



# CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

A COAST GUARD CITY

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Mayor Eisenbeisz and Assembly Members

**Thru:** Amy Ainslie, Acting Municipal Administrator *AAA*

**From:** Sara Peterson, Municipal Clerk *SP*

**Date:** April 3, 2023

**Subject:** Approve amendments to Sitka General Code 2.40 Elections

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### Background

This ordinance has been drafted by the Municipal Clerk's Office with consultation from the Legal Department to clarify and improve two areas in Sitka General Code (SGC) Chapter 2.40, Elections.

The first topic addressed by this ordinance is SGC 2.40.095 which requires candidates who have filed for elected office to provide the Municipal Clerk with biographical information, a recent photo, and advocacy statement for publication on the municipal website. In 2022, a concern was raised that failure to submit the biographical information would result in the candidate's name not being placed on the ballot, which is incorrect. To alleviate this concern, the submission requirement is being amended from "shall provide" to "may provide." In addition, language has been added to clarify submittals received after the deadline will not be published.

The second topic this ordinance addresses is SGC 2.40.190-2.40.230 which describes the process for absentee voting. Pursuant to Sitka Home Rule Charter Section 5.01(i), absentee voting is to be provided.

The following absentee voting options are currently offered: by mail, electronic transmission, in person, and personal representative. This ordinance explains the types and processes of absentee voting and includes an additional form referred to as early voting. Early voting begins 15 days before a regular or special election. The process is identical to voting at the polls on Election Day. Results are tabulated after the polls close on election night rather than waiting until the Canvass Board processes absentee ballots on the Friday following the election.

Prior to the pandemic, absentee in-person voting was held at City Hall beginning 15 days before a municipal election. In response to the COVID-19 public health emergency, absentee voting was relocated to Harrigan Centennial Hall for the 2020 municipal election and subsequent elections. The relocation has increased absentee voter turnout significantly.

	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>
<b>Absentee In Person</b>	16	28	341	1372	676	696

**Analysis**

Regarding candidate information, the proposed code language clarifies submission is optional and that candidate information will not be published if submitted after the deadline.

Regarding early voting, the Municipal Clerk’s Office is committed to expanding voter access to local elections by offering early voting beginning with the October 3, 2023 municipal election. Our Office is confident in its ability to implement early voting while continuing to maintain standards of quality and integrity that merit public confidence in the election process and election results.

**Fiscal Note**

No fiscal impacts are expected because of changes made to the candidate biographical information code section.

Compensation for election officials has been included in the Municipal Clerk’s FY24 budget to cover staffing needs for the 2023 municipal election. No additional appropriation is needed.

**Recommendation**

Approve this ordinance amending Sitka General Code 2.40 Elections.