

## **Aligning our elections with Orange County**

During the recent Council discussion, a question was raised regarding potential cost savings associated with aligning our elections with those of Orange County.

I've been in contact with the Supervisor of Elections Office and have prepared the following outline summarizing both the current process and proposed changes, should the Council choose to move forward. If the Council is interested in pursuing this alignment, we are happy to provide a more detailed overview of the steps and requirements needed for implementation. Below is the outline that was shared with the Supervisor of Elections Office a few weeks ago:

In response to inquiries about potential cost savings, there have been internal discussions about aligning the City of Belle Isle's elections with those of Orange County. After further research, it is clear that such a change would be a significant undertaking, requiring careful planning and multiple considerations before moving forward. While aligning Belle Isle elections with Orange County could yield some cost savings, it may present logistical, administrative, and legal concerns. Further analysis and public input would be needed before any final decision is made. Council direction will be essential in determining the next steps.

### **Current Election Structure:**

- The City currently conducts staggered elections for its seven districts and the Mayor, held every three years with three-year terms.
  - **Cycle A:** Districts 2, 3, 4, and the Mayor
  - **Cycle B:** Districts 1 and 7
  - **Cycle C:** Districts 5 and 6
- We piggyback with County elections when possible and hold standalone elections in off-years.
- There is a cost-sharing agreement in place with surrounding municipalities, which helps reduce overall election expenses.

### **Proposed Change:**

To achieve greater cost savings, we are considering consolidating our election schedule with Orange County. However, the following points must be addressed:

1. **Shift to Odd-Year Elections**
  - Similar to the City of Orlando, which made this change approximately two years ago.
2. **Council Term Adjustments**
  - All council members would move to four-year terms.
  - Staggered elections would likely be adjusted or eliminated, requiring a new rotation schedule.
3. **Polling Location and Precinct Changes**
  - Cost savings would come from reduced staffing and shared polling locations.
  - However, precinct boundaries would need to align with Orange County's, requiring redistricting efforts.

**4. Ballot Placement Concerns**

- With consolidated ballots, City of Belle Isle elections may appear at the end, potentially reducing voter visibility or engagement.

**5. Charter Amendments Required**

- Changing term lengths and election timing would likely require a charter amendment, which would need to be placed before the public as a referendum.