



City Election Reform

Mayor and Council Work Session #2

July 21, 2025





Outline

- ❑ **Background**
- ❑ **Topical Areas**
- ❑ **Requested Feedback**
- ❑ **Next Steps**



Background

- ❑ **May 19th, Mayor and Council work session**
- ❑ **Community engagement sessions – June 5 & June 7**
- ❑ **General community feedback**



Campaign Finance

Background

- Chapter 8, Article IV, Division 2 – Campaign Financing
- Election law and Campaign Finance regulations are confusing

Best practice principles

- Clear and transparent guidelines
- Concise for all stakeholders
- Reflective of current technologies and modern practices

Consultant approach

- Succinct for all stakeholders
- Comprehensive code revisions

Should the Campaign Finance section of the code include transparent and clear guidelines?



Public Financing of Elections

Background

- Public funds for campaign expenses
- Public finance is voluntary
- Encourage a wider range of candidates to run for elected office
- Rockville does not have a public campaign finance program

Best practice principles

- Learn from other jurisdictions, e.g., Montgomery County, Seattle, NYC, etc.
- Follow state laws and or guidelines

Consultant approach

- If there is a desire, proceed with a phased approach
- Start with an advisory question and implement the program in 2030

Does the Mayor and Council support developing a public campaign financing program?



Campaign Finance Reporting

Background

- City limits contributions to \$1,000
- No clear reporting guidelines for PACs, Independent Expenditures, etc.
- Detailed reporting structure needed

Best practice principles

- Clear and simple reporting requirement
- Provide clear and concise regulations that limit the need for interpretation

Recommendations

- Simplify reporting requirements
- Find a balance between flexibility and regulations

1. **Should Political Action Committees (PACs) and independent expenditures be required to report additional activities?**
2. **How often should contribution limits be reviewed?**



Election Procedures

Background

- Extensive election policies and procedures for election administration
 - Ballot delivery and collection
 - Provisional ballots and canvass

Best practice principles

- Develop a clear and concise election handbook
- Regularly update the election handbook

Consultant approach

- Minor modifications to existing policies and procedures
- No code changes within 12 months of an election
- Add new language for the pre-election, election day, and post-election

Should a detailed Election Handbook be created and renewed annually?



Enforcement Mechanism

Background

- Enforcement of campaign violations was not an issue before 2023
- BSE issues infraction citations. Prosecution falls to the Office of the City Attorney
- Disputes regarding whether certain violations should be prosecuted

Best practice principles

- Refer violations:
 - directly to the Office of the City Attorney
 - to the city staff, the BSE, then to the Office of the City Attorney
 - directly to BSE

Consultant approach

- Violations to BSE and to administrative hearing

Should election/campaign finance violation policies and procedures be updated to include administrative hearings?



Role of the Board of Supervisors of Elections

Background

- Five-member volunteer board.
- Serve 4-year staggered terms
- Appointed by the Mayor and Council
- Duties outlined in the Charter (Article III) and Code (Chapter 8)

Best practice principles

- Board roles and responsibilities vary by state and local jurisdictions
- Boards focus on policy recommendations
- Administration of the election conducted by staff

Consultant approach

- Change the role of BSE

Should the BSE's responsibilities be updated to reflect the BSE as a policy-recommending body, versus also being administrators of the elections?



Rank Choice Voting

Background

- Voters rank candidates in order of their preference
- RCV is used in cities across the nation, e.g., Takoma Park, Minneapolis, etc.
- Rockville does not have Rank Choice Voting
- Community voiced support

Best practice principles

- Learn from other jurisdictions
- Utilize available resources at the state level

Consultant approach

- Implementation will take time, but feasible
- Getting assistance from the state is critical

Should the City of Rockville consider moving forward with changing from a winner-takes-all system to a ranked-choice voting system?

2023 Ballot Measures

Background

- Four advisory ballot questions
 - Voting Age – Yes 28% - No 69%
 - Non-Citizen – Yes 33% - No 63%
 - Term Limits – Yes 74% - No 22%
 - Districts – Yes 40% - No 51%
- Community voiced support for allowing 16-and 17-year-olds to vote
- Mayor and Council supported moving forward with the term limits

Best practice principles

- Many jurisdictions have lowered the voting age for their local elections
- Utilize state resources and learn from other jurisdictions

Consultant's approach

- Proceeding with 16-and 17-year-olds to vote is feasible for the 2027 elections
- Outreach and public education are critical at the high schools

Should the Election Code be changed to allow 16- and 17-year-olds to vote in city elections?





Next Steps

- ❑ **Research and Analysis**
- ❑ **Final Report Presented on September 8**