

Briefing Document for the 2023 Kansas City Charter Review Commission
Municipal Election Calendar

Current state

- Current Charter language:
 - Article VI, Sec. 604. - Election dates.
 - (a) Regular elections. The City will hold a **primary election on the first Tuesday after the first Monday of April, and a general election eleven weeks after the primary election.** The next primary election will be held on April 7, 2015, and every four years thereafter....
 - (c) Alternate election dates. If authorized by state law, the Council may change the dates for regular elections.
 - Other sections impacted: Art. II, Sections 204, 206, 210; Art. XIII, Section 1309
- Draft Redline Changes – Shift election calendar to align with state and federal even year, Presidential elections (reference pages 4-5)
- Historical context: what changes to this language have been made previously?

Why consider a change?

- Data on voter turnout – Kansas City mirrors national trends showing turnout generally doubles from municipal elections to federal/state elections, and is highest in presidential election years. (reference chart on page 3)
- How low voter turnout harms Kansas City / what higher voter turnout can yield
 - May contribute to inequality of political representation – low turnout elections may be more likely to favor certain groups like organized interest groups, homeowners, higher-income voters, and white voters.
 - Higher turnout can contribute to more representative and engaged citizenry.
- Frequent elections may cause voter fatigue and apathy towards voting; change would center focus of elections into similar periods of time.
- Interest in municipal elections may be easier to generate during federal and state election cycles when both national and local media may drive more interest and attention to local elections.
- National trend is towards even year and presidential elections given recognition of high turnout
 - Massachusetts, Arizona, Baltimore, Los Angeles as examples

Proposed change

- Shifting election dates to August & November of even years
 - Draft language to change and how ballot language may appear
 - Implementation considerations
 - Alignment with the federal/state calendars
 - Impact on current terms of office
 - Extending service: shift from April 6, 2026 primary and June 22, 2027 general election with August 1, 2027 term start → August/November 2028 election and January 1, 2029 term start.
 - Result → extension of next Council and Mayoral term by 1 year and 5 months
 - Any potential administrative costs/barriers.
 - Will want to consider in connection with any change in how votes are counted, i.e. general election as run-off.
- Other options considered & why this proposal has been identified as the best option
 - Voter turn-out data
 - Change in 2014 simply has not had effect on turnout.
 - If considering move, not clear that any other months would be more aligned with goal of increasing participation and turnout.

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- Kansas holds municipal elections in odd years on similar August/November schedule but continues to see low turnout.
- Odd years do not get benefit of increased attention and focus on election issues when statewide and federal candidates are not on the ballot.
- Opportunities to implement with sufficient time to observe full impacts before next Charter Review Commission convenes.
 - Shifting upcoming 2023-2027 Council and Mayoral term to 2023-2028 allows two election cycles (2028 and 2032) to implement even year election cycle and assess turnout impact prior to next Charter Review Commission (expected in 2033 per Charter requirement to meet every ten years).
 - Implementing change in even year, non-presidential election cycle (2026) cuts short the term of next Council and Mayor, and is inconsistent with goal to establish election cycle aligned with presidential and statewide races like Governor
 - Waiting to implement until 2031/2032 to make change effective leaves only one cycle to evaluate prior to 2033 Charter Review Commission.

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Election Turnout 2010-2023					
Year	Municipal Primaries	Municipal General	Presidential Primaries	Federal Primaries (+ statewide elections when noted)	Federal General
2023	13.77% (APR)	-	-	-	-
2022	-	-	-	19.85% (AUG)	38.47% (NOV)
2021	-	-	-	-	-
2020	-	-	27.94% (MAR)	26.63% (AUG) MO Statewide/Gov. Election	60.53% (NOV)
2019	19.45% (APR)	22.99% (JUN)	-	-	-
2018	-	-	-	26.71% (AUG)	50.2% (NOV)
2017	-	-	-	-	-
2016	-	-	32.58% (MAR)	17.38% (AUG) MO Statewide/Gov. Election	58.57% (NOV)
2015	12.03% (APR)	13.07% (JUN)	-	-	-
2014	-	-	-	18.10% (AUG)	26.03% (NOV)
2013	-	-	-	-	-
2012	-	-	6.06% (FEB)	17.68% (AUG) MO Statewide/Gov. Election	61.19% (NOV)
2011	16.34% (FEB)	22.2% (MAR)	-	-	-
2010	16.84% (AUG)	38.24% (NOV)	-	16.84% (AUG)	38.24% (NOV)

Proposed Charter revisions in Redline

Sec. 204. Qualifications for membership on the Council, including as Mayor.

To be elected or appointed to the Council, including as Mayor, a person shall meet the following requirements:

(a) ***Qualified voter.*** Be a qualified voter of the City;

(b) ***Taxpayer.*** Current on all city taxes or municipal user fees, as attested by the candidate to the City Clerk in a form prescribed by the Director of Finance;

(c) ***Minimum age.*** Attained the age of twenty-five years before election day;

(d) ***Residency.***

(1) ***Mayor.*** Resided a total of at least five years before election day, including the two years immediately prior to election day, in the territory embraced within the City limits.

(2) ***Council members.*** Resided at least two years immediately prior to election day in the territory embraced within the City limits. Resided at least six months immediately prior to election day within the district from which elected.

(e) ***Criminal record.*** Unless otherwise provided by law, no person shall have been found guilty, either after a trial or as a result of a plea of guilty or *nolo contendere*, of a felony or of any other act in another jurisdiction that would be a felony if committed in Missouri unless having been a qualified voter for five years next preceding election. No person having entered a plea of guilty or *nolo contendere* for which imposition of sentence has been suspended shall be qualified for service as a member of the Council, including as Mayor, unless the required period of probation has passed and the charges have been dismissed, or otherwise disposed.

(f) ***Grounds for forfeiture of office.*** No person shall assume office as a member of the Council, including as Mayor, if any grounds for forfeiture of office as provided in this Charter exist. Failure to assume office on ~~August 1~~ **January 1** or within fifteen days of being elected at a special election or appointed to office will result in the office to which elected or appointed being deemed vacant.

Sec. 206. Term of office.

(a) ***Length of term.*** All members of the Council, including the Mayor, will serve a term of four years, commencing ~~August 1~~ **January 1** following their election.

(b) ***Term limits.***

(1) ***Mayor.*** No person shall be elected Mayor who has been elected Mayor in each of the last two regular municipal elections.

(2) ***Member of the Council.*** No person shall be elected a member of the Council who has been elected to the Council in each of the last two regular municipal elections.

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(3) **Retroactive application.** Persons elected as a member of the Council or as Mayor prior to the date this Charter amendment becomes effective are included within the term limits established by this section.

Sec. 210. Meetings.

(a) **Initial meeting.** An initial meeting of the Council shall be held at 10:00 a.m. on ~~August 4~~ January 2, following each regular municipal election, unless January 2~~August 4~~ falls on Sunday, then the meeting shall be held on January 3~~August 2~~.

(b) **Sessions of the Council.** After the initial meeting, the Council shall meet in regular session at times designated by ordinance, unless the meeting is dispensed with by the Council. On written request of the Mayor, or three or more members of the Council, the City Clerk will call special sessions in the manner prescribed by ordinance. The Council shall have the same power to transact business at special sessions as at regular sessions.

(c) **Record of the Council.** It shall be the duty of the City Clerk to cause a correct abstract of the proceedings of each meeting of the Council to be prepared and published promptly for access to the residents of the City. If the Council shall at any time authorize the publication of a daily or weekly record or other similar City publication, whether in print, electronic or other form, such abstract or the full proceedings may be published in such record in lieu of newspaper publication.

Sec. 604. Election dates.

(a) **Regular elections.** The City will hold a primary election on the first Tuesday after the first Monday of ~~April~~ August of even-numbered years, and a general election ~~eleven weeks after the primary election~~ the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November of even-numbered years. The next primary election will be held on ~~April 8, 2015~~ August 8, 2028, the next general election will be held on November 7, 2028, and every four years thereafter respectively.

(b) **Special elections.** The City may call special elections for any lawful purpose as provided by state law.

(c) **Alternate election dates.** If authorized by state law, the Council may change the dates for regular elections.

Sec. 1309. Transition of directors and certain officials.

(a) **Directors and other appointees.** Directors and other appointees of the Mayor and Council, and the City Manager shall continue in office.

(b) **Internal Auditor.** The current Internal Auditor shall be deemed appointed by the City Manager upon the effective date of the elimination of the Internal Audit function as a Charter department.

(c) **Departments and offices.** All departments and offices shall continue to exist until changed in accordance with this Charter or the ordinances of the City.

(d) **Elected officials.** Terms of office for the Mayor, members of the Council, and judges of the Kansas City Municipal Division of the Circuit Court serving on ~~April 30, 2015~~ July 31, 2027, are recognized to end ~~August 1, 2015~~ January 1, 2029.