

AGENDA:



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Vice Mayor Magdalena Carrasco
Councilmember Chappie Jones
Councilmember Sergio Jimenez
Councilmember Don Rocha

SUBJECT: SEE BELOW

DATE: September 27, 2018

APPROVED:

DATE:

Sept. 27, 2018

SUBJECT: BALLOT MEASURE TO HOLD MAYORAL ELECTIONS CONCURRENT WITH PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

RECOMMENDATION

Agendize for the City Council meeting of October 16th, 2018, the attached resolution calling for a ballot measure to amend the city charter to hold San Jose mayoral elections concurrent with national Presidential elections.

BACKGROUND

Currently, the City Charter states that elections for Mayor in San Jose shall be held every four years beginning in 1994. The effect of this provision is that Mayoral elections are never held concurrently with presidential elections which are held every four years based on a date two years after 1994.

The problem with this arrangement is that it fails to encourage high levels of voter participation in elections for Mayor. As is noted in the citations included with the resolution, simply changing the date of the elections to a presidential year is likely to dramatically improve turnout. Those cities in California which have mayoral elections at the same time as presidential elections have – by far – the highest levels of voter involvement. In contrast, San Jose has the dismal record of having mayoral turnout about eight percentage points *below* the statewide average.

HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

9-27-2018

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Citizen involvement in the electoral process improves governance. Candidates recognize they must appeal to a broad electorate. Residents become more knowledgeable about city policies and issue because they have paid attention to mayoral campaigns. Elected Mayors can lead with the understanding that they have been chosen by a substantial part of the voting population.

It is not possible to have all of the City Council elections in a presidential year because we require the stability and continuity associated with staggered city council terms. However, we can and should place the election of our Mayor – our only official elected citywide – at a date which leads to broad public interest and high levels of voter engagement. This change can be achieved by approving the following two modifications to the charter:

1. Extending the term of the Mayor that begins in 2019 for two more years; and
2. Beginning in 2024, holding the election of Mayor every four years concurrent with presidential elections.

We value our electorate and believe that with increased voter turnout we will be able to elevate the Office of the Mayor and capture a more diverse constituency that is reflective of our city.

The signers of this memorandum have not had, and will not have, any private conversation with any other member of the City Council, or that member's staff, concerning any action discussed in the memorandum, and that each signer's staff members have not had, and have been instructed not to have, any such conversation with any other member of the City Council or that member's staff