REQUEST FOR COUNCIL ACTION

CITY COUNCIL MEETING DATE:
DECEMBER 20, 2016

TITLE:
EVALUATION OF OPTIONS CONCERNING POTENTIAL TRANSITION TO A BY-DISTRICT ELECTIONS SYSTEM

CITY MANAGER

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Discuss the information and options contained in this report and provide further direction.

DISCUSSION

At the December 6, 2016 City Council meeting, Mayor Pro Tem Sarmiento, Councilmember Tinajero and former Councilmember Amezcua placed an 85A item on the agenda to consider establishing a by-district elections system in the City of Santa Ana. Council directed staff and the City Attorney to prepare a report addressing the following:

1. Evaluate various municipal election systems, including at-large systems, by-district systems and mixed systems.

2. Evaluate the transition process from the City's existing from district/at-large system to a by-district system.

3. Evaluate the option of holding a Special Election in 2017 to consider the transition to a by-district system.

In a from-district election system the city council candidate must reside in a specific election district, but is elected by all voters in the City. This is the current system by which Santa Ana Council Members are elected.

In a by-district election system, the city council candidate must reside within an election district that is a divisible part of the city and is elected only by voters residing within that election district.

1. Evaluation of Various Municipal Election Systems

A. City of Anaheim
   By-District with Six Districts and a Mayor elected at-large.

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B. City of Riverside
   By-District with Seven Districts and a Mayor elected at-large and the Mayor has no voting rights unless to break a tie vote.

C. City of Huntington Beach
   Seven Council Members elected at-large without districts and a Mayor is selected from among the Council Members by the Council Members.

D. City of Newport Beach
   Seven Council Members elected from districts (like Santa Ana) and the Mayor is selected from among the Council Members by the Council Members with a one-year term.

E. City of Glendale
   Five Council Members elected at-large and the Mayor is selected from among the Council Members by the Council Members.

F. City of Sacramento
   Eight Council Members elected by district and the Mayor is elected at-large for a four-year term.

G. Large Cities in California: Long Beach, San Diego, Los Angeles, etc.
   These large cities have various election systems with different models involving full-time Council Members in most cases and in some cases City Administrators. Since these cities are not City-Manager forms of government I did not evaluate their election system, but I can if so requested.

2. Process of Transitioning To A By-District System

   • Must Draft Charter Amendment
   • Must Develop the Various District Boundaries
   • Must Decide Whether to Maintain an Elected, At-Large Mayor
   • Must Have All Election Resolutions Prepared 88-days Before the Election Date
   • Must Appropriate or Budget Funds—Estimated $250,000 for the Election

3. Evaluation of Holding a Special Election in 2017

As the City evaluates its options you may be told that the City does not have to submit the question to the voters. This is not accurate because while Governor Brown signed AB 278 into law on September 28, 2016 providing that cities with populations over 100,000 could change their election system by ordinance, without voter approval, this law does not preempt the Santa Ana City Charter. The existing election system is provided for in the City Charter so any changes must be approved by the voters.
A Special Election may be held in 2017. The Clerk of the Council can provide election schedules and timelines if the Council desires to pursue changes, confirm the possible election dates and discuss how the terms of the existing Councilmembers will work and be implemented.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

There is no immediate fiscal impact at this time in exploring the various options.

Sonia R. Carvalho  
City Attorney