

Date: May 31, 2018

For ACTION

For INFORMATION

Board Agenda: Yes

No

FROM: Jennifer Abbruzzese, Clerk of the Board & Policy Liaison

THROUGH: Lois F. Berlin, Ed.D., Interim Superintendent of Schools

TO: The Honorable Ramee A. Gentry, Chair, and
Members of the Alexandria City School Board

TOPIC: Board Member Election Cycle, Terms and Composition

SUMMARY: 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.

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, or a citywide referendum. To open a dialogue with Council and the public on the benefits and impacts of various transition options, the School Board requested a draft resolution to serve as a starting point to which the interested parties could react (Attachment 1).

In addition, the Board requested information on the following topics:

1. Are there school boards that have a combination of appointed and elected members?

The Code of Virginia clarifies that boards are either elected or appointed. The only time there is a combined type is during a board's transition from appointed to elected utilizing staggered terms, during which time some of the previously appointed members' terms would not yet have expired. The City of Norfolk School Board is currently undergoing this transition.

- 2. Could a voter referendum coinciding with November elections be held to determine whether there is support for changing the City Council’s and the School Board’s election cycles, terms of office or composition? (Regarding composition, only the School Board’s is being discussed. Changing the composition of the Board would not impact the composition of City Council.)**

Although a referendum could certainly be held, this is not a requirement. Council has the authority to propose a City Charter amendment for approval by the General Assembly without a referendum.

- 3. How do tie votes on even-numbered boards work?**

Out of the approximately 135 school boards in Virginia, **three city** school boards have an even number of members (Fredericksburg, Harrisonburg, and Staunton). **13 county** school boards have an even number of members. Elected school boards may have a tie-breaker that is elected by the voters, in accordance with [Va. Code § 22.1-57.3](#).

“Any elected school board may have a position of tie breaker for the purpose of casting the deciding vote in cases of tie votes of the school board as provided in § [22.1-75](#). The position of tie breaker, if any, shall be held by a qualified voter who is a resident of the county, city, or town and who shall be elected in the same manner and for the same length of term as members of the school board and at a general election at which members of the school board are elected.”

The **three city** school boards with an even number of members (Fredericksburg, Harrisonburg, and Staunton), do not have tie breakers. When there is a tie vote and all members of a school board are not present, the question is passed by until the next meeting. When there is a tie at either the second meeting where all members are not present, or at any meeting where all members are present, the motion is defeated.

- 4. How many city school boards have the district representation/at-large hybrid model of board member representation?**

Six city school boards **out of the 35 city** school boards in Virginia have members who represent a particular district/ward/precinct as well as those who serve at-large.

- 5. Can Student Representatives to the School Board vote or serve as tie breakers?**

Va. Code § 22.1-86.1 states that Student Representatives to the School Board are nonvoting representatives who may neither establish a quorum nor make any official decision.

- 6. How would adding an at-large Alexandria City School Board Member work? Which candidates run for their district and which run for the at-large seat?**

Candidates for School Board would file and declare to run for one of the seats representing the district in which they live, or for an at-large seat. Where there is only one at-large seat, one voting district will necessarily have one more representative than the others. Larger school boards tend to limit the number of at-large members who may reside within the same district. For instance, the Winchester City School Board has

nine board members. One board member represents each of Winchester’s four wards. Five board members are appointed at-large. Overall, no more than three board members may reside in the same ward.

7. When city school boards that changed from one election cycle or representation model to another transitioned, did they break into smaller wards/districts/precincts to ensure a finer demographic representation across the city?

Staff continues to gather data on this query and will provide a thorough response as soon as one is available.

8. When the Alexandria City School Board transitioned from an appointed Board to an elected one, which approaches to breaking into smaller districts were considered?

Staff continues to gather data on this query and will provide a thorough response as soon as one is available.

9. Potential Staggered Election Implementation Scenarios : Maintain Three Year Terms

Issue	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3	Scenario 4	Scenario 5	Scenario 6	Scenario 7
-- Board/Council Collaboration; -- Amendment Proposal Drafted; -- Community Engagement	2018	2018	2018-2019	2018-2019	2018-2019	2018-2020	2018-2021
Voter Referendum	---	November 2018	---	November 2019	November 2019 (Y/N)	November 2020 (Y/N)	November 2021(Y/N)
City Charter Amendment to Gen. Assembly	January 2019	January 2019	January 2020	January 2020	January 2021	January 2021	January 2022
Implementation Group 1	Majority of Board; + Mayor & 1 st ½ of Council	Majority of Board; + Mayor & 1 st ½ of Council	Majority of Board; + Mayor & 1 st ½ of Council	Majority of Board; + Mayor & 1 st ½ of Council	Majority of Board; + Mayor & 1 st ½ of Council	Majority of Board; + Mayor & 1 st ½ of Council	Majority of Board; + Mayor & 1 st ½ of Council
Group 1: Staggered Elections	Nov. 2021, 2024, 2027, 2030, 2033	Nov. 2021, 2024, 2027, 2030, 2033	Nov. 2021, 2024, 2027, 2030, 2033	Nov. 2021, 2024, 2027, 2030, 2033	Nov. 2021, 2024,2027, 2030, 2033	Nov. 2021, 2024,2027, 2030, 2033	Nov. 2024, 2027,2030, 2033, 2036
Implementation Group 2	Remainder of Board; + 2 nd ½ of Council	Remainder of Board; + 2 nd ½ of Council	Remainder of Board; + 2 nd ½ of Council	Remainder of Board; + 2 nd ½ of Council	Remainder of Board; + 2 nd ½ of Council	Remainder of Board; + 2 nd ½ of Council	Remainder of Board; + 2 nd ½ of Council
Group 2: Staggered Elections	Nov. 2022, 2025, 2028, 2031, 2034	Nov. 2022, 2025, 2028, 2031, 2034	Nov. 2022, 2025, 2028, 2031, 2034	Nov. 2022, 2025, 2028, 2031, 2034	Nov. 2022, 2025,2028, 2031, 2034	Nov. 2022, 2025,2028, 2031, 2034	Nov. 2025 2028,2031, 2034, 2037

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.

RECOMMENDATION: The Superintendent recommends the School Board review the attached information on Board election cycles, terms of office and composition.

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