

POSSIBLE MOTION

I MOVE TO approve Ordinance 2011-27
on second and final reading.



City & Borough of Sitka

Municipal Clerks Office

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Memorandum

June 23, 2011

To: Mayor and Assemblymembers
Cc: Municipal Administrator Jim Dinley
From: Colleen Ingman, Municipal Clerk
Subject: **Proposed Ordinance 2011-27**

Request

I'm requesting the Assembly consider changing the time period from the closing of the polls until the absentee and question ballots are counted.

Background

First, questioned ballots are cast on Election Day, and for Sitka, it does not take more than a couple days to verify whether the ballots are eligible to be counted or not. Secondly, for as many years as I can recall, we have not received any absentee-by-mail (properly postmarked) ballots following three days of any election.

Analysis

I queried a number of municipalities on how long they wait before counting their absentee and question ballots. For similar communities, the number one response was - the next day following the election. The only exception was found in the larger municipalities, and that was primarily for question ballots. Due to the large number of question ballots cast, it takes them additional days to determine eligibility.

Recommendation

I recommend the Assembly approve Ordinance 2011-27. In the future if we find that 3 days is not adequate we can revisit the procedure and propose a new ordinance. Passing this ordinance would also allow election results to be known before the weekend following an election, which would allow candidates and the public to know the outcomes sooner.

CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

ORDINANCE NO. 2011 - 27

**AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA AMENDING SITKA
GENERAL CODE AT SECTION 2.40.420B, ENTITLED "COUNTING ABSENTEE AND
QUESTION BALLOTS"**

1. **CLASSIFICATION.** This ordinance is of a permanent nature and is intended to become a part of the Sitka General Code (SGC).

2. **SEVERABILITY.** If any provision of this ordinance or any application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the remainder of this ordinance and application to any person or circumstance shall not be affected.

3. **PURPOSE.** The purpose of this ordinance is to decrease the number of days (by one) following any Municipal Election when an absentee and question ballots are counted. For a number of years, no additional ballots that were properly postmarked have been received beyond three days following the election. Many other municipalities count absentee/question ballots the next day following their election. The Municipal Clerk is recommending that three days is more than adequate. Another advantage of counting the absentee and question ballots on Friday versus Monday is any close races should be known prior to the weekend.

4. **ENACTMENT.** NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ENACTED by the Assembly of the City and Borough of Sitka that Chapter 2.40, Section 2.40.420 B of the Sitka General Code is amended as follows (new language underlined; deleted language stricken):

2.40.420 Counting absentee and questioned ballots.

B. The clerk shall appoint a time to open and count all absentee and questioned ballots that have been received. The clerk may delegate the opening and counting to qualified election judges. The opening will take place must be on the third day following the election (normally Friday for a Tuesday election). ~~at least four days subsequent to the opening of the polls and~~ Absentee ballots received after the opening, shall not be opened or counted.

5. **EFFECTIVE DATE.** This ordinance shall become effective on the day after the date of its passage.

PASSED, APPROVED, AND ADOPTED by the Assembly of the City and Borough of Sitka, Alaska this 12th day of July, 2011.

Cheryl Westover, Mayor

ATTEST:

Colleen Ingman, MMC
Municipal Clerk