



Meeting Date: 5/13/2024

Title: School Board Election Resolution - Even Years

Type: Action

Presenter(s): City-School District Liaisons, Erica Allenburg and Michael Birdman

Background Information: In April 2022, the City of Edina expressed a desire to discontinue managing school board elections due to the complexity, time and resources election management is causing the city. Since then, Edina School District has been analyzing current school board election processes, options and the impacts of varying process changes.

At the board's 1/23/24 and 1/24/24 board retreat, the Edina School Board had a general overview of the impact of the school board election and moving elections from odd to even years. At this retreat it was explained that the board, with input and updates from the city, needed to make a decision regarding its election processes this spring due to certain legal, date-dependent requirements the state has when announcing board elections.

The Minnesota state constitution requires a board to adhere to the will of the community who elected representatives for 4 years. The only provision in Minnesota law is to make a "transition plan" that either adds a year to each elected member's term or sets up two election cycles where people are elected by the public for 3 years. The Legislature looked at this issue back in 1994 when school districts were forced to move elections from May to November in either the odd or even years. That would have forced some districts to cancel an elected person's term a year earlier. The Legislature thought ending a term early would not be constitutional. In 1994, the Legislature passed a term extension provision in Section 26, Subdivision 1 for the orderly transition. It was ruled that extensions of one year would be allowed. The law was approved by the Secretary of State's office at the time and the Office of Senate Counsel. They also made an option to have two 3-year election cycles so districts could move to even year elections.

After consulting with the Minnesota School Board Association and district legal counsel, the board has three options:

1. *Continue to hold board elections on odd years and transition board elections to be in the control of the school district.*
2. *Transition the board to even years by extending the terms of current board members by one year in order to get the board on an even election cycle.*

3. *Transition the board to even years by holding two consecutive three-year term elections for a cycle of eight years in order to get the entire board on an even year cycle.*

Given the budgetary constraints the district is in (facing over a \$3.5 million budgetary shortfall), at the February 20th board work session, the board expressed interest in moving forward with aligning board elections with even years in order to save the district the expenses associated with the odd year elections. In order to accomplish this, the board expressed interest in extending the terms of existing members, as this would allow the board to move to even years as simply, quickly and efficiently as possible.

Financial Information - Even Year Elections

After the April 8th board meeting, the board asked for more information regarding the financial obligations of the board for even year elections. The Minnesota Secretary of State, Minnesota School Board Association, district legal counsel and the City of Edina were contacted regarding this issue. Minnesota State Law outlines how election expenses can be allocated under Minnesota Statute 204B.32 Subdivision 1 and 2. There is agreement that under current state law and based on an estimate of prior year election expenses provided by the city, that the approximate cost to the district to participate in even year elections will be less than \$5,000. This resolution impacts board elections only; it does not affect bond or levy elections. The resolution is based on a recommended resolution from the MSBA and has been reviewed by both administration and district legal counsel.

Recommendation: Approve the Election Resolution.

Attachment(s): Financial Information - Election Even Years; Edina School Board Election Resolution - Even Years