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News Update on By-District Elections

On May 28, 2019, the City Council provided direction on the proposed schedule for Transition from At-Large Elections to By-District City Elections for City Councilmembers. The proposed public hearing dates were approved by Council.

The Public Hearing process aims to seek community input on composition of proposed districts, which will be produced with the assistance of a professional demographer hired by the City.

June 25, 2019 – First Public Hearing: The City will receive public input on the composition of the district maps before draft district maps are drawn and will include identifying neighborhoods, “communities of interest,” and other local factors that should be considered or used as “building blocks” to begin drafting maps. The public is welcome to participate in the process by drawing district lines and submitting their proposed district maps for the City.

July 9, 2019 – Second Public Hearing: The City will again receive public input on the composition of district maps before draft district maps are drawn.

August 13, 2019 – Third Public Hearing: Draft district maps will be available for review on the City’s website and at City Hall seven days prior to the Public Hearing. Following the Public Hearing the City Council may select the preferred map and direct staff to return with the map for a final public hearing and introduction of an ordinance establishing the district election map.

September 9, 2019 – Fourth Public Hearing: The selected district map will be made available for review on the City’s website and at City Hall seven days prior to the Public Hearing. The City Council will introduce the ordinance establishing the district election map.

September 24, 2019 – Fifth Public Hearing: The City Council will adopt an ordinance transitioning to by-district election system and establishing the district election map.

These dates are subject to change. The first by-district election will take place during the November 2020 municipal election.

Go to www.unioncity.org/By-DistrictElections to find updates to the schedule and more information about the transition to by-district elections.



Background

Earlier this year, the City received a letter from the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) alleging a violation of the California Voting Rights Act and demanding that the City move to by-district elections for the City Council. The City currently has an at-large election system, which means that voters across the City can participate in the selection of all four City Council seats and the Mayor's seat. The demand letter from MALDEF claims that the City's current at-large election system dilutes the ability of Latino voters to elect candidates of their choice or otherwise influence the outcome of City Council elections.

Establishing a by-district election system would change the method of voting by physically dividing the City into separate districts, with each district represented by one councilmember who resides in that district and that is selected only by voters of that district. The Mayor would still be an at-large seat.