



Memorandum

To: Programs & Services Committee
From: Carol Moore, City Clerk
Re: Consolidating Local Elections with State
Date: March 15, 2024

Committee members,

To support the discussion about merging local elections with the State and Presidential cycle, I offer the following insights into the potential benefits.

Lower Costs

Consolidating elections can reduce costs significantly as we can share resources with state elections. For instance, by merging with the State, the City can take advantage of the state's efforts in distributing Vote-By-Mail (VBM) applications, thereby eliminating the expenses associated with printing and mailing VBM postcards to all registered voters in the city. In terms of State elections, Newton bears the full costs for staffing and supplies, so including the local ballot would not impact the overall expenses in this area.

Increase Turnout

State and presidential elections draw higher voter turnout in Newton; the 2023 Municipal Election had a 28% turnout, in contrast with a 59% turnout for the 2022 State Election. By aligning local elections with the higher-turnout elections, it's likely that more voters would participate in the local election process, leading to greater democratic participation.

Build Capacity for Elections Staff

By consolidating elections, our staff can streamline their operations. Having an "off-season" would allow us to build new voter outreach programs (creating an "I Voted" sticker design contest), have voter registration events, research and improve our training modules for election workers.

Improve Voter Experience

Most importantly, having one main election every two years would improve the overall experience for voters. Merging local elections with state elections simplifies the voting process, making it easier for voters to stay engaged and informed about all levels of government. State and presidential elections typically receive more media attention, leading to better-informed voters. When local elections are held concurrently, local issues and candidates may benefit from this increased attention. Consolidation helps to reduce confusion and encourages a more straightforward electoral calendar.