

MEMO

To: School Board Members

From: Jackie Dolentz, School District Election Clerk

Date: March 14, 2019

Re: Even Year Election Update

The City of Duluth Charter Commission formed a study group in October 2018 to review City of Duluth municipal election cycles and the issue of transitioning to even-year elections. Because ISD 709 and the City of Duluth must hold elections in conjunction with one another pursuant to Ch. 218, Laws of Minnesota 1973, the Charter Commission felt it appropriate that the study group have representation from the School District.

Some background information:

- Voting is changing with absentee and early voting; this is placing more burden on staff earlier in the election cycle as each individual ballot cast is labor intensive when done one on one vs. election night.
- The City of Duluth used to coincide with state elections back in the 70's (which was odd years at that time); when the state moved to even years, the City of Duluth did not.
- As of November 2018, 27 Minnesota municipalities (out of 843) remain on odd year. The rest have moved to even year. In St. Louis County, only Duluth and Aurora remain on odd years.
- Minneapolis, St. Paul are on odd year elections (rank voting makes things a little different).
- The Secretary of State is *strongly* encouraging uniformity (movement to even year elections) and the use of the special election dates as put forth.

- Changes to city charter must be unanimous (9-0). If it doesn't pass 9-0, then it will be placed on a ballot for the public to decide in the fall.

The study group held several meetings. The general consensus was the move to even year elections.

Concerns with move to even year:

- Ballot size will increase
- Possible changes to length of term for all current elected officials serving
- Costs for special elections for the school district if a special election is held in an odd year (right now we partner with the City of Duluth as they are already holding an election). A special election in an odd year would mean the district would shoulder the entire cost of the election, not just a percentage. All the duties of the election would fall on the School District Election Clerk (including duties normally performed by the City of Duluth).
- Only so much money to go around for those who are supporting candidates; even year cycles means you may need to split donations between more candidates.

Benefits with move to even year:

- Reduced costs for all as more groups (city, county, school district) to shoulder expenses; the cost sharing formula is defined by state statute
- Reduce election fatigue for voters, volunteers and those coordinating/running elections
- Increased turn out (30%-40% increase during even year elections)
- Less confusion for who-does-what between city, county, townships and school district

The steps that would need to be taken to make the transition by the district would be determined once a decision is made.

