



City of Lowell - Law Department

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MEMORANDUM

October 22, 2019

TO: City Manager Donoghue *EMD*

FROM: First Assistant City Solicitor Rachel Brown

SUBJECT: Motion Response to 9/24/19 by C. Nuon: Req. City Manager schedule a minimum of three educational sessions regarding the two election choice options that will appear on the November 2019 Ballot.

The City has made several efforts to inform Lowell residents about the two election systems that will appear as questions on the November 2019 Ballot. Those two systems are:

- (1) The Ranked Choice Election System (also known as Proportional Representation). Under this option, voters will continue to elect 9 City Councilors and 6 School Committee members, who will all run city-wide and represent the whole city. Voters will, however, rank candidates by order of preference, choosing somebody as their No. 1 choice, somebody as No. 2, etc. Voters may vote for as many people as there are candidates, but always in ranked order. The final count of the votes is based on the ranking.
- (2) The District & At-Large System (also known as "Hybrid"). Under this option, the city will be divided into 8 districts. The City Council will be expanded from 9 to 11 members, and will include 8 district representatives—one from each district—and 3 at-large or city-wide representatives. The School Committee will have representatives from 4 districts, each comprised of two of the city districts, and 2 at-large members. Voters will vote for one district representative for each of the Council and the School Committee, and up to 3 at-large representatives for the Council and up to 2 at-large representatives for the School Committee.

The City's recent and upcoming outreach efforts include the following¹:

- On Monday, October 7, the City held a two-hour panel discussion on the two options at the Senior Center in Lowell. The panel featured a renowned expert in Voting Rights law, Dr. Lisa Handley, who served as a moderator, and four panelists: an advocate for each system and two municipal employees from Cambridge and Worcester who each have experience running elections under each system. The event was well attended and also televised by LTC. It continues to be available through LTC. Discussion was comprehensive and informative, and approximately an hour was devoted to questions from audience members.
- The City continues to maintain its website devoted to this issue. The website, which includes Spanish, Portuguese, and Khmer translations, contains information about the two elections systems and the ballot, as well as announcements about up-coming events. Please see:
 - YourLowellYourVote.org
- The Elections and Law departments recently staffed a table at the City's Health Fair, at which staff assisted people in registering to vote and provided information about the upcoming ballot questions.
- On Friday, October 18, City Solicitor Christine O'Connor and First Assistant City Solicitor Rachel Brown appeared on City Life to discuss the two election systems and the upcoming ballot.
- On Friday, October 25, City staff from Law and/or Elections will attend the Lowell Farmer's Market and provide information about the upcoming ballot questions.
- The City has created a mailer to inform residents about the two options. It has now been mailed directly to all households in which one or more registered voters live. The mailer is also available in Spanish, Portuguese, and Khmer. We will provide electronic copies in all languages to the City's non-profit groups, and hard copies will also be available in City Hall, the Senior Center, and the Pollard Memorial Library.
- On Tuesday October 29, 2019, the City's Law Department will give a public presentation regarding the two options. The event will occur at 5:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers, prior to the City Council meeting. The Law Department will present the two options and describe the ballot questions. To the extent they are able to, they will also respond to audience questions.

Please let us know if you have additional questions.

¹ Please note that this list does not include outreach events that occurred *prior* to the City Council's selection of options (1) and (2) above as those that will appear on the November ballot and from which the Council will ultimately select Lowell's new election system on or before December 3, 2019.

