



To: Town Council

From: Debra Lane, Town Clerk

Re: Scheduling of the Citizens Petition Referendum Relating to Town Center Affordable Housing Amendments

Date: December 1, 2021

The Charter does not specify when the election for the citizen's referendum must be held. This memo provides discuss points to consider when scheduling an election.

### Location

June and November are standing events on the high school facility schedule. An election disrupts the facility for two days with events having to be moved, rescheduled or canceled. Some events may not be within the school's purview to reschedule or practicable to do so. Simultaneous events at the pool, auditorium or Hannaford Field could draw crowds that reduce or eliminate sufficient parking for voters.

### Alternate site

Some may ask about another location such as the Middle School. The same disruption would occur displacing or canceling events for two days. The gymnasium isn't conveniently located near the entrance and the space may not accommodate election needs.

Changing a longstanding polling place for one election is not advisable. It would be confusing for this and future elections.

### Weather

Scheduling an election during the winter is risky due to inclement weather. Even in inclement weather a secret ballot election must proceed as scheduled, with the polls open for the full time specified in the posted warrant. If the turnout is exceptionally low, the municipal officers can schedule another election in most cases (except for the election of officials, which is final).

This provision was stated in the February 2009 Maine Townsman Legal Notes. For the purposes of this memo, that provision was not thoroughly examined. At first glance, it appears a decision to hold another election for an “exceptionally low” turnout could become a contentious matter.

The logistics of setting up the polling place would be compromised if public works is called out for snow operations. PWD trucks and staff are a must for set up.

### Budget

A special election was not budgeted for FY 2022. Estimated special election cost: \$20,000 - \$25,000.

### Timing

February/March will begin preparation, caucuses and the availability of absentee ballot requests for June. Running elections close together or overlapping is confusing for voters and provides no break for staff or time to wrap-up one election before moving onto the next.

Many voters are away for the winter although absentee balloting would be available.

### Combining Elections

For years voters have favored combining elections whenever possible.

Combining elections results in higher voter participation.

### Recommendation

It is the recommendation of staff to hold the election with an already-scheduled election. The next two elections are scheduled for Tuesday, June 14, 2022 (school budget and state primary; potential school bond) and Tuesday, November 8, 2022 (municipal and state general).

We are prepared to follow the directive from the town council. I am available to answer further questions.

Thank you for your consideration.