City of Santa Rosa
Election Year Sequencing

March 13, 2018

Election Year Sequencing

- Once a map is chosen, each district must be assigned an initial election year (either 2018 or 2020)

- A move to by-district elections cannot shorten the term of a current Councilmember

- Districts come up for election as current terms end: three in 2018 and four in 2020

- Any other combination results in the wrong number of Councilmembers on the dais

Sequencing Goals

- Elections Code Section 10010 (b):
  - "In determining the final sequence of the district elections . . . the governing body shall give special consideration to the purposes of the California Voting Rights Act of 2001, and it shall take into account the preferences expressed by members of the districts."
- Enhance historically under-represented areas ability to elect their preferred candidate(s)
  - Relatively low-turnout areas benefit from being on Presidential election years
- Provide historically under-represented areas representation sooner rather than later
  - This goal can conflict with the previous goal when the first by-district elections fall in a gubernatorial election year
- Do not arbitrarily block voters from opportunity to re-elect a current Councilmember

Enhancing Opportunity to Elect

- Historically low-turnout areas tend to have more extreme turnout differences between gubernatorial and presidential election years

- Assigning a district in such an area to a presidential election year enhances the historically under-represented / low-turnout population's ability to elect their preferred candidate

- Traditionally under-represented areas generally want to hold the by-district election in their new district as soon as possible.

- When the next election is a Presidential election (as was the case when Elections Code Section 10010(b) was written in 2016), the decision is easy.

- When the next election is a Gubernatorial election (as it is now in 2018), this conflicts with the goal of enhancing the ability of a historically low-turnout area to elect their preferred candidate.

- The "next election" is a one-time event, but assigning an area to a Gubernatorial or a Presidential election is a permanent decision.

  - Once a Councilmember is elected from that area, future post-census redistrictings generally keep the district on the same election cycle as the local Councilmember.

Allowing Voters to Re-Elect

- When only one current Councilmember resides in a district, that district is almost always assigned to that Councilmember's election year

- This allows the voters in that district to decide whether the Councilmember deserves re-election

  - The demographer's pen does not dictate to the voters who they can re-elect

  - This is different than political gerrymandering – gerrymandering is when elected officials cherry-pick friendly voters to include in the district they will run in (and carefully exclude unfriendly voters).

  - Simply giving district voters the opportunity to vote to re-elect, or to not re-elect, an Councilmember empowers voters, not the Councilmember.

Re-Election Impacts

	Councilmember Resides in 2018 District	Councilmember Resides in 2020 District
Councilmember Term Ends in 2018	Councilmember can run for re-election in the district at end of current term	Councilmember leaves the Council at end of term in 2018. Councilmember can run for Council in 2020, though not as an incumbent.
Councilmember Term Ends in 2020	(Option 1) Councilmember leaves the Council at end of term in 2020, and could run for Council in 2022, though not as an incumbent. (Option 2) Councilmember runs for by-district seat in 2018. If elected, resigns at-large seat (leaving a 2-year, at-large vacancy) and is sworn into by-district seat. If unsuccessful, remains on Council until 2020 end of current at-large term. *	Councilmember can run for re-election in the district at end of current term

* There is an unresolved legal question whether the Councilmember must resign to run in 2018, or can run and wait to see if he/she wins before resigning.

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Representation in "Vacant" Districts

- Four current Councilmember terms run until 2020

- Those Councilmembers remain "at-large" Councilmembers until 2020, representing (and subject to recall by) the entire city.

- The residents of any district assigned to a 2020 election remain represented by these Councilmembers until 2020.

Purely Random Year Assignments

- While it has been done, NDC recommends against a purely random assignment of election years:

  - Ignores the potential representation benefits of an assigned election year for historically under-represented areas

  - Has the possibility of forcing a Councilmember, who has been chosen by the voters, from office based on a purely random act, taking away voters' power to choose their representatives.

  - When Modesto randomly assigned election years, the drawing of numbers from a hat blocked voters from deciding whether two Councilmembers whom the map had located alone in different districts deserved re-election and forced those two off the Council without any opportunity for the voters to be heard.

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Typical Sequencing Decision Process

1. Decisions are not made until a single map is chosen

2. If a district has a single current Councilmember, that district is assigned the election year of that Councilmember

3. If multiple Councilmembers <u>sharing the same election year</u> are in a given district, that district is assigned the election year of those Councilmembers

4. For vacant districts and districts with multiple Councilmembers who are on different election cycles, there are options:

   1. Consideration is given to whether a district has a relatively low-turnout population that would benefit from a Presidential election cycle

   2. Consideration is given to whether an historically under-represented area would benefit from holding an election as soon as possible

   3. If an odd number of current Councilmembers reside in the district, it could be assigned the election year of the majority of resident Councilmembers

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