



Legislation Text

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City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JANUARY 2, 2019

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 amend and reordain Title 2 (General Government), Chapter 2 (Elections), Section 2-2-10 (Establishment of Election Districts and Voting Places) of the Code of the City of Alexandria, Virginia, 1981 as amended by establishing the Olympus Condo Election District from three existing districts: Tucker School Election District, Beatley Library Election District, and Cameron Station Election District and establishing the AlexRenew Election District from two existing districts: Lee Center Election District and Lyles Crouch Election District both for the elections in 2019 and thereafter.

ISSUE: Consideration of an ordinance to establish the Olympus Condominium as a new voting precinct with associated changes in the Beatley, Tucker, and Cameron Station precinct boundaries, and to designate the Party Room at the Olympus Condominium (6301 Stevenson Avenue) as the polling place within the Olympus precinct. Additionally, to establish AlexRenew as a new voting precinct with associated changes in the Lee Center and Lyles Crouch precinct boundaries, and to designate the Lobby of Alexandria Renew's Environmental Center (1800 Limerick Street) as the polling place within the AlexRenew precinct.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council pass on first reading and set for second reading, public hearing and final passage on January 12, 2019 an ordinance (Attachment 1) to establish the Olympus Condominium as a new voting precinct with associated changes in the Beatley, Tucker, and Cameron Station precinct boundaries, and to designate the Party Room at the Olympus Condominium (6301 Stevenson Avenue) as the polling place within the Olympus precinct. Additionally, to establish AlexRenew as a new voting precinct with associated changes in the Lee Center and Lyles Crouch precinct boundaries, and to designate the Lobby of Alexandria Renew's Environmental Center (1800 Limerick Street) as the polling place within the AlexRenew precinct.

BACKGROUND: The Alexandria Electoral Board, which is a bipartisan board comprised of three 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 the establishment of new precincts and polling places. The Code of Virginia (§24.2-307) gives City Council the statutory authority to make these changes.

In making its recommendations to City Council, the Electoral Board is primarily concerned with ensuring that precincts conform to legal requirements, are a manageable size, have suitable voting facilities and those voting facilities are fully accessible. The Electoral Board monitors any changes in the availability of polling place facilities and considers the current number of registered voters, in-person turnout statistics, the size of the voting facility and any likely residential development within the precinct.

The Electoral Board has determined that new voting precincts are needed to accommodate continuing growth in two areas of Alexandria: (1) the Tucker School, Beatley Library and Cameron Station Precincts on the West End; and (2) the Lee Center Precinct which is the current voting location for all the Eisenhower East development.

While many precincts in the city have been (or will be) impacted by residential development projects, the Tucker School and Lee Center precincts are the City's two largest precincts in terms of registered voters and projected Presidential Year turnout, and continued growth in both precincts due to residential development is substantial and near term.

In advance of the 2020 Census and 2021 redistricting, the Code of Virginia (§24.2-309.2) prohibits any precinct boundary changes from February 1, 2019 to May 15, 2021. Due to this imminent line freeze, if City Council wants to make any precinct boundary changes prior to the 2020 Presidential election cycle, Council must make those changes before February 1, 2019.

DISCUSSION: On November 13, 2018, the Alexandria Electoral Board voted unanimously to recommend that City Council add a new precinct in the City's West End and a new precinct in Eisenhower East as well as adjust the boundaries of five existing precincts effective with the passage of the attached ordinance (Attachment 1).

These changes will enable City precincts to absorb future growth from continued residential development in the West End and in Eisenhower East. In addition, these changes will better balance the number of registered voters in two areas of Alexandria, making it more convenient for these voters to vote and reducing their wait times at the polls. Nearly 5,000 voters would be moved closer to their polling place, and over 20,000 voters would benefit from being in a smaller-sized precinct.

The following proposed precinct and polling place changes meet all requirements of the Code of Virginia, §24.2, Chapter 3: Election Districts, Precincts and Polling Places (Attachment 2).

1. Split three existing precincts (Tucker School, Beatley Library and Cameron Station) into four by adding the Olympus Condo as a new precinct in the West End.

Over 2,500 voters would be moved closer to their polling place, including the 315 voters who live at The Olympus. As shown on the attached map (Attachment 1 to the Ordinance). The proposed precinct boundary changes will result in the following transfers of voters:

- a. 1,886 voters would move from Tucker School to Olympus Condo
- b. 557 voters would move from Beatley Library to Olympus Condo
- c. 118 voters would move from Cameron Station to Tucker School

Specific Changes at Each Precinct

<u>Precinct Name</u>	<u>Current Registration</u>	<u>Proposed Registration</u>
Olympus Condo	0	2,443
Tucker School	5,153	3,385
Beatley Library	3,645	3,088
Cameron Station	3,655	3,537
Combined Total	12,453	12,453

These changes would have the following specific benefits:

Tucker School. Tucker School is the largest precinct in the City with 5,153 voters. While the polling place space at Tucker can accommodate many voters, the precinct is on the verge of becoming unmanageable in terms of line length, parking, and crowd control. In addition, by reducing the size of Tucker School now, this precinct will be able to accommodate new residential development under construction in this area of Alexandria.

Beatley Library. The proposed change would eliminate the need for over 550 current Beatley voters to cross a busy section of Duke Street to get to their polling place.

Cameron Station. The proposed change only removes 118 voters from Cameron Station; however, it also shifts the entire Cameron Park residential development (under construction on S. Pickett) from Cameron Station into Tucker. This new development has over 450 residential units, and the voting room at Cameron Station would not be large enough to accommodate these additional voters.

2. Designate the Party Room at the Olympus Condominium (6301 Stevenson Ave) as the voting place within the Olympus Condo precinct.

- a. On August 15, 2018, the Electoral Board and its staff inspected the Party Room at the Olympus Condominium with General Manager, José A. Lizama, and determined that this space was suitable for voting in terms of size, location, accessibility and parking.
- b. On October 23, the Electoral Board made a formal request to the Olympus Board to use the party room as a polling place (pending approval from City Council). Staff met with Condominium board members and residents to answer questions, and on October 30, the Olympus officially approved the request.

3. Split two existing precincts (Lee Center and Lyles Crouch) into three, by adding AlexRenew as a new voting precinct for Eisenhower East.

Nearly 2,500 voters would be moved closer to their polling place, and many of those voters would be within walking distance. As shown on the attached map (Attachment 2 to the Ordinance). The proposed precinct boundary changes will result in the following transfers of voters:

- a. 2,436 voters will be moved from Lee Center to AlexRenew.
- b. 140 voters will be moved from Lyles Crouch to Lee Center.

Specific Changes at Each Precinct

<u>Precinct Name</u>	<u>Current Registration</u>	<u>Proposed Registration</u>
AlexRenew	0	2,436
Lee Center	4,753	2,457
Lyles Crouch	3,842	3,702
Combined Total	8,595	8,595

These changes would have the following specific benefits:

Lee Center. Lee Center is the second largest precinct in the City with 4,740 voters, and like Tucker, is on the verge of becoming unmanageable in terms of line length, parking, and crowd control. Moving half of these voters to a new precinct at AlexRenew will result in precincts with fewer voters making it more convenient to vote and reducing wait times.

Lyles Crouch. The proposed change only removes 140 voters from Lyles Crouch; however, these voters all live in the newly-developed Thornton Apartments which will have 442 units once fully occupied. Lyles Crouch is already approaching 4,000 voters, and with limited parking in the neighborhood, moving these voters to Lee Center would keep Lyles Crouch a manageable size.

4. Designate the Lobby at Alexandria Renew’s Environmental Center (1800 Limerick Street) as the voting place within the AlexRenew precinct.

Alexandria Renew Enterprises is a water resource recovery public utility which transforms water so it is clean and safe.

- a. On August 8, 2017, the Electoral Board inspected the lobby of this facility with its staff and the Chief Executive Officer, Karen Pallansch, and determined that this space was suitable for voting in terms of location, accessibility, and parking.
- b. The Electoral Board also determined that the lobby of Alexandria Renew’s Environmental Center was suitable for voting in terms of size; however, it would not be large enough to (1) accommodate all the voters currently living in Eisenhower East and (2) absorb all the future residential development in this area. For this reason, the Electoral Board needed to leave some Eisenhower East voters in the Lee Center precinct. The Board considered several alternative maps and selected the one which was the most compact and moved the appropriate number of voters.
- c. On December 18, 2018 the Electoral Board made a formal request to Alexandria Renew Enterprises to use their Lobby as a polling place (pending approval from City Council). Staff met with the Alexandria Renew Enterprises Board of Directors at a public meeting that evening to answer any questions. During the meeting, Alexandria Renew Enterprises officially approved the request.

OUTREACH AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: Prior to review by City Council, these proposals were discussed and finalized over the course of many months during public meetings of the Alexandria Electoral Board, and all meeting minutes have been posted online.

In addition, details of the proposals have been posted on the City's web site, and information was shared via press releases, Facebook and Twitter. The City has placed the required advertising, and the Electoral Board has conducted a public survey and held two public open houses.

The feedback has mostly been favorable, and the Board has received overall support for its proposals. There have been a few technical questions about parking and a few voters who have expressed a preference for remaining in the Lee Center Precinct.

As for additional outreach, if City Council approves the ordinance to add these two precincts, the Electoral Board will:

- a. Send the required legal notification by first class mail to all affected voters prior to any possible June Primary.
- b. Send voters a second notice prior to the November 5, 2019 General Election.
- c. Work with the City's Communications staff to ensure the public is adequately informed about these new polling places and the associated changes in precinct lines.
- d. Have election-day maps (with directions) at Lee Center, Lyles Crouch, Tucker School, Beatley Library and Cameron Station precincts to assist voters who appear at their former polling place.

FUTURE CHANGES IN PRECINCTS AND POLLING PLACES: The Electoral Board continually monitors precincts and polling places to ensure that they adequately support the voting process. Current areas of study include:

- **Eisenhower Valley.** The Electoral Board recognizes that residents who live on the middle section of Eisenhower Avenue must travel a considerable distance to vote, going to either Temple Beth El or Douglas MacArthur. Unfortunately, staff was not able to locate a suitable voting location in this area that meets the legal requirements and does not split a precinct between multiple legislative districts.
- **John Adams and William Ramsay precincts.** Due to the expected development and residential growth along the Beauregard corridor it might be necessary to add a third precinct into this area. Ferdinand T. Day School might be an option.
- **Cora Kelly, Mt. Vernon and George Washington precincts.** Due to continued growth in this area, the Electoral Board will be looking for additional voting locations to reduce the size of these three large precincts. The proposed Virginia Tech Innovation Campus might be an option.

Attached is a current map of Alexandria Voting Districts and a list of current registration counts (Attachments 3 and 4).

FISCAL IMPACT: No additional voting equipment is required; however, it will cost approximately \$8,000 to send two notifications to all the affected voters and prepare precinct maps and other materials announcing these changes. This amount will be split between the FY19 and FY20 budget years and can be accommodated within the budget for the Office of Voter Registration and Elections.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Proposed Ordinance with two attached maps:
 - Map 1: Proposed Creation of Olympus Condo Precinct and Changes to Beatley Library, Tucker School, and Cameron Station Precincts (Attachment 1 to the ordinance)
 - Map 2: Proposed Creation of AlexRenew and Changes to Lee Center & Lyles Crouch Precincts

(Attachment 2 to the ordinance)

2. Excerpts from §24.2 of the Code of Virginia, Chapter 3, “Election Districts, Precincts and Polling Places”
3. Current Map of Alexandria Voting Districts (as of July 27, 2017)
4. Current Citywide Voter Registration Counts (as of December 19, 2018)

STAFF:

Members of the Alexandria Electoral Board

Anna Leider, General Registrar

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