

MINUTES
Public Hearing of the College Park City Council
Ordinance 09-CR-02:

**Charter Resolution Of The Mayor And Council Of The City Of College Park, Maryland,
Amending Article IV “Voting And Elections”, §C4-2, “Registration Of Voters” And §C4-4,
“Other Election Officials” Of The City Charter To Set The Closing Date For Voter
Registration, To Change The Method By Which Notice Is Given Concerning Appointment
Of Election Officials, And To Delete Election Date Information**
Tuesday, April 14, 2009
7:45 p.m.

PRESENT: Mayor Brayman; Councilmembers Molinatto, Wojahn, Catlin, Stulich, Mark Cook, Hampton and Mary Cook; Student Liaison Dan Hartinger.

ABSENT: Councilmember Perry.

ALSO PRESENT: Joe Nagro, City Manager; Suellen Ferguson, City Attorney; Janeen Miller, City Clerk; Sara Imhulse, Assistant to the City Manager; Jack Robson, Chief, Board of Election Supervisors.

Mayor Brayman called the Public Hearing to order at 7:45 p.m. He invited Jack Robson, Chief of the Board of Election Supervisors, to provide an overview. Mr. Robson stated the BOES has noted some areas in the City Charter pertaining to elections that they would like to see updated. The first change is to memorialize the City’s practice of closing the voter registration rolls 29 days prior to an election, even though the exact date has not been stated in the Charter. The County keeps the City’s voter registration rolls, and the City tells them when to close the books. The recommendation is to close the rolls 29 days prior to the election, which falls on a Monday. 30 days prior to the election would fall on a Sunday. Using the 29 day designation allows someone to walk in to the County’s election office to register on a Monday, which technically would be the same date that a registration that arrived by mail over the weekend would be opened and counted.

The other change proposed in this charter amendment is a “fix” – it moves from one section of the charter to another more logical section the actual date of the election – it does not change the law.

Mayor Brayman asked about the due date for candidacy petitions. Candidate petitions are due 46 days prior to the election.

Councilmember Mark Cook asked why the City is different from Counties in the state which use 21 days before the election as the date to close the voter registration rolls. Mr. Robson replied it is because we use paper, and the extra time is needed. The County is supporting many other municipalities that also have elections when we do. Mr. Cook feels this is an effort to

disenfranchise voters. He stated the City's Board of Elections should be more focused on increasing voter turnout. He is also concerned that the City's polls don't open until 11:00 a.m.

Mr. Robson stated that interest in Municipal elections across the region is much lower than it is in federal and state elections.

Mayor Brayman wants to draw the distinction between county election practices and municipal practices. He believes that public feedback can be easily given to an elected official or to City Hall if someone is feeling disenfranchised.

Mayor Brayman invited public comment.

Larry Bleau, 4901 Niagara Road: He is in support of these proposed charter amendments.

Mayor Brayman stated that there will be no further public comment on this charter amendment unless there is a substantial change, and declared the Public Hearing closed at 8:10 p.m.

Janeen S. Miller
City Clerk

Date Approved