



Agenda Report

19-810

Agenda Date: 7/18/2019

REPORT TO CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE

SUBJECT

Implementation of Voter Approved Measure N Relating to District Elections

BACKGROUND

On November 6, 2018, the City of Santa Clara (City) held its first district-based election as required by a ruling of the Santa Clara County Superior Court (Court). The Court ruling implemented district-based elections with six Council districts for the 2018 and 2020 elections, with the Mayor continuing to be elected at large, but did not amend the City Charter. Under Article XI, § 3 of the California Constitution, the City Charter can only be amended by a majority vote of the City electorate. Currently, the City Charter still states that City Councilmembers are to be elected “at large.”

The City Council placed an advisory measure on the November 2018 ballot to determine if the voters wanted to engage in a public process to draft charter amendment language relating to the City’s election system. The advisory ballot measure (known as “Measure N”) read as follows:

“Shall the City of Santa Clara engage the voters in a public process to draft a Charter Amendment ballot measure to elect its Council Members, other than the Mayor, by district?”

Santa Clara voters approved Measure N, with more than 70% of the vote, on Nov. 6, 2018.

DISCUSSION

At the June 4, 2019 meeting, the City Council approved the City Clerk’s recommendation for a March 2020 primary election work plan to implement voter-approved Measure N, which included the creation of a Charter Review Committee (Committee).

Per the Council’s direction, the Committee’s discussions and requests for public input will be focused on making a recommendation on districting based on the public input received, and not on drafting of actual charter amendment language. The discussion is expected to involve the number of districts and how many council members should represent each district. The Committee will not be drawing district boundaries.

The resulting Charter amendment would then be put forward to the City’s electorate on the March 2020 election. Discussions related to other portions of the City Charter are not part of the scope of this Committee.

One of the Committee’s first steps will be to receive public input on whether the City Charter amendment language should reflect the current, Court ordered six Council district election system and election sequencing, or to examine if there is community support for some other configuration for electing councilmembers by district. Santa Clara voters will continue to elect the Mayor at large.

A summary of input received will be compiled and included in subsequent reports to the Committee.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The action being considered does not constitute a “project” within the meaning of the California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15378(b)(4) in that it is a fiscal activity that does not involve any commitment to any specific project which may result in a potential significant impact on the environment.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact other than staff time.

COORDINATION

This report has been coordinated with the City Attorney’s office.

PUBLIC CONTACT

Public contact was made by posting the Council agenda on the City’s official-notice bulletin board outside City Hall Council Chambers. A complete agenda packet is available on the City’s website and in the City Clerk’s Office at least 72 hours prior to a Regular Meeting and 24 hours prior to a Special Meeting. A hard copy of any agenda report may be requested by contacting the City Clerk’s Office at (408) 615-2220, email clerk@santaclaraca.gov <<mailto:clerk@santaclaraca.gov>> or at the public information desk at any City of Santa Clara public library.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff has no recommendation on this item.

Reviewed by: Brian Doyle, City Attorney

Approved by: Deanna J. Santana, City Manager