



Agenda Item C.2
DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEM
Meeting Date: November 13, 2019

TO: Chair and Members of the Public Engagement Commission

FROM: Kristine Schmidt, Assistant City Manager

SUBJECT: Increase Mayoral Term to Four Years

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Public Engagement Commission make a recommendation to the City Council about whether to place a measure on the November 2020 General Municipal Election asking the voters to decide whether to increase the Mayor's term of office from 2 years to 4 years.

BACKGROUND:

On May 16, 2017, the City Council approved Resolution No. 17-18 establishing the Public Engagement Commission (PEC) as an advisory board with the purpose of increasing public engagement in City governance. One of the assigned goals for the PEC was to explore whether the directly elected mayor's term should be increased from two to four years.

Previously, a measure was included on the 2016 November General Municipal Election to determine whether the Goleta Mayor should be a directly elected position and to determine the length of the Mayoral term, either a two- or four-year term. The ballot measure language was as follows:

Measure C:

Shall the electors elect a Mayor and four city councilmembers? Yes/No

Shall the term of office of Mayor be two years? Yes/No

Shall the term of office of Mayor be four years? Yes/No

Measure C passed in 2016, establishing the directly elected position of Mayor starting with the November 2018 election. The majority of voters (59.57%) approved a term of two years. The majority of the voters (62.12%) said "No" to a four-year term.

The question of changing the term of the elected Mayor from two years to four years, arose again during negotiation of the settlement agreement with the former District Elections Committee. The rationale for a change was that under a two-year term the Mayor would need to be constantly in campaign mode, with a potentially significant commitment of time and money, and would not be able to be as focused on

governance. A secondary reason would be cost savings, because each seat or measure placed on the ballot increases the City's share of the cost of the election.

Pursuant to California Government Code § 34900 et seq., in order for the length of the term to be changed, the City Council would have to place a measure on the ballot again. It is the charge of the PEC to advise them about whether to do that.

Initially, the PEC discussed surveying members of the public on their interest in revisiting the question. Rather than conduct a standalone survey that would not necessarily be statistically valid, the PEC asked that the question about mayoral term be part of the already-planned comprehensive community survey that was conducted by staff in 2018. The Commission would then have the opportunity to review the results before deciding whether to make a recommendation to the City Council to submit a ballot measure for the 2020 election.

Further, on June 13, 2018, the PEC decided not to move forward with consideration of this matter. Members stated that it felt premature, as a mayor had not even yet been directly elected under the two-year term. Some felt that the rationale for moving to 4 years was not well developed. Since it was not critical that a decision be made, consideration of the issue was tabled.

DISCUSSION:

Staff is bringing this issue back to the PEC because, from a timing standpoint, the PEC would need to make a recommendation to Council now if a ballot measure is to be considered for November 2020 General Municipal Election.

Since the last time the PEC considered this issue, the 2018 Community Survey was completed, and the results were presented to the City Council on September 18, 2018. A random sample of 451 residents completed the survey between July 26 and August 13, 2018. When asked whether the Mayor should serve a 2-year term or a 4-year term, 48.4% favored a 4-year mayoral term and 43.6% preferred a 2-year term. An additional 8% of respondents were unsure or preferred not to answer.

Following today's discussion, staff would like to advise the City Council either 1) that it is the PEC's recommendation that the Council place a measure on the November 2020 General Municipal Election asking the voters to decide whether to increase the Mayor's term of office from 2 years to 4 years, or 2) that it is the PEC's recommendation that Council not place such a measure on the ballot. This would fully conclude the PEC's responsibilities related to this goal.

Reviewed By:


Kristy Schmidt
Assistant City Manager