



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Hon. Mayor and Board of Commissioners

**VIA:** Mike Helfrich, City Manager

**FROM:** Clara VanBlargan, City Clerk

**DATE:** June 26, 2026

**SUBJECT:** Ordinance 2026-07, Charter Amendments Relating to Municipal Election Dates, Candidate Qualifying Periods, Term Transition Provisions, and Referendum Questions – 1<sup>st</sup> Reading & Public Hearing

### BACKGROUND

Proposed Ordinance 2026-07, places charter amendments on the November 3, 2026 Municipal General Election Ballot relating to Municipal Election Dates, Candidate Qualifying Periods, Term Transition Provisions, and Referendum Questions.

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.

**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.

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.

**VOTER PARTICIPATION ANALYSIS AND COST COMPARISON**

| <b>Year</b> | <b>March Municipal Election</b> | <b>November General Election</b>                     | <b>Notes</b>   |
|-------------|---------------------------------|--|--|
| 2017        | March 14, 2017 — 42.8% turnout  | November 7, 2017 — 22.8% turnout                     |  |
| 2018        | March 13, 2018 — 36.3% turnout  | November 6, 2018 — 69.0% turnout                     |  |
| 2019        | March 12, 2019 — 36.7% turnout  | November 5, 2019 — November municipal elections only | March election ballot included 11 Madeira Beach Charter Amendments.  |
| 2020        | March 17, 2020 — 42.1% turnout  | November 3, 2020 — 80.0% turnout                     | March election held with Presidential Preference Primary; November ballot included 6 Madeira Beach Charter Amendments. |
| 2021        | March 9, 2021 — No election     | November 2, 2021 — November municipal elections only |  |
| 2022        | March 15, 2022 — 31.4% turnout  | November 8, 2022 — 66.0% turnout                     | March election ballot included 3 Madeira Beach Charter   |

|      |                                   |   |   |
|------|-----------------------------------|---|---|
|      |                                   |   | Amendments and 1 referendum; November ballot included 2 Madeira Beach Charter Amendments. |
| 2023 | March 14, 2023<br>— 31.6% turnout | November 7, 2023 —<br>November municipal elections only | March election ballot included 2 Madeira Beach Charter Amendments.                        |
| 2024 | March 19, 2024<br>— 23.9% turnout | November 5, 2024 —<br>79.4% turnout                     |   |
| 2025 | March 11, 2025<br>— No election   | November 4, 2025 —<br>November municipal elections only |   |
| 2026 | March 10, 2026<br>— 21.7% turnout | Not yet available                                       |   |

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 present Charter of the City of Madeira Beach, Section 2 of the Florida Constitution, and Chapter 166, Florida Statutes, charter amendments must be approved by referendum of the electors of the City of Madeira Beach to take effect.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Board of Commissioners approve, following first reading and public hearing, Ordinance 2026-07, Charter Amendments Relating to Municipal Election Dates, Candidate Qualifying Periods, Term Transition Provisions, and Referendum Questions . The

ordinance will be advertised for a second reading and public hearing to be held on August 12, 2026.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

1. Ordinance 2026-07
2. Ordinance 2026-07, Business Impact Statement
3. Madeira Beach Election Estimate A
4. Madeira Beach Election Estimate B (In conjunction with Countywide Election, 1 Card Ballot)
5. Pinellas County Supervisor of Elections 2026 Election Schedule