



Dear Municipal Clerks, Commissions, and Councils,

Congratulations to those of you who participated in a successful 2021 election cycle! The recent March Elections demonstrated the municipalities' commitment to democracy and to the voters of Palm Beach County. We were honored to work with you.

The Palm Beach County Supervisor of Elections office (SOE) is committed to facilitating secure, transparent, and accurate elections. To that end, due to updates in Florida Law in recent years, we have determined that certain changes in municipal charters and ordinances are necessary to ensure the efficient and cost-effective administration of future elections.

Qualifying Dates

To accommodate statutory vote-by-mail requirements, the SOE strongly recommends that each municipality who has not already done so amend its qualifying period so that its qualifying period ends on or before the 95th day before Election Day.

For example, qualifying for the March 8, 2022 election would end no later than Friday, December 3, 2021, allowing the SOE staff to program the necessary elections, create and proofread the ballot language, submit ballot templates to participating municipalities for approval, print vote-by-mail ballots, and prepare those ballots for mailing. We mail the military and overseas ballots 45 days before the election.

Failure to amend the qualifying period may result in the inability of the SOE to accommodate the elections of those municipalities. Our system does not allow us to "close" or move forward one city at a time, so any delay by one municipality results in our inability to move forward with the others.

Runoff Elections

While many municipalities no longer hold runoff elections, several still maintain provisions requiring a majority vote to win an election. Many municipalities have mentioned to us that the runoff elections are detrimental to their budgets because often the municipality has not budgeted for that expense. With so few holding runoff elections, the municipality does not benefit from the same degree of cost sharing as a Uniform Municipal Election that is held simultaneously with other municipalities. The county does not fund the municipal elections.

Please understand that we are happy to hold runoff elections, but are cognizant of the cost burden it places on municipalities. If you determine that you no longer wish to have runoff elections, please revise your charters or ordinances accordingly.



Polling Locations

It has come to our attention that some charters include provisions requiring specific polling locations or specifying that polling locations be within city or town limits. While this may not present an issue for stand-alone elections, when municipalities wish to participate in uniform or countywide elections, this becomes logistically problematic and expensive, if not impossible. The SOE urges municipalities to remove any provisions to this effect, as it will be impossible to guarantee specific polling locations in future elections if the municipality is joining a countywide election.

Single Canvassing Board for Uniform Municipal Elections

The final question presented for consideration by the municipalities is the designation of the Palm Beach County Supervisor of Elections as the official Supervisor of each Uniform Municipal Election, such that one single Canvassing Board may be empowered to canvass all of the municipal elections held simultaneously on a given day. The municipal clerks would still be qualifying officers for their municipality's candidates.

This is an optional service, and each municipality can make its own determination as to whether they want to designate the Palm Beach County Supervisor of Elections as the official Supervisor of their election. As required under the Florida election laws, at least one (1) member of the Canvassing Board is required to be present during activities such as the pre-election testing of tabulation equipment (the Logic and Accuracy test), opening, tabulation, duplication, and the canvassing of ballots. A municipality may choose to maintain its own Canvassing Board; however, if they choose to do so, the Supervisor of Elections may elect not to serve as a Canvassing Board member for that municipality.

In some municipalities, an election may be required in order to make these changes. The Secretary of State has called for a Special Primary Election on November 2, 2021, for the U.S. House of Representatives District 20 seat. While this district may not include a municipality that would be required to have an election, we will be happy to accommodate a municipality that wishes to do so. (If the municipality is within Congressional District 20, it would also result in a cost savings to that municipality.) Please let the Supervisor of Elections know by July 15, 2021, whether your municipality plans to participate in the November 2, 2021 election. We will not be able to hold an election outside of this date.



Again, congratulations on a successful election season. The Palm Beach County Supervisor of Elections looks forward to many future elections in partnership with our local governments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Wendy Sartory Link".

Wendy Sartory Link
Supervisor of Elections Palm Beach County