd. of Elections)

## Timing:

- Examination of scenarios that would avoid election cycle coinciding with presidential elections:
  - Local issues would not be overshadowed by national issues
  - Avoids straight-ticket voting
- If 3-year terms maintained, first possible staggered election: 2021
- If terms changed to 4 years, first possible staggered election: 2022

## Voter Turnout:

- No anticipated increase in voter turnout (Bd. of Elections)

# City Charter: Amendment Process

City  
Council/  
School  
Board  
Discussions

School  
Board  
Resolution  
(Regular  
Order &  
Public  
Hearing)

Council  
Resolution to  
Amend City  
Charter  
(Regular  
Order &  
Public  
Hearing)

City &  
Board Staff  
work with  
Alexandria  
Delegation  
to Draft  
Bicameral  
Bills

Members of  
Local  
Delegation  
Sponsor &  
File General  
Assembly  
Bills:

**Senate:**  
Local  
Government  
Committee

**House:**  
Counties,  
Cities &  
Towns  
Committee

Full  
General  
Assembly  
Action

Transition  
Process:  
2  
Election  
Cycles

**Beginning  
2018**

# School Board Election Cycle, Terms and Composition

## Questions?

**Staff Contact:**

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Clerk of the Board & Policy Liaison

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