



MEMORANDUM

TO: Hon. Mayor and Board of Commissioners

VIA: Mike Helfrich, City Manager

FROM: Clara VanBlargan, City Clerk

DATE: June 4, 2026

SUBJECT: Ordinance 2026-07, Charter Amendments Relating to Municipal Election Dates, Candidate Qualifying Periods, Term Transition Provisions, and Referendum Questions – Discussion

BACKGROUND

The Ordinances propose amendments to several sections of the City Charter to transition municipal elections from March to November, align candidate qualifying periods with the revised election schedule, clarify the commencement of terms of office following election certification, and establish transitional provisions necessary to implement the change.

If the Board of Commissioners decides to go forward with the item, the proposed amendments would be submitted to the electors of the City of Madeira Beach for approval at the November 3, 2026 Municipal General Election or the March 10, 2027 Municipal Election.

The City Charter currently provides that municipal elections be held on the first Tuesday after the second Monday in March, with candidate qualifying occurring during the first two full weeks of December, excluding weekends. The proposed amendments would:

- Change the municipal election date from March to November to align with the State General Election.
- Change the candidate qualifying period from the first two full weeks of December to the first two full weeks of June.
- Clarify that terms of office commence following election certification and installation.
- Modify induction procedures to ensure consistency with the revised election schedule.
- Establish transitional term extensions necessary to convert from the March election cycle to a November election cycle.

DISCUSSION

The Board of Commissioners has expressed interest in evaluating whether municipal elections should be held in conjunction with statewide and countywide general elections.

Conducting elections in November may offer several benefits, including:

- Increased voter participation due to historically higher turnout during general elections.
- Reduced election administration costs through coordination with the Pinellas County Supervisor of Elections.
- Improved efficiency in election administration and ballot processing.

Because the City currently operates under a March election cycle, transitional provisions are necessary to maintain the Charter's staggered election structure and avoid shortening any elected official's term.

The ordinance proposes the following temporary term extensions depending on which Election Ballot to place charter amendments on:

November 3, 2026 Municipal General Election Ballot – If approved by the voters

- Commissioner District 3 and Commissioner District 4 terms, currently scheduled to expire in March 2027, would be extended until the certification of the November 2027 election results and the installation of successors.
- Commissioner District 1, Commissioner District 2, and Mayor-Commissioner terms, currently scheduled to expire in March 2028, would be extended until the certification of the November 2028 election results and the installation of successors.

March 10, 2027 Municipal Election Ballot – If approved by the voters

- Commissioner District 1, Commissioner District 2, and Mayor-Commissioner terms, currently scheduled to expire in March 2028, would be extended until the certification of the November 2028 election results and the installation of successors.
- Commissioner District 3 and Commissioner District 4 terms, currently scheduled to expire in March 2029, would be extended until the certification of the November 2029 election results and the installation of successors.

The ordinance further provides that these temporary extensions shall not be treated as additional terms for purposes of the City's consecutive-term limit provisions.

If the ordinance is approved by the Board on second reading, the proposed Charter amendments would be submitted to the voters via three separate referendum questions addressing:

- Changing the municipal election date from March to November.
- Changing the candidate qualifying period from December to June.
- Extending elected officials' terms as necessary to implement the election transition.

VOTER PARTICIPATION ANALYSIS AND COST COMPARISON

March 14, 2017 Municipal Election	42.8% Turnout
November 7, 2017 General Election	22.8% Turnout
March 13, 2018 Municipal Election	36.3% Turnout
November 6, 2018 General Election	69.0% Turnout
March 12, 2019 Municipal Election	36.7% Turnout (included 11 Charter Amendments)
November 5, 2019 General Election	November Municipal Elections Only
March 17, 2020 Municipal Election	42.1% Turnout (with Presidential Preference Primary)
November 3, 2020 General Election	80.0% Turnout (6 Madeira Beach Charter Amendments)
March 9, 2021 Municipal Election	No Election
November 2, 2021 General Election	November Municipal Elections Only
March 15, 2022 Municipal Election	31.4% Turnout (Includes 3 Charter Amend & 1 Referendum)
November 8, 2022 General Election	66.0% Turnout (2 Madeira Beach Charter Amendments)
March 14, 2023 Municipal Election	31.6% Turnout (Includes 2 Charter Amendments)
November 7, 2023 General Election	November Municipal Elections Only
March 19, 2024 Municipal Election	23.9% Turnout
November 5, 2024 General Election	79.4% Turnout
March 11, 2025 Municipal Election	No Election
November 4, 2025 General Election	November Municipal Elections Only
March 10, 2026 Municipal Election	21.7% Turnout

The comparison directly illustrates the policy question before the voters: whether local elections should be held during a low-turnout stand-alone municipal cycle or during a high-turnout November general election cycle.

In addition to increased voter participation, holding municipal elections alongside the November General Election may yield administrative efficiencies and cost savings. The City would benefit from shared election infrastructure, including polling locations, election workers, voting equipment, ballot tabulation systems, vote-by-mail processing, and election administration services already used for countywide and statewide elections.

FISCAL IMPACT

Costs for public hearing advertising and for placing the referendum questions on an upcoming ballot will be included in the City's election administration budget.

LEGAL REVIEW

The City Attorney has reviewed Ordinance 2026-07 for legal sufficiency. Pursuant to Section 14.3 of the City Charter and applicable Florida law, the proposed Charter amendments must be approved by a majority of City electors voting on the referendum questions to take effect.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

If the Board of Commissioners decides to proceed with changing the Municipal Election Date, the first reading and public hearing of the ordinance will be held on July 8, 2026, followed by a second and final reading and public hearing on August 12, 2026, if approved at the first reading. The ordinance will specify which Election Ballot the Board of Commissioners chooses to place the charter amendments on for voter approval.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Ordinance 2026-07
2. Proposed Charter Amendment Referendum Questions
3. Redline Charter Amendment Language
4. Madeira Beach Election Estimate A
5. Madeira Beach Election Estimate B (In conjunction with Countywide Election, 1 Card Ballot)
6. Pinellas County Supervisor of Elections 2026 Election Schedule