



## **Voter Guide –Local Ballot Measures Municipal Election – March 19, 2024**

### **Belleair Beach**

#### **Belleair Beach Charter Amendment 1: Increasing Limit on Consecutive Terms**

##### **Ballot Language:**

Shall the City amend the Charter to prohibit council members, including the Mayor, from serving more than three (3) consecutive terms, as opposed to the existing limitation prohibiting a council member from serving more than two (2) consecutive terms?

##### **Synopsis:**

The Charter currently limits council members, including the Mayor, to serving two (2) consecutive terms. This amendment would increase that limit and allow council members to serve three (3) consecutive terms.

The Mayor has stated that this proposed change is in response to a shortage of community members who are interested in serving as council members. In January 2024, a new state law came into effect that requires a greater level of financial disclosure for city council members. This new law has led to a number of election officials in Belleair Beach (and around the state) stepping down from their positions because they did not want to make the financial disclosures. As a result, Belleair Beach faced challenges filling three unfilled seats on the city council. This amendment is intended to get ahead of future candidate shortages.

**Supporters:** Mayor Gattis, Vice Mayor Shirley, Council Members Notaro & Roberts

**Opponents:** Council Member Bankard

**A Yes Vote Would...:** Increase the number of consecutive terms that a council member can serve from two (2) to three (3).

**A No Vote Would...:** Keep the current limit of council members only being allowed to serve two (2) consecutive terms.

#### **Belleair Beach Charter Amendment 2: Reducing the City Council to Five Members from Seven Members**

##### **Ballot Language:**

Shall the City amend the Charter to provide for a city council composed of five (5) at-large council members, including the Mayor, as opposed to the existing language providing for a city council composed of seven (7) at-large city council members, including the Mayor, and adjust the corresponding voting requirements for the council to take action?

##### **Synopsis:**

The Charter currently requires seven (7) at-large council members, one of whom is elected as mayor. This amendment would reduce the total number of council members down to five (5).

The Mayor has stated that this proposed change is in response to a shortage of community members who are interested in serving as council members. In January 2024, a new state law came into effect that requires a greater level of financial disclosure for city council members. This new law has led to a number of election officials in Belleair Beach (and around the state) stepping down from their positions because they did not want to make the financial disclosures. As a result, Belleair Beach faced challenges filling three unfilled seats on the city council. This amendment is intended to get ahead of future candidate shortages.

For comparison purposes, these are some of the Pinellas County cities that have five (5) council members: Belleair Bluffs, Clearwater, Dunedin, Gulfport, Indian Rocks Beach, Indian Shores, Madeira Beach, Oldsmar, Redington Beach, Redington Shores, and Treasure Island.

**Supporters:** Mayor Gattis, Vice Mayor Shirley, Council Members Notaro & Roberts

**Opponents:** Council Member Bankard

**A Yes Vote Would...:** Reduce the number of council members from seven (7) to five (5).

**A No Vote Would...:** Keep the number of council members at seven (7).

### **Belleair Beach Charter Amendment 3: Increasing Term of Office from Three Years to Four Years**

#### **Ballot Language:**

Shall the City amend the Charter to provide that each individual term of office for city council members, including the mayor, shall be for four (4) years, as opposed to the existing three (3) year term, beginning with the officials elected in 2024, and amend the regular election cycle to accommodate the longer election terms?

#### **Synopsis:**

The Charter currently sets the length of a term of office on the city council to three (3) years. This amendment would increase the term length to four (4) years.

The Mayor has stated that this proposed change is in response to a shortage of community members who are interested in serving as council members. In January 2024, a new state law came into effect that requires a greater level of financial disclosure for city council members. This new law has led to a number of election officials in Belleair Beach (and around the state) stepping down from their positions because they did not want to make the financial disclosures. As a result, Belleair Beach faced challenges filling three unfilled seats on the city council. This amendment is intended to get ahead of future candidate shortages.

For comparison purposes with other city councils in Pinellas County, Clearwater and Dunedin have 4 year terms, Indian Shores and Oldsmar have 3 year terms, and Indian Rocks Beach, Madeira Beach, Redington Beach, Redington Shores, Treasure Island and Belleair Bluffs have 2 year terms.

**Supporters:** Mayor Gattis, Vice Mayor Shirley, Council Members Notaro & Roberts

**Opponents:** Council Member Bankard

**A Yes Vote Would...:** Increase the term length for city council members, including the mayor, from three (3) years to four (4) years.

**A No Vote Would...:** Keep the term length for city council members, including the mayor, at three (3) years.

## **Belleair Beach Charter Amendment 4: Conditionally Aligning Local Election Cycle with Federal Election Cycle in November**

### **Ballot Language:**

If a majority of the City's electors approve an amendment extending council member terms to four years, shall the City also amend the Charter to provide that its regular local elections for council members shall be held in November, in general alignment with federal election cycles, as opposed to the existing requirement that regular local elections occur in March?

### **Synopsis:**

The Charter currently requires elections for city council to be held in March. This amendment would move the date of city council elections to coincide with federal general elections in November of even-numbered years. This amendment is tied to Charter Amendment 3, which, if approved, would change the length of council member terms from three (3) years to four (4) years. Charter Amendment 4 would not come into effect if Charter Amendment 3 is not approved.

Because federal elections see a higher turnout of voters, holding city elections at the same time as federal elections would increase voter participation in city elections and increase the number of voters who choose the city's council members. In addition, holding elections at the same time as federal elections would save the city money because the city pays much less for elections that occur at the same time as county, state or federal elections.

However, holding elections at the same time as federal elections would also increase the cost of city council campaigns, which could reduce the number of candidates able to run for office.

**Supporters:** Mayor Gattis, Vice Mayor Shirley, Council Members Notaro & Roberts

**Opponents:** Council Member Bankard

**A Yes Vote Would...:** Change the date of city elections from March to November to align with the Federal general election cycle (if Charter Amendment 3 also passes).

**A No Vote Would...:** Leave the date of city elections in March.

## **Clearwater**

## **Clearwater Charter Amendment 1: Creating an Election Run-Off System and Changing Clearwater's Election Dates to Make that System Possible**

### **Ballot Language:**

Shall the City of Clearwater charter be amended to require a run-off election, beginning in the year 2026, for each Council seat in which no candidate receives more than 50% of the vote in the regular city election? As described in City Ordinance 9728-23, this amendment will also change Clearwater's regular election from March of even-numbered years to August of even-

numbered years. The run-off elections, when necessary, will be held in November of even-numbered years.

**Synopsis:**

Under the current system, the candidate who gets the most votes for a council seat in elections held in March of even-numbered years wins the race (there is no primary or first round of elections). This amendment would make two changes to this system. (1) It would add a second round of voting: if no candidate gets more than 50% of the votes in the first election, then a run-off election will be held between the top two candidates. (2) It would change Clearwater's election dates to align with state and federal elections: the first round would be held in August beginning in 2026 to coincide with state and federal primaries, and then the run-off (if needed) would be held in November with the state and federal general election.

In the last two city elections, three to five candidates have run for council seats, resulting in some candidates winning their races with less than 50% of votes. For example, in 2020, the winning candidate in the five-way race for Seat 2 won with 27% of votes and the winning candidate in the four-way race for Seat 3 won with almost 49% of votes.

Because state and federal elections see a higher turnout of voters, holding city elections at the same time as state and federal elections would increase voter participation in the city elections and increase the number of voters who choose the city's council members.

In addition, holding city elections at the same time as state and federal elections would save the city money. When there is no corresponding county, state or federal election, the city has to pay the bulk of the election costs. In March 2022, that amounted to over \$140,000. When the election occurs at the same time as other elections, the cost is approximately \$10,000.

However, adding a run-off election and holding elections at the same time as state and federal elections would significantly increase the cost of city council campaigns, which could reduce the number of candidates who are able to run for office.

If this amendment passes, the terms of Lina Teixeira and David Allbritton, which expire in March 2026, would be extended to November 2026 to avoid long-term vacancies. Candidates elected to council seats in the March 19, 2024 election will serve terms through November 2028 to align the seats with the new system.

**Supporters:** Clearwater Mayor Brian Aungst Sr., Clearwater Council Member Mark Bunker

**Opponents:** Clearwater Council Member Kathleen Beckman

**A Yes Vote Would...:** Require a run-off election for a council seat if no candidate receives more than 50% of the votes in a first-round election AND change Clearwater's city election dates to align with state and federal primaries (August) and general election (November).

**A No Vote Would...:** Keep the current system in place which only requires a candidate to get the most votes in a single election held in March.

## Madeira Beach

### Madeira Beach Charter Amendment 1: Amend Qualifying Period to the First Full Week in December

**Ballot Language:**

This charter amendment would amend Section 3.3(A) of the Charter to change the Candidate Qualifying Period to the first full week in December instead of the first two full weeks in December. Should the Charter be amended?

**Synopsis:**

Currently, candidates who want to run for Mayor or City Commission must file their qualifying paperwork during the first two full weeks of December (excluding weekends). This amendment would shorten that period to only the first full week of December, beginning at noon on Monday and ending at noon on Friday. If approved, this change would take effect beginning December 2024 for the March 2025 Municipal Election.

For comparison, the qualifying periods in neighboring towns (Indian Rocks Beach, St Pete Beach, Gulfport, N. Redington Beach, Redington Shores, Redington Beach, Clearwater and Treasure Island) range from 6 to 11 days in December. There is no change to any regulatory or compliance costs resulting from this amendment.

**Supporters:** All Madeira Beach City Commissioners, Vice-Mayor and Mayor

**Opponents:** None known at time of writing

**A Yes Vote Would...:** Shorten the city's candidate qualifying period from two weeks to one week, to be held during the first full week of December (excluding weekends)

**A No Vote Would...:** Leave the city's candidate qualifying period at two weeks, held during the first two full weeks of December (excluding weekends)

**Pinellas Park****Pinellas Park Referendum 1: Economic Development Property Tax Exemptions for New Businesses and Expansions of Existing Businesses****Ballot Language:**

Shall the governing authority of the City of Pinellas Park, Florida, be authorized to grant, pursuant to Section 3, Article VII of the Florida Constitution, property tax exemptions to new businesses and for expansions of existing businesses, that are expected to create new, full-time jobs in the municipality?

**Synopsis:**

Florida law authorizes a municipality to hold a referendum on the authority to grant economic development ad valorem tax (property tax) exemptions to new and expanding businesses.

In 2016, Pinellas Park City Council put in place the current property tax exemption program, which is currently set to end on November 6, 2025. This referendum is for the purposes of continuing this program. If this referendum is approved, the new program will begin on March 19, 2024 and run for 10 years, ending in March 2034.

Pinellas Park's economic development property tax exemption program is designed to help existing businesses expand and encourage industries that offer higher-than-average salaries to locate in Pinellas Park. However, any tax exemption means that the city does not collect that tax revenue from that source, and thus any gap in revenue to support services would have to be made up elsewhere.

Companies seeking to receive the tax exemption must first meet threshold criteria required by state law. If all criteria are met, an application is considered by the Pinellas Park City Council at a public hearing where public input is taken. The City Council has discretion to grant or deny exemption applications and to determine the percentage and duration of the exemption. Each exemption is granted on a case-by-case basis, and may exempt up to 100% of assessed value of improvements to real property.

**Supporters:** All Pinellas Park Council Members

**Opponents:** None known at time of writing

**A Yes Vote Would...:** Extend the authority of the Pinellas Park City Council to grant economic development property tax exemptions through March 2034.

**A No Vote Would...:** End the authority of the Pinellas Park City County to grant economic development property tax exemptions as of November 6, 2025.

## **Safety Harbor**

### **Safety Harbor Charter Amendment 1: Proposed Amendment to the Charter of the City of Safety Harbor Concerning Review of Ordinances**

**Ballot Language:**

Shall Section 5 of the Charter of the City of Safety Harbor be amended to require the City Manager to present the City Commission with suggested additions, deletions, or changes to City ordinances on an annual basis and eliminate the appointment of an ordinance review committee every ten years?

**Synopsis:**

This amendment would replace the city's intermittently appointed Ordinance Review Committee with annual review of city ordinances by the City Manager and City Commission.

The amendment states that the Ordinance Review Committee is currently appointed every 10 years, however the city Charter indicates that the Ordinance Review Committee is actually appointed every 5 years. The Ordinance Review Committee has not actually been utilized since 1997 and the City Commission feels the current process of reviewing ordinances annually has been working well. This amendment would align the charter with that current practice.

This amendment was proposed by the Charter Review Committee. Section 5 of the Safety Harbor city Charter requires that the Charter be reviewed every 10 years by a committee appointed by the City Commission. The Charter Review Committee voted 7-0 to approve this proposed amendment.

**Supporters:** Charter Review Committee, City Council

**Opponents:** None known at time of writing

**A Yes Vote Would...:** Eliminate the Ordinance Review Committee which is appointed every five (5) years. Instead, the City Manager would suggest ordinance changes to the City Commission annually.

**A No Vote Would...:** Leave the current process in place which appoints an Ordinance Review Committee every five (5) years.

## **Safety Harbor Charter Amendment 2: Proposed Amendment to the Charter of the City of Safety Harbor Concerning Gender Neutrality**

### **Ballot Language:**

Shall Section 9 of the Charter of the City of Safety Harbor be amended to provide that throughout the Charter, the words "he" or "his" are gender neutral and apply to all natural persons regardless of subjective gender identification?

### **Synopsis:**

Section 9 of the city Charter is entitled Gender Neutrality and currently states, "In this Charter, the words 'he' or 'his' shall include the female gender." This amendment would update the language of Section 9 with the intention to be more inclusive by changing it to state, "In this Charter, the words 'he' or 'his' are gender neutral and apply to all natural persons regardless of subjective gender identification."

This amendment was proposed by the Charter Review Committee. Section 5 of the Safety Harbor city Charter requires that the Charter be reviewed every 10 years by a committee appointed by the City Commission. The Charter Review Committee voted 8-0 to approve this proposed amendment.

**Supporters:** Charter Review Committee

**Opponents:** None known at time of writing

**A Yes Vote Would...:** Change the language of Section 9 of the city Charter to include all natural persons regardless of gender.

**A No Vote Would...:** Leave the language in Section 9 of the city Charter as is.

## **Safety Harbor Charter Amendment 3: Proposed Amendment to the Charter of the City of Safety Harbor Concerning Commission Vacancy**

### **Ballot Language:**

Shall Section 19(a) of the Charter of the City of Safety Harbor be amended to require a pool of applicants when appointing a person to fill a vacancy on the City Commission?

### **Synopsis:**

Section 19(a) of the city Charter currently states that in the case of a vacancy on the City Commission, "the remaining Commissioners shall appoint by majority vote a person otherwise qualified to be a Commissioner." This amendment would add language to require that the City Commission consider a person "from a pool of applicants" in this process. The intention of this proposed change is to provide more equal opportunity to all those interested, rather than a hand-selected individual process.

This amendment was proposed by the Charter Review Committee. Section 5 of the Safety Harbor city Charter requires that the Charter be reviewed every 10 years by a committee appointed by the City Commission. The Charter Review Committee voted 6-0 to approve this proposed amendment.

**Supporters:** Charter Review Committee, City Council

**Opponents:** None known at time of writing

**A Yes Vote Would...:** Modify the language in Section 19(a) of the Charter so that the City Commission must consider a pool of applicants when appointing someone to fill a vacancy on the Commission.

**A No Vote Would...:** Leave current language in place which does not require multiple applicants to be considered.

## **Safety Harbor Charter Amendment 4: Proposed Amendment to the Charter of the City of Safety Harbor Concerning the Baranoff Park**

### **Ballot Language:**

Shall Section 12 of the Charter of the City of Safety Harbor be created to provide that the Baranoff Park shall remain a public park and no sale, lease, transfer, donation, trade, or change to its character district of Public (P) or future land use classification of Community Redevelopment District (CRD), may be authorized under the Charter without referendum?

### **Synopsis:**

In 2019, Safety Harbor's City Commission voted to purchase the Baranoff property for \$1 million to preserve the park's 100 year old historic oak trees. This charter amendment is meant to permanently protect the park and these historic oak trees.

This amendment was proposed by the Charter Review Committee. Section 5 of the Safety Harbor city Charter requires that the Charter be reviewed every 10 years by a committee appointed by the City Commission. The Charter Review Committee voted 7-0 to approve this proposed amendment.

**Supporters:** Charter Review Committee, City Council

**Opponents:** None known at time of writing

**A Yes Vote Would...:** Protect Baranoff Park and the 100 year old oaks in perpetuity by requiring a referendum to change Baranoff Park from being a public park.

**A No Vote Would...:** Leave the door open for Baranoff Park to be repurposed without a referendum vote.

## **Safety Harbor Charter Amendment 5: Proposed Amendment to the Charter of the City of Safety Harbor Concerning Appointment of Vice-Mayor**

### **Ballot Language:**

Shall Section 21 of the Charter of the City of Safety Harbor be amended to require that a Vice-Mayor be appointed no later than the last day in March in years when no election is held?

### **Synopsis:**



Section 21 of the Charter currently states that at the first regular meeting following certification of the results of a regular election, “the Mayor-Commissioner shall appoint one (1) of the four (4) Commissioners as vice-mayor who shall serve a one-year term or until his successor is appointed.” This language does not set a timeline for appointing the one-year term Vice-Mayor position in non-election years. This amendment would require that the appointment be made annually, no later than March 31st.

This amendment was proposed by the Charter Review Committee. Section 5 of the Safety Harbor city Charter requires that the Charter be reviewed every 10 years by a committee appointed by the City Commission. The Charter Review Committee voted 8-0 to approve this proposed amendment.

**Supporters:** Charter Review Committee, City Council

**Opponents:** None known at time of writing

**A Yes Vote Would...:** Ensure that the Vice-Mayor position, which has a one-year term, is appointed every year no later than March 31st.

**A No Vote Would...:** Leave the current process in place which sets no deadline for appointing the Vice-Mayor position in non-election years.

## **Safety Harbor Charter Amendment 6: Proposed Amendment to the Charter of the City of Safety Harbor Concerning Special Meetings**

### **Ballot Language:**

Shall Section 25 of the Charter of the City of Safety Harbor be amended to extend the time period to provide written notice of special meetings of the City Commission from twenty-four (24) hours to seventy-two (72) hours?

### **Synopsis:**

Section 25 of the Charter currently states that the “Mayor-Commissioner, or the City Manager, or any two (2) Commissioners at any Commission meeting may call Special Meetings of the Commission upon at least twenty-four (24) hours’ written notice.” This amendment would extend the public notice period to 72 hours, except in the event of an emergency.

This amendment was proposed by the Charter Review Committee. Section 5 of the Safety Harbor city Charter requires that the Charter be reviewed every 10 years by a committee appointed by the City Commission. The Charter Review Committee voted 6-0 to approve this proposed amendment.

**Supporters:** Charter Review Committee, City Council

**Opponents:** None known at time of writing

**A Yes Vote Would...:** Extend the public notice period for special meetings from 24 hours to 72 hours (except in emergencies), allowing residents more time to respond to special meetings.

**A No Vote Would...:** Keep the public notice period for special meetings at the current 24 hours.

## **Safety Harbor Charter Amendment 7: Proposed Amendment to the Charter of the City of Safety Harbor Concerning Procedure for Filing Petitions**

### **Ballot Language:**

Shall Section 33(a) of the Charter of the City of Safety Harbor be amended to extend the number of days to provide notice of intention to amend an initiative petition, which has been certified insufficient for lack of signatures, from two (2) days to five (5) days?

### **Synopsis:**

The city Charter provides voters with the power to propose city ordinances through an initiative petition process. An initiative petition must be signed by a number of qualified voters that is equal to at least 10% percent of the total number of voters registered to vote in the city's last regular election.

Section 33(a) of the Charter states that the City Clerk (or other designated official) must inform the petitioners' committee within twenty (20) days after the initiative petition is filed if the petition is insufficient. If the petition is insufficient because it does not have the required number of valid signatures, the petitioners' committee currently has two (2) days to file a notice of intention to amend the petition. This amendment would extend that period to five (5) days, with the intention of allowing more processing time in the event the notice is filed near the end of a work week or after business hours.

This amendment was proposed by the Charter Review Committee. Section 5 of the Safety Harbor city Charter requires that the Charter be reviewed every 10 years by a committee appointed by the City Commission. The Charter Review Committee voted 5-1 to approve this proposed amendment.

**Supporters:** Charter Review Committee, City Council

**Opponents:** None known at this time

**A Yes Vote Would...:** Extend the number of days to provide notice of intention to amend an initiative petition from 2 days to 5 days to allow for more processing time.

**A No Vote Would...:** Keep the current 2-day notice period.

## **Safety Harbor Charter Amendment 8: Proposed Amendment to the Charter of the City of Safety Harbor Concerning Candidate Qualifying Period**

### **Ballot Language:**

Shall Section 54(b) of the Charter of the City of Safety Harbor be amended to revise the City Commission candidate qualifying period to filing no sooner than noon on the one-hundredth (100) day prior to the date of the election, but not later than noon on the eighty-ninth (89) day prior to the date of the election?

### **Synopsis:**

Section 54(b) of the city Charter currently requires that candidates for City Commission file their qualifying paperwork between noon on the 74th day prior to the election and noon on the 63rd day prior to the election. This amendment would push the qualifying period back to be between the 100th day before the election and the 89th day before the election. The intention of this

change is to prevent a qualifying week from falling on or near the holidays and reduce the need to adopt an ordinance to change the qualifying period.

This amendment was proposed by the Charter Review Committee. Section 5 of the Safety Harbor city Charter requires that the Charter be reviewed every 10 years by a committee appointed by the City Commission. The Charter Review Committee voted 6-0 to approve this proposed amendment.

**Supporters:** Charter Review Committee, City Council

**Opponents:** None known at time of writing

**A Yes Vote Would...:** Shift the candidate qualifying period from 63-74 days before election day to 89-100 days before election day.

**A No Vote Would...:** Leave in place the current qualifying period of 63-74 days before election day.