Legislation Text

File #: 200744., **Version:** 4

Ordinance Creating Qualifying Fee and Alternative Petition Process for Qualifying for City Office (B)

ORDINANCE NO. 200744

An ordinance of the City of Gainesville, Florida, amending Section 9-10 of the Code of Ordinances by creating additional requirements for candidate qualifying; providing for an additional qualifying fee or petition signatures in lieu of a qualifying fee; providing directions to the codifier; providing a severability clause; providing a repealing clause; and providing an immediate effective date.

The General Policy Committee, at its meeting of December 9, 2021, directed the City Attorney's Office to draft an ordinance that would impose additional requirements upon candidates seeking to qualify for office to the City Commission. This ordinance adds a 2% qualifying fee to the mandatory 1% election assessment required by section 99.093, Florida Statutes (2021). In lieu of paying the qualifying fee, a candidate may choose the petition process of qualifying, which means a mayoral or at-large seat candidate must collect signatures of 1% of registered voters in the city and a district seat candidate must collect signatures of 0.25% of registered voters in the city. The ordinance does not provide for a hardship exemption for the qualifying fee or petition process.

The City intends to contract with the Supervisor of Elections to perform the service of verifying signatures. The current Supervisor of Elections has expressed willingness to perform this service.

Although the current actual cost for the Supervisor of Elections to verify a signatures is 30 cents ($0.30) per signature, General Policy Committee gave direction to only charge candidates 10 cents ($0.10) to verify a signature. The City will fund the difference between the 10 cents per signature to be paid by candidates and the actual cost of the Supervisor of Elections to verify signatures.

The City will be responsible for approximately $0.20 cents per petition checked, or the actual cost for the Supervisor of Elections to verify signatures, if greater. A candidate for a mayoral or at-large seat is required to obtain 895 signatures, but will likely submit approximately 1,119 signatures to account for mismatching or invalid signatures. The city will incur approximately $223.80 for each at-large seat candidate. A candidate for a district seat is required to obtain 224 signatures, but will likely submit 280 signatures to account for mismatching or invalid signatures. The city will incur approximately $56.00 for each district seat candidate. The ultimate cost to the city will depend on the number of prospective candidates who avail themselves of the petition process.

The City Commission adopt the proposed ordinance.