

TOWN OF PALM BEACH

Information for Town Council Meeting on: December 10, 2024

To: Mayor and Town Council

Via: Kirk W. Blouin, Town Manager

From: Kelly Churney, Acting Town Clerk

Re: Changes to the Municipal Election Dates, Caucus, and Qualifying Period

Date: November 26, 2024

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff would like the Town Council to consider the past changes made to the municipal election cycle when discussing the dates for future caucuses, qualifying periods, and elections.

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Town Council and staff have discussed the Town's Municipal Election and Caucus dates at length over the last ten years. The last change occurred in August 2021, when the Town Council changed the date of the Town Caucus and qualifying date to the first Tuesday and Wednesday in December to provide the Supervisor of Elections with sufficient time to create and mail ballots to overseas voters.

A history of the changes:

- In October 2015, a discussion occurred between the Council and then Palm Beach County Elections Supervisor (SOE) Susan Bucher regarding using the County's resources to assist the Town in a standalone election. Ms. Bucher informed the Council of the multiple challenges for the SOE when municipalities hold standalone elections the month before statewide or county elections. As a result, the Town Council adopted **Ordinance 28-2015**, adding Article IV to Chapter 34 of the Town's Code, which allowed the Town to change the Caucus, qualifying period, and election dates (by ordinance) to be uniform with Presidential Preference Primary (PPP) in those election years.
- In 2017, the Town Council adopted **Ordinance Nos. 21-2017 and 22-2017**, when the Town decided to move its general election date from the first Tuesday in February to the second Tuesday in March to be uniform with the County's municipal elections. These ordinances also rescinded and repealed Ordinance No. 28-2015 by removing Article IV from Chapter 34 of the Town's Election Code.

- In 2019, the Town Council adopted **Ordinance No. 31-2019**, which changed the Town's Charter to provide the Town's municipal election date concurrent with a statewide or countywide election, and Chapter 34 of the Town's Code, which allows for the municipal election date and qualifying period to run concurrently with the Presidential Preference Primary (PPP) in those election years.
- In 2021, the Town Council adopted **Ordinance No. 018-2021**, which changed the Town Caucus and qualifying dates to the first Tuesday and Wednesday of December, or on a date at least ninety-five (95) days prior to the March election date, whichever is first, to accommodate the SOE's ability to create and mail ballots to overseas voters.
- The option of a stand-alone election has been discussed several times in the past. Each discussion found this option costly and challenging, and staff could not find an independent firm to tabulate the Town's ballot results.

FUNDING/FISCAL IMPACT

In 2024, the town's municipal election was held at the same time as the Presidential Preference Primary (PPP). The approximate cost for this election was \$11,500.

In 2021, the town's municipal election was held in conjunction with the county municipal elections. The approximate cost for this election was \$39,800.

The estimated costs of a stand-alone election would likely exceed the cost in 2021, but staff cannot estimate the amount without further research.

Attachments

KC

cc: Carolyn Stone, Deputy Town Manager – Business Enterprise and Culture