

Date: June 21, 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: Resolution to Explore School Board Election Cycle and Composition Adjustments

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 requested a resolution be drafted 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.

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:

Resolution to Explore School Board Election Cycle and Composition Adjustments

RECOMMENDATION: The Superintendent recommends the School Board adopt the Resolution to Explore School Board Election Cycle and Composition Adjustments.

CONTACT: Jennifer Abbruzzese, 703-619-8314



RESOLUTION TO EXPLORE SCHOOL BOARD ELECTION CYCLE AND COMPOSITION ADJUSTMENTS

WHEREAS, the Alexandria City School Board serves concurrent, three-year terms and therefore may incur the loss of its knowledge base and experience every three years, and as a continuing body seeks to better maintain its institutional knowledge and increase its effectiveness; and

WHEREAS the Alexandria City School Board currently seats nine Members, three each of which are elected to represent one of three voting districts; and

WHEREAS, the Alexandria City School Board seeks to improve its overall efficiency, collaboration and ability to reach consensus; and

WHEREAS, the Alexandria City School Board supports transparency and encourages community engagement; and

WHEREAS, the Code of Virginia mandates that the Alexandria City School Board's elections must coincide with those of its governing body, the City Council of Alexandria, Virginia; and

WHEREAS, the Code of Virginia mandates that the Alexandria City School Board's term of office must coincide with that of its governing body, the City Council of Alexandria, Virginia; and

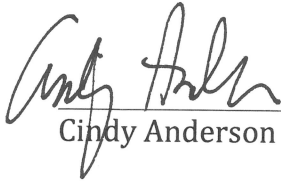
WHEREAS, the Code of Virginia mandates that the Alexandria City Council's and the Alexandria City School Board's terms of office are determined by the City Charter of Alexandria, Virginia;

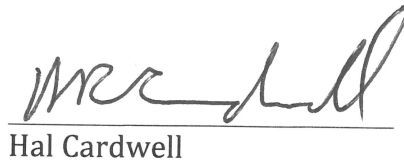
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alexandria City School Board requests that the Alexandria City Council consider exploring one or more potential amendments to its City Charter during 2018-2019 as proposed below.

The School Board further encourages the next School Board, to be elected in November 2018, to develop and present specific recommendations to City Council on the matter during 2019, and for both elected bodies to actively seek community input on the following:

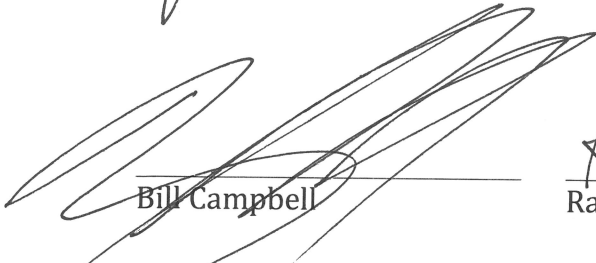
- Transitioning Alexandria City School Board Member and Alexandria City Council Member terms of office from concurrent to staggered terms, and therefore the possibility of holding elections more frequently than every three years; and
- Supporting the School Board's interest in exploring a reduction from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

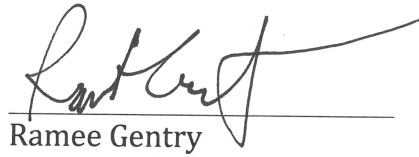
Adopted at the June 21, 2018 School Board Meeting

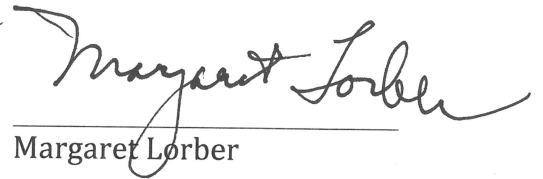

Cindy Anderson

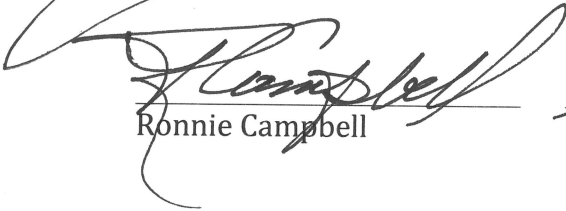

Hal Cardwell



Christopher Lewis

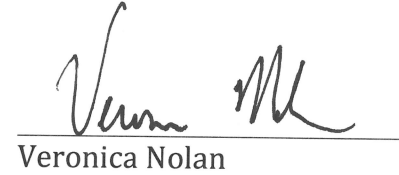

Bill Campbell


Ramee Gentry


Margaret Lorber


Ronnie Campbell


Karen Graf

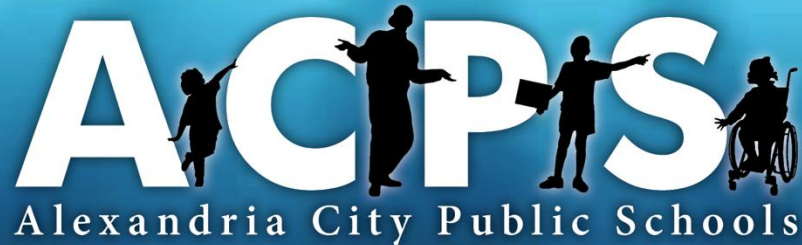

Veronica Nolan

Legal Refs.: Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, §§ 22.1-50, 22.1-57.3, 24.2-222, 24.2-223.
City Charter of Alexandria, Virginia, §§ 3.01, 3.05, 10.01, 15.10.

Cross Refs.: BB School Board Legal Status
BBBA Qualifications of School Board Members

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 st Year : 1 2 nd Year: 1 3 rd Year: 2 4 th Year: 1 | Odd years preceding presidential elections | 1 st Year: 4 3 rd 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**

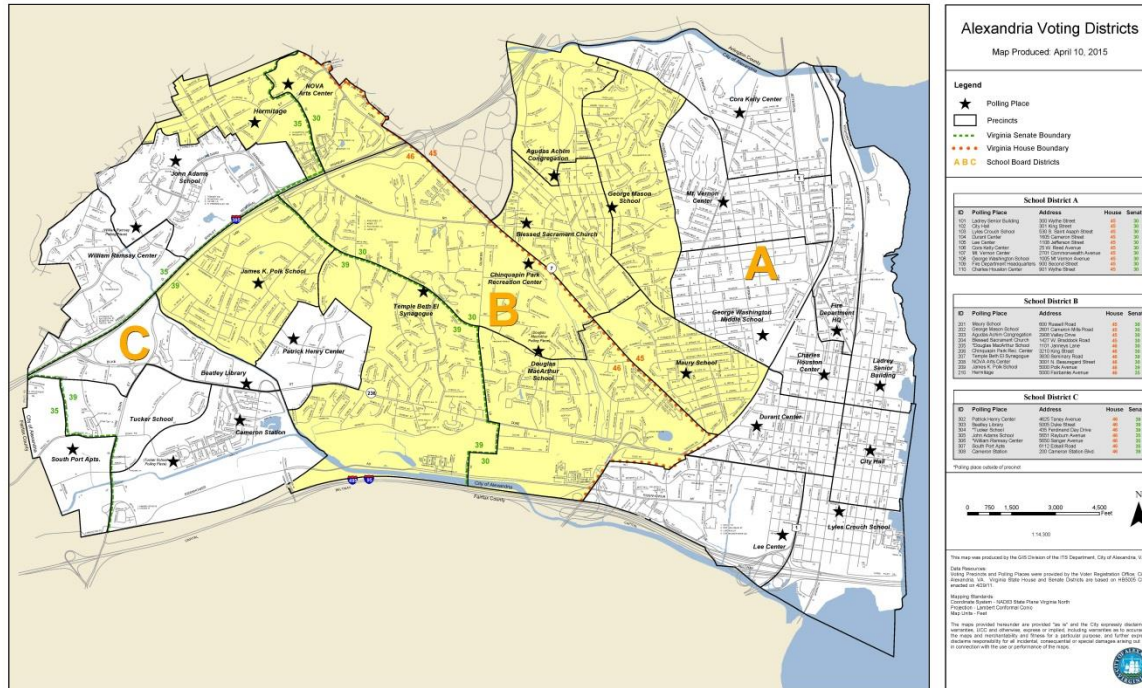
City Council Docket:

- **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
 - Regular Order and Public Hearing prior to adoption

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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:

Jennifer Abbruzzese

Clerk of the Board & Policy Liaison

703-619-8314