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## City Studies Council Election System Changes

The Pasco City Council is made up of five seats where voting is by district in the primary election, but “at-large” in the general election, and two “at-large” seats which are voted city-wide in both the primary and general election. This system has seen numerous district boundary adjustments, a process called redistricting, over the past several election cycles in response to the rapid growth of the city. Along with the overall growth, community demographics have changed. According to U.S. Census data, 20 percent of the population in 1980 was of Latino heritage; today that number is 56 percent.

In May 2015, the City Council enacted Resolution No. 3635 declaring its intent to pursue a change in state law to allow district based-voting, declaring its continuing intent to provide equal voting opportunities for all of its citizens, and to provide equitable and proportional representation. A district-based voting system would provide that only voters residing within the district vote on the district representative, not only for the primary, but also for the general election. The City actively pursued a change in state law through the legislative process during the 2015 and 2016 legislative sessions; however, the State Legislature has yet to pass a bill that would offer relief.

The ACLU of Washington, in March 2016, notified the City that they believe the City’s current election system, as it fails to provide for district-based elections, violates the federal Voting Rights Act (VRA) and would seek remedies, including court action, to make the City compliant with the VRA. The City has been in active negotiations with the ACLU to evaluate the concerns raised, ensure whatever course the City Council elects to pursue will withstand any challenges for violating state or federal law and avoid litigation.

Since receiving the ACLU’s first communication this spring, Pasco City officials have been consulting with the ACLU to determine the data and the law that must be considered in addressing the alleged violations of the VRA. Given the fact that state law precludes district-based voting in cities like Pasco, and Pasco’s efforts to find a way around the state requirement have been fruitless, both the City and ACLU agree that it will likely be necessary to embrace limited litigation in Federal Court as the only available means to bring the force of federal law to remedy the problem that exists as a result of state law.



Briefly, the process would work as follows:

Following the filing of a complaint in Federal Court by the ACLU, alleging violation of the VRA, the City and ACLU would jointly propose a “Consent Decree” which would serve to identify the likely violation of the VRA and establish jurisdiction of the Court to order an appropriate remedy to address the violation.

Upon the approval of the Consent Decree, both the City and ACLU would meet to determine if agreement could be reached on a voting plan as remedy for the VRA issues. If a joint plan can be agreed to, it would be submitted to the Court for final approval. If no agreement is reached, the Court would hear arguments from each side and make a decision on the final plan. It is envisioned that Court approval of any plan would occur well in advance of the May 2017 City Council candidate filing deadline.

With the above approach in mind, and Council goals of a thorough public outreach effort during the process and completion of the process as far in advance of the 2017 election cycle as possible, the City anticipates the following as a likely schedule for the process to move forward:

- August 8 – Council workshop on proposed Consent Decree
- August 15 – Council action to approve/reject Consent Decree
- September 6 – Public hearing on alternative voting systems
- September 19 – Council action on preferred voting system
- October 3 – Public hearing on Council district boundaries ordinance

- October 17 – Council action on preferred Council district boundaries

Under a district-based voting scenario, the City is currently evaluating two potential options for consideration by the public and ultimately the City Council:

- Five districts with two at-large seats
- Seven districts with no at-large seats

Each system has its own advantages and disadvantages from the perspective of the voter. For instance, if under the five district with two at-large scenario, each voter would have the opportunity, in a four year cycle, to vote for three of the City Council seats – the one representative for the district in which the voter resides and the two at-large seats. Each registered voter would continue to have the option to run for election to the City Council every other year in either the district position or for one of the at-large positions.

If the voting system were changed to district-based voting for seven districts, each voter would vote for the one Council seat which represents the district in which the voter resided. As four-year terms are the norm, each registered voter would have the opportunity to run for election to the City Council once every four years representing the district of their residence.

After evaluating these two alternatives and establishing preliminary district boundaries as appropriate, the alternative(s) conforming to the VRA will be presented to the public for consideration and feedback with final action from the City Council to follow.



## New Finance Director & Department



The City has appointed Ms. Richa Sigdel as the Finance Director and re-organized the Finance Department as an independent department, effective July 8. Finance had previously been a division of the Administrative and Community Services Department for almost two decades; recent changes in the Finance Division triggered a discussion among the City’s management team to evaluate future options. After considerable study, this group concluded it was time to progress to an independent Finance Department.

A major implementation step of a stand-alone department was the recruitment and selection of a Director, which will take the

place of the former Finance Manager position. The recruitment was successful in attracting a number of well qualified candidates. After this thorough search effort, Richa Sigdel was selected as the City’s Finance Director. Sigdel brings considerable professional level experience in financial modeling and analysis, operational efficiency, complex accounting, and team building as a manager at the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory here in the Tri-Cities. Sigdel holds a BA in Business Administration and a MBA from Washington State University. Her record demonstrates a degree of success and drive indicative of a professional that has paid her dues by working her way through the professional accounting ranks into management and now as the City’s Finance Director.

## Pasco Police Captain appointed to Legislative Body Camera Task Force



Pasco Police Captain Jeff Harpster was appointed in June by Lieutenant Governor Brad Owen and State House Speaker Frank Chopp to the Legislative Task Force on the Use of Body Worn Cameras by Law Enforcement and Corrections Agencies, representing the Washington State Fraternal Order of Police. This task force was created as a result of House Bill 2362, passed in the last Legislative session, which deals with law enforcement body cameras.

The charge of the task force is to have a report by December 2017 which outlines findings and recommendations for body

cameras, including: costs assessed to public records requesters; body camera policies adopted by agencies; retention and retrieval of data; model body worn camera policies; the use of body worn cameras in health care facilities subject to federal and state health care privacy laws; and the use of body worn cameras for gathering evidence, surveillance, and police accountability. The task force is made up of a wide range of stakeholders besides law enforcement.

“The City is proud to have Captain Harpster representing Pasco on this very important task force,” said City Manager Dave Zabell. “The mission of this task force is critical to make sure the use of body cameras, such as the City is now exploring in its pilot program, improves officer safety and increases the public’s trust.”

## Fall Parks Events

Pasco Recreation Services offers many special events throughout the year; here are some of the events slated for this fall:



- *Pool Doggie Paddle* - Dog Swim at Memorial Pool, August 31. This annual event (after the pool is closed for the year) is for your pooch to get some swim time! There will be a separate area for both large and small dogs.
- *Tons of Trucks* – September 10  
Join us for this educational and family friendly event that triggers the imagination and gives children the opportunity to discover and explore possible future careers. The event will be held on the streets of downtown Pasco in conjunction with the Pasco Farmers Market and the Fiery Foods Festival.

- *2016 All-Senior-Picnic* – September 15  
Enjoy good food, entertainment, community vendors and lots of fun at one of the largest events for senior citizens in the State of Washington. Pasco, Kennewick and Richland all take turns hosting this event.

For more information on these and other events, visit [www.pascoparksandrec.com](http://www.pascoparksandrec.com) or call 545-3456.

### CITY COUNCIL:

- Mayor Matt Watkins (At Large)**  
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- Councilmember Al Yenney (Dist. 1)**  
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- Councilmember Bob Hoffmann (Dist. 3)**  
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- Councilmember Saul Martinez (Dist. 4)**  
545-3404, [martinezcouncil@pasco-wa.gov](mailto:martinezcouncil@pasco-wa.gov)
- Councilmember Tom Larsen (At Large)**  
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### MANAGER & OFFICIALS:

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### HOLIDAY OBSERVANCE

City offices will be closed **Monday, September 5**, in observance of Labor Day.

*For more information about the City, visit our website at [www.pasco-wa.gov](http://www.pasco-wa.gov)*