



# City of Gainesville

## City Elections – Charter Review Item

August 27, 2013



## City Charter Laws Regarding City Commission Elections (Article 2.04)

- Candidates shall qualify in the manner prescribed by ordinance.
- Commissioners are elected for a term of 3 years.
- Regular municipal elections shall be held on the date prescribed by ordinance.
- Commissioners take office in May of the year in which they are elected.
- Other issues regarding runoff elections and filling vacancies.



## City Ordinances Regarding Election Dates and Terms (Section 9-2)

- Regular elections shall be held in March or April of each year, on a date set by the city commission by ordinance, for the election of city commissioners, including the mayor, whose terms of office expire or to fill vacancies that may occur.
- The clerk of the commission shall recommend a date for the next regular election to the commission at or before the first regular city commission meeting in May of each year. The city commission shall determine the date and direct an ordinance be drafted and advertised to be adopted no later than July 1 of each year.
- The city commission may consider factors such as local academic spring break dates, transition time for new commissioners and dates of other elections.



## Audit, Finance and Legislative Committee (AFLC) Referral Activity

- December 17, 2009 – The City Commission referred an item to the AFLC to discuss Permanent Election Dates for future City elections (Legistar item 090601).
- September 20, 2010 and November 30, 2010 – The AFLC discussed the concept of establishing a fixed spring election date with the Alachua County Supervisor of Elections and the Clerk of the Commission. Ultimately, the City Commission decided to maintain the current process established by ordinance regarding floating City election dates in the spring and to retain this item in Committee for further discussion.



## Audit, Finance and Legislative Committee (AFLC) Referral Activity

- August 30, 2011 - After a June 2011 CCOM retreat and a memo from City Attorney Marion Radson regarding a history of previous Charter Review Committees; the AFLC discussed possible solutions for establishing permanent dates for future City elections. Primary focus was on options raised by the 2005 Charter Review Committee, whose recommendation to the City Commission was a movement to 4 year terms for the Mayor and City Commissioners, while retaining 2 term limits and implementation of a consistent date for stand alone fall elections in consecutively odd years.



## Audit, Finance and Legislative Committee (AFLC) Referral Activity

- January 19, 2012 – The City Commission approved an expanded referral to the AFLC (Legistar 110659) to examine all facets of the City of Gainesville elections systems and process including dates, terms, term limits and other issues relating to elections.
- April 3, 2012 and May 21, 2012 – The AFLC discussed these issues in detail, receiving input from interested City Commissioners, City staff and citizens in attendance.



## Audit, Finance and Legislative Committee (AFLC) Referral Activity

- May 21, 2012 – The AFLC developed the following recommendations for the Commission's consideration:
  1. Approve a City Charter ballot initiative for Spring 2013 that would, if approved by voters, move City Commission elections to the fall of even years and extend the term of office to four years
  2. Discuss possible changes to City ordinances regarding qualification requirements for City Commission candidates
  3. Maintain non-partisan elections
  4. Hold a community forum to receive input from the public on the proposed ballot initiative
  5. Refer an overall Charter review process to the AFLC



## Audit, Finance and Legislative Committee (AFLC) Referral Activity

- The City Commission received items 1, 2 and 3 of the recommendations. They also directed the City Manager and Clerk of the Commission to plan a Town Hall meeting to receive input from the public, referred the overall Charter review process to the AFLC for further discussion, and asked staff to develop a FAQ page.





## City Elections – Elections Town Hall

- September 24, 2012 – The City Commission advertised and hosted the Elections Town Hall Meeting at the Senior Recreation Center. The Alachua County Supervisor of Elections made comments and answered questions.
- November 1, 2012 – The City Commission voted unanimously to ask the City Attorney to prepare a proposed Charter amendment that would move City elections to the fall of odd-numbered years (October and November), change terms from 3 to 4 years and maintain a two consecutive term limit.



## City Elections – Ballot Referendum

- The Charter Amendment was placed on the ballot in March 2013 and read:
  - **City Commission Elections and Terms of Office**  
“Shall the City Charter be amended to require regular municipal elections every other year in odd-numbered years rather than every year beginning with the regular election in 2017; and to change the terms of the office of the Mayor and City Commissioners from the current 3-year terms commencing in May to 4-year terms commencing in January 2018; and to provide transitional terms of office; as proposed by ordinance no. 120369?”
- The amendment was voted down by 56.34% of the voters.



## Audit, Finance and Legislative Committee (AFLC) Referral Activity – Other Elections Issues Remaining in Committee

- Legistar Item 120551 – City Commission Candidate Qualification Process, referred November 1, 2012. On July and August 2013 AFLC agendas.
- Legistar Item 120044 – Early Voting Site on the University of Florida Campus, referred May 17, 2012. On July and August 2013 AFLC agendas.
- Legistar Item 090893 – Supervisor of Elections Contract, referred April 1, 2010.



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