



CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

A COAST GUARD CITY

MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor Eisenbeisz and Assembly Members

Thru: John Leach, Municipal Administrator 

From: Sara Peterson, MMC, Municipal Clerk 

Date: April 27, 2026

Subject: Proposed Home Rule Charter Amendment – Section 6.01 (Initiative and Referendum)

Background

The City and Borough of Sitka Home Rule Charter, Article VI, Section 6.01 currently provides that when an initiative or referendum petition is signed by at least one-third of voters in the last regular annual election, a special election must be scheduled not less than 40 days nor more than 90 days after the filing of that petition. This ordinance proposes to amend Section 6.01 to remove the mandatory special election requirement and replace it with a discretionary provision. The Assembly could, by ordinance, order a special election when it determines doing so is in the best interest of the municipality. Qualifying petitions would instead go before voters at the next scheduled regular or special election, unless the Assembly passes an ordinance calling a special election on the matter.

Analysis

The 2025 special election, triggered by an initiative petition meeting the one-third signature threshold, cost the municipality \$18,251.05. This cost provides context for the proposed amendment. Whether the current mandatory special election provision should be replaced with Assembly discretion is a policy question for the Assembly and, ultimately, the voters.

State law allows Alaska municipalities to decide whether to call a special election in similar situations (AS 29.26.170). Sitka's Charter is different, and while this proposal does not adopt the State's specific timelines or procedures, the reference is included only to show that allowing discretion, rather than requiring a special election, is a standard policy approach for many Alaska municipalities.

Fiscal Note

No additional election costs are anticipated, as the proposition will be included on the ballot for the October 6, 2026 regular election if approved by the Assembly.

Recommendation

The Municipal Clerk submits this ordinance for Assembly consideration.