

Date: November 14, 2019
For ACTION _____
For INFORMATION X____
Board Agenda: Yes X____
No _____

FROM: Jennifer Abbruzzese, Director of Policy & Board Initiatives

THROUGH: Gregory C. Hutchings, Jr., Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

TO: The Honorable Cindy Anderson, Chair, and
Members of the Alexandria City School Board

TOPIC: School Board Election Cycle and Composition

SUMMARY:

Any changes to the School Board’s term, election cycle, and/or composition would necessitate the Virginia General Assembly’s approval of an amendment to the Alexandria City Charter. As the Code of Virginia requires that the School Board’s and City Council’s terms of office and election cycles must coincide, such amendments would affect both of Alexandria’s elected bodies. This would necessitate embarking on a community engagement and public comment process that would likely include such feedback instruments as surveys, public hearings, and a citywide referendum. To open a dialogue with Council and the public on the benefits and impacts of various transition options, the School Board adopted the *Resolution to Explore School Board Election Cycle and Composition Adjustments* in June 2018 to serve as a starting point for consideration of the matter.

BACKGROUND:

At its April 26, 2018 Board Meeting, the School Board discussed the background, current status, legal authority, process and timing for potentially transitioning:

- From concurrent to staggered Board Member terms of office, and therefore;
- From holding concurrent elections every three years to holding staggered elections more frequently;
- From three-year terms to four-year terms;
- From a nine-Member Board to a lesser number; and
- From representation based solely on Alexandria’s three voting districts, to the addition of one at-large Board Member.

At its May 31, 2018 Work Session, the School Board reviewed the legislative process and community engagement involved in its 1994 transition from an appointed to elected Board, staff responses to follow-up information requests from April 26th, staggered election implementation scenarios, and a draft resolution requesting City Council and community engagement on potential adjustments to its election cycle, term and composition.

At its June 21, 2018 Board Meeting, the School Board adopted the *Resolution to Explore School Board Election Cycle and Composition Adjustments*. The *Resolution* requested that the Alexandria City Council consider exploring potential amendments (described below) to its City Charter during 2018-2019. The *Resolution* also encouraged the incoming School Board to develop and present specific recommendations to City Council during 2019, and for both elected bodies to actively seek community input on the following:

- Transitioning Alexandria City School Board Member and Alexandria City Council Member terms of office from concurrent to staggered terms, and therefore the possibility of holding elections more frequently than every three years; and
- Supporting the School Board's interest in exploring a reduction from its nine-Member Board to a lesser number and to possibly include at-large Members.

IMPACT: By reviewing current requirements and procedures for operational effectiveness and efficiency, the Board ensures its practices align with ACPS 2020 Strategic Plan goals to support excellence and continuous improvement.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Background Presentation: School Board Election Cycle, Terms and Composition
2. 06/21/18 Resolution to Explore School Board Election Cycle and Composition Adjustments
3. 5/31/18 Memo to School Board: Election Cycle Q&A and Possible Implementation Scenarios
4. Background Document: City Manager's 10/29/09 Memo to City Council re: City Charter Amendments
5. Background Document: City of Alexandria Election Cycle Transition from May to November

RECOMMENDATION: The Superintendent recommends the School Board review the attached material regarding the Board election cycle and composition.

CONTACT: Jennifer Abbruzzese, 703-619-8314