

Staggering of Terms, Term Length

Topic: Governance: Initial Staggering of Terms

General Rules:

- Terms must be staggered
- Terms cannot exceed 6 years, but can be shorter
- RFA Commissioner elections occur every two years, in the same year as City Council elections (elections in odd-numbered years; terms start in even-numbered years)
- Vacancies are filled by the appointing authority; elected position vacancies are filled by the Board as a whole.
- Since city councilmember terms are 4-years, assume that Council appointments can be for a term of 2 or 4 years, but not more than 4 years.

Policy Goal

- Minimize turnover of board in any election year to minimize disruption in operation of RFA, using the Phased-in Option 4 (1 councilmember from each City plus 5 at-large commissioners)
- To minimize turnover, the best possible pattern is to have 2, 3 or 4 seats *maximum* turnover on any date.
 - For comparison, with 7 city council seats, the turnover pattern is 3-4.

Options

- Three scenarios are modelled below that minimize the turnover in any election year.
- The difference between the options is whether the Elected Commissioners serve a term of 4 years or 6 years.
 - One might expect the directly elected commissioners will prefer longer terms and they will have 5 seats on the board beginning in 2028.
- The initial election in 2025, for terms starting January 2026, could result in 7 new board members under any scenario. Four of those seats are arguably within the control of the city councils to minimize turnover of their appointed positions (assuming all appointees serving in 2025 are re-elected).

Interpreting the tables:

- Each row represents 1 RFA Governing Board Commissioner position (whether a city appointee or directly elected)
- Cells of same color (by row) represent 1 term for that commissioner. E.g., when the color changes in a row, that is a point of potential turnover.

Scenario A

- Option 4 Phase-in
- After phase-in: the 2 appointed councilmembers have 4-year terms, while directly elected commissioners have 6—year terms
- Initially, one of the 3 initial elected commissioners has a 4 year, rather than 6-year term.

Position	Appointing Authority / Voted Positions	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035	2036	2037	2038	2039	2040
1	Olympia City Council																		
2	Tumwater City Council																		
3	Olympia City Council At Large Commissioner beginning 2028																		
4	Tumwater City Council At Large Commissioner beginning 2028																		
5	Olympia City Council At Large Commissioner beginning 2026																		
6	Tumwater City Council At Large Commissioner beginning 2026																		
7	-- At Large Commissioner 2026																		
Maximum Seat Turnover Possible at election years					7 (3)		2		3		2		4		2		2		3

Scenario B

- Option 4 Phase-in
- All elected commissioners have 6-year terms from the start.
- After phase-in: Councilmembers have 4-year terms, directly elected commissioners have 6—year terms

Position	Appointing Authority / Voted Positions	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035	2036	2037	2038	2039	2040
1	Olympia City Council																		
2	Tumwater City Council																		
3	Olympia City Council At Large Commissioner beginning 2028																		
4	Tumwater City Council At Large Commissioner beginning 2028																		
5	Olympia City Council At Large Commissioner beginning 2026																		
6	Tumwater City Council At Large Commissioner beginning 2026																		
7	-- At Large Commissioner 2026																		
Maximum Seat Turnover Possible at election years					7 (3)		2		2		3		4		2		2		3

Scenario C

- Option 4 Phase in.
- After phase-in: Councilmember Terms at 4 years after transition
- After phase-in, elected commissioners also have maximum 4 years terms

Position	Appointing Authority / Voted Positions	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035	2036	2037	2038	2039	2040
1	Olympia City Council																		
2	Tumwater City Council																		
3	Olympia City Council At Large Commissioner beginning 2028																		
4	Tumwater City Council At Large Commissioner beginning 2028																		
5	Olympia City Council At Large Commissioner beginning 2026																		
6	Tumwater City Council At Large Commissioner beginning 2026																		
7	-- At Large Commissioner 2026																		
Maximum Seat Turnover Possible at election years					7 (3)		3		4		3		4		3		4		3