



Legislation Text

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City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JUNE 8, 2016

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: MARK B. JINKS, CITY MANAGER /s/

DOCKET TITLE:

Introduction and First Reading. Consideration. Passage on First Reading of an Ordinance to Establish T.C. Williams High School as a Temporary Replacement for the Chinquapin Recreation Center Polling Place for the November 8, 2016 Presidential Election.

ISSUE: Consideration of an ordinance to establish T.C. Williams High School as a temporary replacement for the Chinquapin Recreation Center polling place for the November 8, 2016 Presidential Election.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council pass on first reading and set for public hearing, second reading and final passage on June 18, 2016, an ordinance (Attachment 1) to establish T.C. Williams High School as a temporary replacement for the Chinquapin Recreation Center polling place for the November 8, 2016 Presidential Election.

BACKGROUND: The Alexandria Electoral Board, which is comprised of three bipartisan members who are appointed by the Alexandria Circuit Court for staggered three-year terms, is responsible for making recommendations to City Council concerning changes in precinct boundaries and polling places and for establishing new precincts. City Council has the statutory authority to make these changes. In making its recommendations to Council, the Electoral Board is primarily concerned with ensuring that precincts and polling places conform to legal requirements, are a manageable size, have suitable voting facilities and are fully accessible.

The Electoral Board has determined that the space currently used for voting in the Chinquapin Recreation Center is not large enough to accommodate the estimated turnout of 2,000 voters in that precinct for the Presidential Election on November 8, 2016.

DISCUSSION: On April 12, 2016, the Alexandria Electoral Board voted to recommend that City Council establish T.C. Williams High School (3330 King Street) as a temporary replacement for the Chinquapin

Recreation Center polling place (3210 King Street) for the November 8, 2016 Presidential Election. According to State law (Section 24.2-310.1 of the Code of Virginia) polling places are to be located in public buildings whenever practical. The Alexandria Electoral Board greatly appreciates the City's support in allowing the use of public facilities and we make every effort to avoid disrupting public activities. We previously used First Baptist Church of Alexandria at 2932 King Street when Chinquapin was closed for renovations and have considered other nearby houses of worship and Minnie Howard School as alternate locations, but no location other than T.C. Williams has the same proximity to Chinquapin. As this is a major election, using the closest viable polling place will aid voters in finding the temporary location.

- 1. Parking for Voters:** The Auxiliary Gym is on the Rotunda side of T.C. Williams High School, closest to Chinquapin Recreation Center and the Chinquapin Circle. This allows for handicapped-accessible parking directly in front of the doors to the building and a large number of parking spaces for voters around the circle. Because students will not be in school on November 8, 2016, voters will have full access to these parking areas.
- 2. Conflict with Other Activities:** Schools will be closed on November 8, 2016 for a teacher work day. We have confirmed with the principal of T.C. Williams that there are no conflicting activities in the Auxiliary Gym on that day. Because school is not in session on November 8, 2016, voters waiting to enter the gym will be able to form a line inside the school building without disrupting any student activities or the general public. This will be helpful in the case of inclement weather.
- 3. Accessibility of the Facility and Available Space:** There is a significant amount of space available for use as a polling place in T.C. Williams High School and this facility is very accessible to voters. In the Chinquapin Recreation Center polling place, we use rooms that would otherwise be available for the recreation center to rent to private groups; additionally, a line of voters would extend through the facility and obstruct public access.
- 4. Proximity to Chinquapin:** T.C. Williams is located adjacent to Chinquapin Recreation Center. All voters will receive notices about the location change prior to the election, but if any voters return to the regular polling location, they will only be 500 feet from T.C. Williams. The parking will be in the same location for both facilities. We will also clearly post signs on the doors to the Chinquapin Recreation Center directing voters to the alternate location at T.C. Williams High School.

Representatives of T.C. Williams High School have agreed that the City can use their facility as a temporary replacement for Chinquapin and the Electoral Board recommends that City Council approve the ordinance that has been drafted by the City Attorney.

If City Council approves this ordinance, the Electoral Board will send notification by first class mail to all affected voters prior to the November 8, 2016 General Election and post signs at Chinquapin directing voters to T.C. Williams.

FISCAL IMPACT: It will cost approximately \$1,350 to send notifications to the 2,600+ registered voters in the Chinquapin precinct. This amount can be accommodated within the budget for the Office of Voter Registration and Elections.

FUTURE CHANGES IN POLLING PLACES: The Electoral Board continually monitors polling places to ensure that they adequately support the voting process. The following is a summary of changes in polling

places that could occur in the future:

1. **Chinquapin Recreation Center** - The Electoral Board has determined that it may be necessary to move from Chinquapin permanently because of congestion and space limitations at this facility, as well as a renovation project that could be planned for Chinquapin. These issues make the voting process more difficult, particularly for large elections. Initially, the Board planned to schedule this change for June 2015 and considered Minnie Howard School and T.C. Williams as potential alternatives. The Board has received public input supporting a move from Chinquapin, however, there are issues with locating available space at both Minnie Howard and T.C. Williams, so the Electoral Board needs additional time to explore other facilities.
2. **Potomac Yard** - The Board anticipates that a new polling place will be needed in 2017 to accommodate growth in the Potomac Yard section of the City and to reduce the size of the Mount Vernon, Cora Kelly and George Washington Precincts. The Board has inspected the new Fire Department in this section of the City and it appears that this facility could be used as a polling place. The Board and its staff will closely monitor the growth in Potomac Yard and will return to Council to recommend a new polling place in this area in the future.
3. **West End** - The City has several polling places in the West End with a large number of registered voters and it could prove beneficial to reduce the size of these precincts if another facility could be used as a polling place, however, the Board and its staff have searched for an accessible facility that could be used as a new polling place in the West End and have been unable to locate a suitable facility in a needed area. The Board will continue to monitor growth in the West End and may recommend the addition of a polling place in the future.

ATTACHMENT: Proposed Ordinance.

STAFF:

Susan B. Kellom, Secretary, Alexandria Electoral Board

Bruce A. Brown, Chair, Alexandria Electoral Board

Jack Powers, Vice Chair, Alexandria Electoral Board

James L. Banks, City Attorney

Jesse Dingle, Ed.D., Principal, T.C. Williams High School

Karen A. Graf, ACPS School Board Chair

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