



## **DISTRICT ELECTIONS**

### **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ's)**

#### **What is the City of Richmond's current election system?**

- The City of Richmond uses an at-large election system that allows all registered voters in the City to elect Councilmembers and the Mayor.

#### **What are district elections?**

- For Richmond, the City would be divided into six separate districts, and only the voters that live within each district get to elect a City Councilmember from that district.
- The Mayor would continue to be elected at-large.

#### **Why is the City of Richmond considering going from at-large to district elections?**

On September 11, 2019, the City of Richmond received a letter from Attorney At Law Scott J. Rafferty alleging that its at-large council member electoral system violates the California Voting Rights Act (CVRA). This type of letter is the first step a party must take to later bring a CVRA lawsuit against a City. While the City is confident that its current electoral system does not run afoul of the CVRA or any other provision of law, the City Council has determined that the public interest would be best served by considering the transition to a district-based electoral system because:

- (1) The high cost to defend against a CVRA lawsuit,
- (2) The risk of losing such a lawsuit, which would require the City to pay the prevailing plaintiffs' attorneys' fees, and
- (3) A jurisdiction can limit the amount of its liability to prospective plaintiffs and their attorneys to a maximum amount of \$30,000 for reimbursable expenses and costs (the "safe harbor provision")

#### **What are the criteria for creating election districts?**

In addition to complying with the Federal Voting Rights Act and federal law, the criteria for creating districts include:

- Districts should be nearly equal in population
- Districts must be geographically contiguous
- Neighborhoods and communities of interest
- Clear visible (natural & man-made) boundaries
- Compact (Do not bypass one group of people to get to a more distant group of people).

**How will the election district boundaries be decided?**

- The City Council will take comments from residents and interested community groups at two public hearings to understand the community’s view of where district boundaries should be drawn.
- The City Council will then define the criteria they want a demographer to use in creating one or more proposed district maps. The demographer’s goal will be to draw map options that meet the criteria, and that takes into account comments from the community as prioritized by the City Council.
- The draft maps will be presented for public comment and review at two additional City Council public hearings.
- At those hearings, the City Council will provide further direction to the demographer, who will revise the map or maps, which will then go before the City Council at a fifth public hearing for a final vote and adoption of the ordinance.

**How can I participate in the decision-making process?**

- You and your neighbors are encouraged to attend the public hearings (see meeting schedule below) as the community’s input in developing the voting districts is very important to this process.

**Anticipated Meeting Schedule:**

DATE	EVENT	COMMENT
November 5, 2019	1st Public Hearing	Council to receive input from community to be used to draw preliminary district maps. No maps yet drawn.
November 14, 2019 November 18, 2019	Community Workshops	Staff provides a presentation regarding the move to district elections, demonstrates the mapping tools and receives input on map designs.
November 19, 2019	2nd Public Hearing	Council to receive additional input from community to be used to draw preliminary district maps. No maps yet drawn.
November 21, 2019	Initial Map Submission Deadline	Deadline to submit maps that will be posted November 26 and considered by Council at third public hearing.

DATE	EVENT	COMMENT
November 26, 2019	Publish Draft Maps and Potential Sequence of elections.	Maps will be posted at least 7 days prior to the third public hearing.
December 3, 2019	3rd Public Hearing	Regarding draft maps and proposed sequence of elections. Opportunity for public to respond and make recommendations regarding the proposed district boundaries and sequence of elections.
December 4, 2019  December 5, 2019	Community Workshop	Staff to receive input from community regarding draft maps submitted for review.
December 6, 2019	Revised Maps Deadline	Deadline to submit revisions to posted maps that will be posted December 10 and considered by Council at fourth public hearing.
December 17, 2019	4th Public Hearing	Expected that Council will select map to establish district boundaries, introduce an ordinance establishing district elections, and determine election sequence. <b>Note:</b> If posted maps are further amended, ordinance cannot be introduced until 7 days after amended map is published.
January 14, 2020		Expected that Council will adopt maps and ordinance establishing district elections.

All meetings will be held at the City Council Chambers, 440 Civic Center Plaza, beginning at 6:30 p.m. Check the City's website for individual meeting materials.

**Once voting districts are established, how often are their boundaries reviewed?**

- The voting districts will be reviewed every ten years following the Census.
- The next Census will be conducted in 2020, so the voting districts will be reviewed after the Census counts are released, and revised as necessary. The district revisions are anticipated to occur sometime in 2021.

**Additional Questions? Please Contact Us!**

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